

# **The Power of Preaching**

**Loy Stanley Mitchell**

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## Publisher's Statement

Perhaps I need to bring you up to date on Loy Mitchell's situation, with the changes that have come about since we published his earlier book, *Preaching the Word of God*. As you know, Loy and his wife, Donna, spent many years working as missionaries in Zimbabwe. They eventually returned to the States and accepted the local work with the Northside Church of Christ in Topeka, Kansas. Shortly thereafter, Donna became ill and died, in spite of months of treatment and intensive care.

True to what Donna would have wanted, Loy continued to make mission trips to Zimbabwe, accompanied by one or the other of his children and grandchildren. Then, with the passing of time, he came in contact with Debra Griffin, a dedicated Christian woman who was also deeply involved in mission efforts and teaching ladies. Their mutual concern for the lost led to their marriage. Both Loy and Debra are authors, and both have new manuscripts under publication at the present time. They continue with annual mission trips to Zimbabwe, filling the remaining time with Gospel meetings and speaking on lectureships and other special programs. They make their home in Dyersburg, TN where they are sponsored by the West Dyersburg Church of Christ.

Betty and I love and value Loy and Debra as a devoted team in the body of Christ. Loy is a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International*, the quarterly magazine that we publish for use in the US as well as throughout the world. We are thrilled, now, to be publishing this new book Loy has written, emphasizing *The Power of Preaching in God's work*.

J.C. Choate  
Winona, MS  
June 10, 2006

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# Noah Found Favor

*“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord”* (Genesis 6:8).

What a blessing! Noah found favor with the Lord. The rest of mankind were busy thinking and doing evil. *“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time”* (Genesis 6:5). So God decided to destroy mankind because He was grieved at the sin of man. Surely it also must grieve God today to see the sins being committed by men.

## **I. What Did God See in Noah? He Saw a Man of Faith!**

*“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7, NIV). This great chapter of Hebrews is filled with wonderful examples of men and women who lived by faith. *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”* (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). This man trusted God. Do you and I?

## **II. What Did This Faith Cause Noah to Do?**

First, we see his faith caused him to prepare an ark. God commanded him to build an ark, and he did exactly as he was told. *“Noah did everything just as God commanded him”* (Genesis 6:22, NIV). He used the right kind of wood. He made it the right height, width, and length, just as God told him to do. His faith caused him to be obedient to God. If we are people of true faith, we will obey the Lord in everything.

Next, we see that his faith caused him to preach the message of righteousness. *“If He did not spare the ancient world when He brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others”* (2 Peter 2:5, NIV). True faith will cause us to speak to others of Christ, God, and His plan of salvation. No, Noah did not convert the world of his day, but seven others did heed the word of righteousness and entered the ark. They were saved. Let us be people of faith. Let us show our faith by obeying God and preaching to others about God and His way. May God help us to do that!

# Do Not Be Afraid

*“After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward’”* (Genesis 15:1).

## I. Do Not Be Afraid.

Why would Abram need this message? The Bible does not explain, but perhaps he was afraid of enemies or potential enemies. Chapter 14 tells of his great victory over the army that had taken Lot captive. Could it be that he was afraid that he would die without having a son? God reassures Abram. **Do not be afraid.** Abram needed that message, and so do we today. We have our Lord with us!

*“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead. He put His right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid: I am the first and the last, the living one. I was dead, but behold! I am alive forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and Hades’”* (Revelation 1:17,18).

## II. I Am Your Shield.

God was the shield of Abram. He protects His people from their enemies. What a blessing and comfort.

*“Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will trample down their high places”* (Deuteronomy 33:29).

*“But You are a shield around me, O Lord, my glorious One, Who lifts up my head”* (Psalm 3:3).

*“My shield is God most high, Who saves the upright of heart”*  
(Psalm 7:10).

This great God is still our shield and protector today!

### **III. Your Very Great Reward.**

God would give Abram a son of his own, and he and his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan. God's rewards are so wonderful! There is a reward for those who patiently endure. *“If we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us”* (2 Timothy 2:12).

There is a reward for sacrifices made freely. *“Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name's sake shall receive a hundred fold and shall inherit everlasting life”* (Matthew 19:29).

Let us fear not. Let us remember that God is our shield and that our reward is great.

# Offer Him There as a Burnt Offering!

*“Then He said, ‘Take your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you’” (Genesis 22:2, NKJV).*

## I. God Gave an Important Command.

Go to the land of Moriah with your son, Isaac. That was the easy part. Now came the difficult part. **Offer him there as a burnt offering!** Wait a minute, God. Don't You know that I waited years to have this son? Don't You remember all the promises You made concerning him and my offspring? God, don't You know how busy I am with all the care of these cattle, sheep, and goats? God, let's just put this off for another time.

## II. Abraham Obeyed Immediately.

The next morning this man rose up early and went to the land of Moriah. Didn't he have work to do? Surely he had other appointments. But Abraham knew something about priorities. Where was this man's love? Verse two is clear. God said: **“Take your only son, Isaac, whom you love!”** There was no doubt that he loved his son. How do you think he felt as he traveled for three days? Was there a questioning of the integrity of God? What did he feel as he bound his son on the altar and prepared to slay his son with a knife? Sorrow. Pain. Dread.

## III. Abraham Did This by Faith.

*“By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac; and he who*

*received the promises was offering up his unique one, to whom it was said, 'Your offspring shall be called in Isaac.' He thought that God could even raise the dead, from which figuratively he did receive him"* (Hebrews 11:17-19). I look forward to seeing this great man in heaven. Don't you? I often wonder, what will we say to God on the judgment day standing there with all the faithful throughout the ages? What will we say to God?

Perhaps He will ask us some of the following questions:

1. Why did you not show your faith in Me by repenting and being baptized?
2. Why did you miss meeting with the saints time after time when you could have been there to worship Me?
3. Why did you allow the passing duties and pleasures of your earthly life to take priority over My kingdom and righteousness?
4. Why did you not find time to teach your children daily about Me and My Son, Jesus Christ?

Brethren, these things were written for our instruction (Roman 15:4).

# How Could I Sin Against God?

*“No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”* (Genesis 39:9, NIV).

In a world that thinks nothing concerning the sins of adultery, fornication, and homosexuality, we need to heed the words of the young Hebrew named Joseph.

## **I. Joseph Was in a Position of Power and Opportunity.**

*“Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned”* (Genesis 39:4, NIV).

Joseph performed his duties well, but Mrs. Potiphar took notice of him and tempted him to sin. She said: *“Come to bed with me!”* (Genesis 39:7b). She was persistent in her temptation to do wrong. *“And though she spoke to Joseph day after day he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her”* (Genesis 39:10, NIV).

## **II. Joseph Knew that Fornication Was a Sin, So He Refused.**

If he had taken this woman's offer, it would have been a sin against her husband and a sin against God. What a pity that so few today fail to heed these statements of truth. *“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed is unstained, but God will judge fornicators and adulterers”* (Hebrews 13:4). *“Run away from fornication. Every sin a man commits is outside the body, but he who fornicates sins against his own body”* (1 Corinthians 6:18).

When we choose to do wrong, we sin also against God. God will not fellowship us when we live in sin. Sin separates man from God. Perhaps Joseph could have hidden his sin from Potiphar and the servants, but God would have known. *"No creature is hidden from Him, but all things are laid bare and exposed to the eyes of Him with Whom we must reckon"* (Hebrews 4:13).

### **III. We Are Challenged to Live Pure, Holy Lives.**

*"This is God's will, even your dedication, that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you may know how to gain control over his own body in dedication and honor; not in passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who do not know God; not in wronging and taking advantage of a brother in this matter. We told you before, and warned, that the Lord is the avenger in all these things. God has not called us into impurity, but in holiness"* (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).



## God Sent Me

*“But God sent me ahead of you to preserve you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (Genesis 45:7).*

What a great story! God was at work to save His people. There had already been two years of famine. Jacob had sent his sons twice to Egypt where there was food. The second time Joseph revealed himself to them. *“I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt”* (verse 4). The brothers were not able to answer the simple question put to them: *“Is my father still living?”* (verse 3). They were terrified in the presence of Joseph.

Joseph was the person who caused them to be jealous when Jacob gave him a richly-ornamented robe. Added to that jealousy was the fact that he had two dreams indicating that Joseph would be ruler over his brothers. They had planned to kill him, but they saw an opportunity to make money and still get rid of the young man. They sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

In Egypt, Joseph finally rose to be second only to the king. He was in charge of storing up food for the seven good years. He was now selling to all who came to Egypt to buy food. Of course the brothers were terrified. Now was the chance for Joseph to get even. Did he? No! No! Joseph saw the hand of God at work. He preserved the lives of his wicked brothers and their families.

It is hard to see the good when men do evil. There was a day in Jerusalem when men filled with jealousy killed a righteous man named Jesus. He died on a cruel cross after being beaten and

mocked. Had God sent Him? Yes, He did send His Son! *“God so loved the world that He gave His unique Son, in order that everyone who believes in Him might not perish, but may have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Praise God for His wonderful grace and mercy. In Christ we can be saved. Yes, God sent Him!

Joseph instructed his brothers to go back to Canaan and bring back their father and all their families to Egypt where there was food and life. They obeyed him and were saved from starvation. Let us today be obedient to our Savior who died for us. There is no need to die in sin. *“He who believes and is immersed shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:16).

# As the Lord Had Commanded

*"Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them" (Exodus 39:43, NKJV).*

Good news! Moses had been instructed by God to build a tabernacle. He inspected the work and found that all had been done **as the Lord had commanded**. I like that message. God's commands are not burdensome. Every commandment of God is good and right. Not one command of God is bad or harmful to man. Yes, it was a great day because the Israelites had done the work as commanded by God.

Dear reader, are you doing what the Lord has commanded? Put yourself to the test as you read the following passages.

## **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.**

*"Then he led them outside and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your household will be saved'" (Acts 16:30,31).*

## **Repent of Every Sin.**

*"No, I assure you, but unless you change your hearts (repent), all of you will perish" (Luke 13:5).*

## **Confess Jesus Before Men.**

*"Everyone who acknowledges (confesses) me in the presence of men, I will also acknowledge him in the presence of my heavenly Father; and whoever denies me in the presence of men, I will also deny him in the presence of my heavenly Father" (Matthew 10:32,33).*

### **Baptized for the Forgiveness of Sin.**

*“Peter said to them, ‘Change your hearts (repent), and let each of you be immersed (baptized) in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).*

### **Always Abound in the Work of God.**

*“So, my beloved brothers, be firm, unshakable, always abounding in the Lord’s work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).*

### **By Our Obedience We Show Our Love.**

*“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).*

Do you keep His commandments?

# The Lord Bless You and Keep You!

*"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace"* (Numbers 6:24-26).

The priests of God were to pronounce a threefold benediction marking Israel and each Israelite as the special objects of God's favor.

## **I. The Lord Bless You and Keep You.**

The Lord God is the source of all blessings. *"Every good and complete gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change, and with Whom there is no shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). God promised to bless the Israelites with material benefits as well as spiritual blessings as set forth in Deuteronomy 28:3-14. The word "you" in verse 24 is singular; thus each Israelite who was faithful would be blessed. God will keep, or protect, you. He can prevent the evil one from destroying you.

## **II. The Lord Make His Face to Shine Upon You.**

The brightness of the face is a metaphor showing a sign of inward delight and happy results. How God delights to bless those who submit to Him. *"O Lord, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed"* (Psalm 30:7). *"Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved"* (Psalm 80:3). What a blessing today to have the face of God shine upon us!

### **III. The Lord Turns His Face Toward You and Gives You Peace.**

This is figurative language that expresses a wish for the Lord God's divine favor. May He give you peace, which indicates one's total well-being. When we are willing to carry every anxiety and worry to God in prayer, we can enjoy a peace beyond understanding. *"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and God's peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6,7).

As we live day by day, let us ask these blessings from God, and may we submit wholly to Him. It is the best way to live.

# Love the Lord Your God!

*"Love the Lord your God and keep His requirements, His decrees, His laws and His commandments always"* (Deuteronomy 11:1).

## I. Love the Lord Your God.

This statement is based on what was given in chapter ten, where we are given a description of the greatness of the Lord God and His love for His people. Moses is about to die, and he does not want the people of Israel to forget God when they enter the "land of promise". This great and only true God cared for the widows and orphans. He had brought the Israelites out of Egypt and cared for them for forty years in the wilderness. They were only seventy in number when they went into Egypt, but now they were as *"numerous as the stars in the sky"* (Deuteronomy 10:22).

Jesus teaches us the same message. When asked about what is the great commandment in the law, He gave the following answer: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your understanding. This is the first and great commandment"* (Matthew 22:37,38). Why should we love God? Because He has given us every good and complete gift. *"Every good and complete gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, Who does not change, and with whom there is no shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). The most perfect gift we have received is salvation in Christ Jesus. *"Love is in this, not that we have loved God, but that He Himself loved us, and sent His Son as the offering for our sins"* (1 John 4:10). We should find it easy to love Him who first loved us.

## II. Keep His Decrees, His Laws, and His Commands Always.

The Israelites were to keep what God had charged. If they observed the commandments of God, they would have the strength to conquer the land of Canaan. God would send abundant rain at the right seasons, and the land would yield them fruit and crops. The Lord would drive out all the nations who occupied that land. It was Israel's choice. They could be blessed if they obeyed but cursed if they disobeyed. Moses connects love for God and keeping His commands.

Jesus also connects loving Him and keeping His commandments. *"If you love me, you will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15). John connects the two also. *"This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3).

**Do This Always!** Do you find it hard to love God? Do you find it difficult to keep His commands? Every law is for our own good. Let us all love God and keep His decrees, always.



# Be Strong and Very Courageous

*“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or the left, that you may prosper wherever you go”* (Joshua 1:7, NKJV).

## **I. Joshua Was the New Leader of Israel.**

Moses had died after leading Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness. Joshua had over 600,000 soldiers and perhaps a total of three million people to lead. He was tasked with the responsibility of leading this nation across the Jordan River and into a land occupied by the people of Canaan. God told him, *“go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving them”* (Joshua 1:2, NKJV). Would he be able to do this job?

## **II. God Gave Joshua Some Promises.**

1. The whole land of Canaan would be given to the Israelites.

*“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory”* (Joshua 1:3,4, NKJV). They would receive houses they had not built, vineyards they had not planted, and fields that had already been cleared.

2. God would be with Joshua; He would not forsake him. He would not be alone. The great God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be with Joshua just as He had been with Moses.

That makes us remember the question posed by Paul in Romans 8:31b: *"If God is on our side, who is against us?"*

### III. God Gave Joshua Commandments.

1. Be strong and very courageous. He was to be a man of action and alertness. There was no need to fear. Why? God promised to be with him.

2. Observe all the laws God had given through Moses. Joshua must listen to God. He must do what He commanded. There was no other way. Don't turn to the left or the right. Just do exactly what God commands and do **all** He commands.

3. The Book of the Law was never to depart from his mouth. *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"* (Joshua 1:8, NKJV). Talk about this law, Joshua. Think about it all the time. **Do it!**

The result would be success. He would be prosperous. Dear reader, that principle is still true today. We must observe all the commands of the Lord God in His New Covenant. We must not turn to the right or left. Make sure we have a **thus saith the Lord** for what we do. When we do this, we will be successful. God will be with those today who walk in His way. Thus we need not fear. I challenge you to be like Joshua, to speak of His will and do it, today.

# Choose Life!

God made us as creatures who can choose. We are not robots. Listen to His word as it instructs us to choose what is right and good.

*“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land He swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Deuteronomy 30:19,20).*

*“Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:14,15).*

*“The Lord replied to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, but there is a need of one. Mary has chosen the good part, and it will not be taken from her’” (Luke 10:41,42).*

*“By faith, when Moses had grown up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, having chosen to suffer ill-treatment with God’s people, rather than to enjoy the temporary pleasure of sin” (Hebrews 11:24,25).*

Look at the great lessons we can learn from the above scriptures.

1. When we choose to love God and obey His will, we are granted life forever.
2. When we choose to serve God, we lead others to do the same.
3. Many things are good and right, but we must choose the best. Let your spiritual responsibilities be first.
4. A right choice to serve God may bring suffering, but the glory in heaven will be worth the suffering.

Will you not choose Jesus today? (Mark 16:15,16).

# The Lord Had Departed from Him

*“And she said, ‘The Philistines are upon you, Samson!’ So he awoke from his sleep, and said, ‘I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!’ But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him”* (Judges 16:20, NKJV).

Samson had won some great victories over the Philistine people. God used him in this way. However, this man, who was raised as a Nazirite and had such promise, fell. What caused his downfall? What caused the Lord to depart from him?

## **I. He Loved Foreign Women.**

In chapter 14 of this book, he saw a daughter of the Philistines and told his father and mother: *“Get her for me as a wife”* (Judges 14:2b, NKJV). His parents were not pleased, but Samson would not listen to them when they asked him to marry a daughter of the Israelites. Again Samson spoke to them: *“Get her for me, for she pleases me well”* (Judges 14:3b, NKJV). In chapter 16 he went into a harlot in Gaza. Then he went to Delilah, and she got him to reveal the secret of his strength. It seems quite clear that Samson could only see physical beauty in women and failed to see the need for a spouse who would be strong in the faith.

## **II. He Had Fallen Asleep Spiritually.**

Yes, Delilah *“lulled him to sleep on her knees.”* He put trust in a woman who did not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. She did not fear the Creator of heaven and earth. She

was interested in money. The lords of the Philistines had promised that each one of them would give her 1,100 pieces of silver (Judges 16:5). Samson slept physically on her knees, but even worse, he was asleep spiritually. Physical pleasure and lust had become the important things in his life. God and His will for man took second place.

### **III. He Forgot that God Was the One Who Gave Him Great Strength.**

*"I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free."* Do you see any mention of God? The Philistines overpowered Samson with ease. They put out his eyes and gave him the menial task of an animal. He became a grinder in prison (Judges 16:21). Samson forgot that without God he was only as strong as other men. He forgot the **Great I Am** Who delivered Israel from bondage, brought them over the Red Sea, cared for them in the wilderness, and brought them safely into the "Promised Land".

My beloved brothers and sisters, let us look at our own lives. Has the Lord departed from us and we are not aware of it? Maybe we are too much like Samson. When we choose to marry those who are not a part of the body of Christ, His church, we make a grave error. It will likely end in losing our own souls plus the souls of our children. Too many of us are asleep spiritually. We seem to think that because we were baptized that somehow the Lord will take us to heaven even though we forsake the meeting together of the church time after time. We have no time for prayer and the reading of the Bible. Brothers, we are asleep when that happens. Just because we live in a rich land does not mean that we are right with God. He is the one who gives us all gifts, and He is the One who will strengthen us to defeat the enemy, Satan.

# Nothing But Death Can Separate Us

*“But Ruth replied, ‘Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you from me’” (Ruth 1:16,17).*

When half the marriages end in divorce in the USA, we have a major problem. Why is this taking place? Can the situation be changed? Is it hopeless? Divorce takes place because of sin. Going back to the Bible and following God’s word can change the situation. The situation is not hopeless when we apply the word of the Lord. I want to set forth three major items in this message.

## **I. We Need the Attitude of Ruth.**

It is true that she was not married to her mother-in-law Naomi, but look at her wonderful attitude.

1. Don’t urge me to leave you. That is not what some spouses are urging today.
2. Wherever you go, I will go. Going in different directions and different places only weakens a marriage.
3. I will stay wherever you stay. Marriages are made stronger when the people stay together. The people of Naomi became the people of Ruth. The family of your spouse should become your family also. Ruth said she would have the same

God as Naomi. Christians should marry only those who are children of the Lord.

## **II. We Need to Remember that the Vows Are Solemn Promises.**

The marriage vows are said to one another. They are spoken before the assembled congregation. The vows are made before God. Woe to the person who breaks that promise made before God! *“When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow”* (Ecclesiastes 5:4).

## **III. We Need to Remember that God Joins the Couple.**

*“So they are no longer two, but one flesh, Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined”* (Matthew 19:6). Do men dare tamper with the work of God in joining a man and woman in marriage? They are destroying what God tied together. Who suffers? All suffer. The wife suffers. The husband suffers, and so do the children. The church is also hurt. Yes, a marriage can be destroyed by fornication, but God’s plan is one man for one woman for life (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:1-4).



## No One Shall Be Put to Death Today

*“The people said to Samuel, ‘Who was it that asked, “Shall Saul reign over us?” Bring these men to us and we will put them to death.’ But Saul said, ‘No one shall be put to death today, for this day the Lord has rescued Israel’” (1 Samuel 11:12,13).*

God had given His people a great victory over the Ammonites. The leader was the newly-anointed King Saul. However, not all people were happy about the new king. *“But some trouble makers said, ‘How can this fellow save us?’ They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silence” (1 Samuel 10:27).* These men refused to show respect to the new leader. What did Saul do? He kept silent. He held his peace. Sometimes it is better to be quiet than to make a fuss.

These worthless fellows did not believe Saul could save them from their enemies. Now that the Ammonites had been defeated, they were silenced, and some of Saul’s supporters wanted to kill the opponents of Saul. Saul interceded on behalf of his enemies. *“No one shall be put to death today!”* This statement helps us see two great qualities of Saul that helped qualify him to be king over Israel.

1. He recognized that God had given them the victory over the enemy.
2. He made friends out of some of his enemies by honoring their right to oppose him without taking vengeance on them.

Unfortunately Saul changed as he grew older.

1. He failed to heed God's clear commands. *"Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: 'I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.' Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the Lord all that night"* (1 Samuel 15:10,11). He had failed to completely destroy the Amalekites as commanded by God. When men today fail to do exactly as God commands, they lose the favor of God. They sin!

2. Saul changed to a person who would kill his own people, even the priests of God. *"The king ordered Doeg, 'You turn and strike down the priests.' So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down. That day he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. He also put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, sheep, and donkeys"* (1 Samuel 22:18,19). He was so jealous of David that he even took vengeance on the priests of God. What was their sin? Ahimelech, the priest, had given David and his men consecrated bread and the sword of Goliath. What a pity that he turned away from God in his old age. What a shame that Saul did his best to kill David, a man who was God's servant. Then the Scripture reveals the death of Saul as he took his own life. Brothers, let us be like Saul when he was a young man and beware lest we change as we grow older.

**Serve the Lord faithfully unto death!**

# Do Not Look at His Appearance!

*“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart’” (1 Samuel 16:7).*

God sent Samuel to the home of Jesse to anoint one of his eight sons as the new king of Israel. Seven sons passed before Samuel, but not one was the one God wanted. Samuel asked Jesse if there were any more sons. The answer was “Yes”. The youngest was keeping sheep. When David arrived, God said to Samuel, “*This is the one*”.

## **I There Was a Warning to Samuel.**

Don't look at his “appearance”. Do not look at how handsome the person is. Samuel, who was a good man and a prophet, thought Eliab was the one to be the next king. Eliab was Jesse's first-born son. But, no, he was not to be anointed.

Samuel was not to consider height as a criteria for choosing a king. Yes, Saul was “head and shoulders” taller than the rest of the people. However, this tall king was now one who failed to follow the will of God. Goliath was a giant over nine feet tall, but he had an evil heart. Og, the king of Bashan, had a bed over 13-feet long, but he did not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Basketball coaches love tall men who have athletic ability, but God wanted something else.

## **II. The Lord God Looks at the Heart.**

The skin, shape of the face, and height tell us little about the real person. God saw in David a man after His own heart. God

saw a man who would do His will. Did David make mistakes? Did he sin? Yes, but when the sins were pointed out to him, he repented. The "heart" means the mind or inner man. The body is only a shell that we can use or abuse for some 60, 70, or maybe 80 years. It will die and turn back to dust, but the Lord looks at the heart.

### **III. Lessons We Can Learn From This Event.**

1. Make sure your heart is right with God. Let Him shape and mold your mind to be like that of Jesus Christ. Let God speak to you every day by reading His word. Take time, much time, daily to speak to the Lord in prayer. Always be present when the Saints meet together for worship. These are some of the ways we can have hearts that are right with God.
2. Let us be careful how we look at other people. Yes, some are beautiful and handsome, physically. Does that make them good in God's sight? Look at that one. He or she is tall. How high can she jump? How far can he throw a football? It makes little difference. Look at the person's mind-heart. That is what God does. Is he lost? Teach him of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is she out of duty? Then strive to bring her back to the Lord.

# O My Son Absalom – My Son, My Son Absalom

*“Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: ‘O my son Absalom — my son, my son Absalom — if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!’”* (2 Samuel 18:33, NKJV).

Surely this must be one of the saddest verses in the Bible. We see King David weeping and crying over the death of his son, Absalom.

## **I. Who Was This Son?**

He was the third son of David by his wife Maacah, daughter of Talmai, king of Geshure. His name was a beautiful name meaning, *“father is peace”*. He was a favorite son of David and possessed physical beauty and charming ways with the people. He lived in great style and drove in a chariot with fifty men to run before him (2 Samuel 15).

## **II. What Had This Son Done?**

1. He had Amnon killed by his servants. Yes, Amnon was guilty of sin by raping his half sister. Yes, David failed to punish Amnon, but the fact remains that Absalom took the law into his own hands and murdered his half brother.
2. He fled to Geshure where he remained three years. Upon his return, Absalom started a campaign to win the hearts of the people away from King David by speaking about how well he would rule, if he were made the ruler (2 Samuel 15:6b).

3. This son led a rebellion against his own father, which caused David and his people to flee from Jerusalem.

### **III. Who Killed Him?**

There was a battle between the forces of Absalom and David and scripture records his death. *“Then Joab said, ‘I cannot linger with you.’ And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom’s heart, while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree”* (2 Samuel 18:14, NKJV).

### **IV. Was David Responsible for His Death?**

1. David’s own sin with Bathsheba meant a curse on David’s house. *“The sword shall never depart from your house”* (2 Samuel 12:10).
2. Why did David not punish Amnon for his sin? Was he one who failed to discipline his own children? Did he not see the lavish lifestyle of Absalom? Perhaps he had been too busy with the “affairs of government” to teach his own sons.

Dads and Moms, let us look carefully at our own life styles. What messages are we sending our children? Will we weep as David did over his son, Absalom?

# Loved Many Foreign Women

*“King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter — Moabites, Ammonites, Sidonians and Hittites” (1 Kings 11:1).*

“I can marry anyone I want to.” “You can’t tell me who I can marry.” “Who I marry is none of your business.” Have you ever heard such statements? I am sure you have. You can even hear members of the church make such statements.

## I. Does the Bible Say Anything About Who You Should Marry?

*“They were from the nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, ‘You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.’ Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love” (1 King 11:2).*

*“A wife is bound to her husband as long as her husband lives; but if he dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, **only in the Lord**” (1 Corinthians 7:39).*

*“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad associations ruin upright morals’” (1 Corinthians 15:33).*

*“Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. What sharing is there between righteousness and lawlessness? What fellowship does light have with darkness? What common ground is there between Christ and Belial? What link is there between God’s temple and idols? Indeed we are the temple of the living God, as God has said; I will dwell in him and live among them. I will be their God and they will be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).*

The bottom line is, **do not marry those who are not God's children!** Do not be mismatched with unbelievers.

## **II. What Happened to King Solomon?**

*“As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Asthoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done”* (1 Kings 11:4-6).

The bottom line is, Solomon's heart was turned to other gods by his wives. His heart was not fully devoted to the Lord God. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

## **III. What Will Happen to You Who Marry Those People Who Do Not Follow the Lord Completely?**

1. Your heart will likely be turned to other gods, such as pleasure or materialism.
2. You will find it exceedingly difficult to be fully devoted to God. In fact 90 percent of those who marry out of the Lord become weaker and weaker spiritually.
3. Eventually your spouse will lead you to do evil. Is it not evil when the Lord and His church are not first in your life?



# He Did Evil in the Sight of the Lord

*“Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; for he served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked the Lord God to anger, according to all that his father had done” (1 Kings 22:51-53, NKJV).*

## **I. What Did Ahaziah Do? He Did Evil.**

What a sad picture when a nation has a wicked ruler. His example was not that which Israel needed. He did not heed the commandments of God. He did not worship the Creator of heaven and earth, but served Baal, the supreme god of the Canaanites. Ahaziah was a worshipper of a false god!

## **II. What Caused Ahaziah to Do Evil?**

He made the choice to do evil. He made the choice to serve Baal. However, he had some bad examples set before him. He walked in the way of his father, Ahab, and in the way of his mother, Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel introduced the worship of Baal. In Samaria, Ahab erected a temple to Baal and constructed an altar so Israel could worship that god. *“Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria” (1 Kings 16:32, NKJV).* Baal was the god worshipped by the people of Tyre, the home of Jezebel.

Jezebel and Ahab had words of blasphemy spoken against Naboth and had him stoned to death so Ahab could have Naboth's vineyard. Yes, Ahaziah learned the evil ways of his parents. This new king also learned from the example of Jeroboam who had set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel so Israel would not go to Jerusalem and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

### **III. Why Was God Angry with Ahaziah?**

The bottom line in answer to that question is, **he sinned!** God loves all men, but to those who reject Him and fail to serve Him and Him alone, there is anger. When this man fell and was injured, he sent messengers to *"inquire of BaalZebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury"* (2 Kings 1:2b, NKJV). Therefore, the message of God to this king was that he would surely die. So he died according to the word of the Lord through Elijah.

### **IV. Are There Lessons for Us from Ahaziah?**

1. All of us have choices, but the right choice is to obey the word of God (Joshua 24:15).
2. As parents, let us teach God's will and set a good example before our children (Ephesians 6:4).
3. God is angry with us today when we fail to do His will daily (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 10:25-31).

# As Moses Had Commanded

*“And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the Lord” (1 Chronicles 15:15).*

The ark of God had been in the land of the Philistines, but having been afflicted by God with tumors, they returned it to the nation of Israel. It was then placed in the house of Abinadab. Finally, David desired to bring it up to the house of God in Jerusalem. However, the people failed to show respect for God; they moved it upon a cart drawn by oxen rather than on the shoulders of the Levites as commanded by Moses. The result was the death of Uzzah as he touched the ark when the oxen stumbled.

## **I. David Became Angry.**

*“Then David was angry because the Lord’s wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah” (2 Samuel 6:8).* Had David intended disrespect by moving the Ark of the Covenant in a way unauthorized by God? Did he feel the punishment was too severe? This death and misconduct would never have happened if they had only followed God’s directions for moving the ark. Was it ignorance or a disrespect for God that this took place and David became angry?

Even today when we strive to follow exactly God’s commands in His kingdom and we try to teach others of His will and ways, some become angry. Is it because of ignorance or disrespect for God? Maybe both. When God tells us how to finance His work, why do some try to imitate what many religious organizations do? Why not just follow God’s instructions and give as we are prospered? (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

## **II. David Admitted Their Previous Failure.**

*"It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of Him about how to do it in the prescribed way"* (1 Chronicles 15:13). Whose fault was it? David's or the Levites? Both should have known and done this work according to what God had commanded through Moses. Is ignorance a sin? To those worshipping idols Paul said: *"God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now He orders all men everywhere to change their hearts"* (Acts 17:30).

God does give instructions about how He is to be worshipped and served. *"God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24). Let us encourage all people to study and learn what God wants in our worship and daily living. If we find we are wrong, let us change our hearts and do according to the prescribed ways of God. This time David and the Levites were successful, for they did bring the Ark of the Covenant into the city of David as commanded by God.

# Ezra's Grief!

*"When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice"* (Ezra 9:3,4).

## I. What Caused Ezra's Grief?

A. The law of God had been broken. The people of God had married strangers. *"They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the people around them. And the leaders and officials have led in this unfaithfulness"* (verse 2). They had broken the instructions God gave through Moses. They were to be a separate people. How can God approve of His children marrying the children of Satan? **He cannot!**

B. They had been led into detestable practices. *"After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, 'The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites'"* (Ezra 9:1). God's law had been violated, even by the rulers. Sin is contagious. Be careful that you marry only in faithfulness!

## II. How Deep Was His Grief?

A. He rent his tunic and cloak. This was a sign of the deep distress of his soul. God's honor had been violated by sin. Israel

was not faithful to the God of heaven. Are we distressed when we see God's people become unfaithful?

B. He plucked out some of his hair. The beard was a sign of manhood and honor. Ezra is so deeply hurt by the iniquities of Israel that he pulls hair from his head and beard.

C. He sat there appalled. He was stunned. Sin destroys. Sin breaks fellowship with God. Has sin become so commonplace that we cannot be appalled at murder, abortion, fornication, gossip, homosexuality, and lying? When we intermarry with the children of the devil, we take on the ways of those people.

Ezra then confessed sin and pleaded for mercy. Ezra led the people to repent of their evil ways and to return to God. Is that what we should do today? Yes! Yes! (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-2:1).

# He Feared God and Shunned Evil!

*“In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil” (Job 1:1).*

When we hear the name “*Job*”, what comes to our minds? We think of one who had plenty of trouble, pain, and sorrow. We think of a man who was patient or one who persevered. Yes, Job was all of that and more. Let us look at four great qualities of this man as revealed in verse one and then let us strive to add these qualities to our own lives.

## **I. Job Was Blameless.**

The word “blameless” means “complete, entire, not wanting in any respect”. It does not mean sinless, for Job did sin. It describes a person who makes “wrongs” “right” by turning from every evil deed and thought day by day. He was not known for his vices or glaring inconsistencies. Here was a man who was a pillar in the community and an example to all. How we ought to be like this man!

## **II. Job Was Upright.**

The idea of this word is a straight line, in contrast to a line (life) that is crooked or curved or a line that deviates. He was an honest man. People could look at Job and know that he spoke the truth and lived according to what was right. What a great man! Can people today see us as upright followers of Jesus Christ? I pray so.

### **III. Job Feared God.**

One who fears God realizes that his (her) life depends upon this great Creator, God. No, it is not blind terror. It is the knowledge that God made man and sustains him daily. When one realizes that God loves us, this should produce fear and respect. This God will do everything possible to get us to fear Him and keep His commandments. Will you fear God? Let us start that today!

### **IV. Job Shunned Evil.**

He departed from evil. This was his habit of life. He did not live like the wicked. Was he ever tempted? Yes, he was tempted. Did Satan put him to the test? Yes, he did. But Job rejected and shunned evil. Satan is still busy trying to get us to do evil. Let us resolve that we will shun evil each day.

When we look at Job, let us be like him. We should be blameless, upright, fear God, and shun evil. We can do it with the help of our Lord.



# Pleasing in Your Sight

*"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer"* (Psalm 19:14).

The Psalmist asks that God accept his words and life. He desires that God make him what he ought to be. Nothing is to be hidden from God, nor can it be.

## I. The Words of My Mouth.

How many words do you and I speak each day? Ten thousand? Twenty thousand? Are they acceptable to God? Is He pleased with my words? Do I lie? Gossip? Malign my brothers? Do my words deceive? Do they defame the God of heaven? On the positive side, have you and I used our words to encourage, comfort, and lift up the downtrodden? Have I used words to tell others of our Savior Jesus Christ? Have we used words to praise God the Redeemer?

## II. The Meditation of My Heart.

It is a blessing to have a strong, healthy body. Many have beautiful physical bodies. But what about their hearts? God does not see as man sees. He looks at the heart. *"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart'"* (1 Samuel 16:7). God saw the heart of David and chose him to be the king after Saul. He was a man after God's own heart.

When you and I take in bucket after bucket of garbage and

filth from what we read and see, what will we find in our hearts? **Garbage and filth!** Let your heart be filled with God's holy word. Take time every day to read and study that precious Word. May our hearts be filled with thanksgiving for the abundant physical blessings we enjoy. May we meditate upon the grace of God in giving His precious Son for our sins.

### **III. The Lord Is My Rock and My Redeemer.**

He is my strength. I am weak, but He is strong. *"I have strength for every situation through the One who gives me power"* (Philippians 4:13). *"I love You, O Lord, my strength"* (Psalm 18:1). We cannot succeed in life without our Rock! Let us put our trust in Him and obey His will.

He is my redeemer. He is my deliverer. I need not fear the devil when I let my Redeemer take charge of my life. You and I have sinned, but we have a great redeemer in Jesus Christ. He took our sins to the cross. Let us be obedient to Him (Hebrews 5:8,9).

# God Is Our Refuge!

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride” (Psalm 46:1-3).*

## **I. We Need Not Fear. Why?**

God is our refuge. He is our sure defense. When we abide in God, we can rest assured that we will be protected. God is our strength. His aid is dynamic. This God we serve is omnipotent. “Very present” literally means “making Himself found exceedingly”. Our God is accessible. This great God has sufficient aid for us no matter what the trouble.

Fear and faith are opposites. Yes, the earth may be changed by events, such as earthquakes. Mountains can fall into the sea and waters may roar and foam. The man of God is safe. Why? Our God is our refuge and strength. There may be hurricanes, floods, and volcanic eruptions, but this great God is One Who takes care of His people.

## **II. Our God Is with Us.**

*“The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold” (Psalm 46:7).* Yes, other nations may threaten God’s people, but when they put their trust in Him and do His will, there is no need to fear. Who can defeat the God of heaven and earth? Satan? No! No! Listen to James in chapter 4, verses 7 and 8. *“Be submissive therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”*

Children of the Lord, we know not what the morrow may bring, but we do know that we have a God who takes care of us. Let us continue to serve Him wholeheartedly. Let us lay aside every fear and anxiety and trust in our wonderful God. We can rejoice that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, and in Him we can abide safely.

*“Since we have a great high priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. We do not have a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who has been tempted in everything, though without sin. Let us therefore come confidently to the gracious throne, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for timely help”* (Hebrews 4:14-16).

# For Great Is Your Love!

*“For great is Your love, reaching to the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the skies” (Psalm 57:10).*

## **I. How Great Is the Love of God?**

The love of God is so great that it reaches to the heavens! It cannot be measured by the number of feet or miles. Yes, God Himself is love. *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in Him” (1 John 4:16, NIV).* This great love was seen in the giving of His unique Son. *“God so loved the world that He gave His unique Son, in order that everyone who believes in Him might not perish, but may have eternal life” (John 3:16).* Yes, while we were still sinners, this Christ died for us. *“On the other hand, God displayed His love toward us, because while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).*

## **II. How Great Is the Faithfulness of God?**

The faithfulness of God is so great that it reaches to the skies. Can this faithfulness be measured? How high are the skies? God is not fickle. He is faithful! You can count on Him to do right. He keeps His promises. He has never failed to keep even one of the promises He has made.

## **III. What Should Our Response Be to This Love and Faithfulness?**

Return the love to God. *“If you love me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).* *“In this we know that we love God’s children, when we love God and do His commandments. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His*

*commandments are not burdensome*" (1 John 5:2,3). Do you keep the commandments of this God of love?

Since God is faithful, we can with confidence commit our souls to Him. *"So, also, let those who are suffering according to God's will entrust their souls to a dependable Creator by doing good"* (1 Peter 4:19). We need not fear a war, sickness, or death. This faithful God will provide everything needed.

Let us be obedient to every command given by God, whose love reaches to the heavens. Let us trust Him to take care of us day by day.

# The Generation to Come

*“For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children”* (Psalm 78:5,6, NKJV).

## **I. God Gave a Law to the Children of Israel.**

This law was given by God to the Israelites through Moses. The almighty Creator made known His testimony to the children of Jacob. God wanted Israel to give “ear” to the words of His mouth. He did not want His people to be ignorant. Ignorance would result in no praise for the God of heaven. Ignorance meant people would not know the right way to live.

## **II. The People of Israel Were to Instruct Their Children.**

Note the words used by God in the verses above concerning the need for instruction. “Make known!” “Declare!” This was a solemn duty. Children were to be taught! What could be more important for children and the generations to come? Children are not born with a knowledge of God and His will. There must be instruction. Speaking the Words of God, Moses instructed: *“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”* (Deuteronomy 6:7, NKJV).

## **III. The People of God Today Must Instruct Their Children.**

*“Fathers, do not make your children angry, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). Do we want our children to go to heaven? Instruct them about God

and His way. Do we want our children to live happy, holy lives? Then train them to live according to the will of Christ.

I fear many of us are dooming our children to a miserable life and an eternity in hell. Why? How? We have failed to teach them the commandments of God. Parents, teach the message of God daily in your own home! Make sure your children are present every time the church makes instruction available in classes and lessons from the pulpit. *It is our duty!*



# Teach Us to Number Our Days Aright

*“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).*

## I. Teach Us!

Man needs a teacher. Man is the creature, not the Creator. God is the great teacher, and He sent His Son to teach us of God. The word “teach” has the idea of “reflect”. Reflect on the brevity of life. How long is life? *“The length of our days is seventy years — or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away”* (Psalm 90:10). Man must think about the brevity of life in his physical body. Will you live seventy years? Eighty? Even if you and I live to be one-hundred-years old, it is so short compared to eternity.

## II. Number Our Days Aright.

The point being made is that we need to use each day wisely. I cannot relive yesterday. I do not know if there will be a tomorrow for me. The important thing to remember is not how long we live, but how have we lived each day. Have I remembered God? Did I thank Him yesterday for His mercy and grace? Have I thanked Him for the gift of His Son Jesus Christ? Am I obedient to His will each day? Have I let my light shine in my daily activities? Today you and I are one day closer to the day of death. We are one day closer to eternity. Are you ready to die? Are you and I ready to meet our Creator and the Judge of all men?

### **III. A Heart of Wisdom.**

The wise heart hears the message of God. *“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Wise people make preparation. They hear the word of the Lord and do it. They are not like the foolish man who built on the sand. They are not like the five foolish virgins who failed to prepare for the coming of the bridegroom.

### **IV. Some Are Slow to Number Their Days. Why?**

1. We do not like the task. It breeds melancholy and frightening thoughts.
2. We rationalize that we have plenty of time to prepare.
3. We love the world too much. The rich fool could only think of the material and made no preparation for his soul.
4. Some are filled with doubts about God and His word. Some are “practical” atheists.

Let us heed the wise words of the Psalmist and number our days with a heart of wisdom by daily doing God’s will!

# Let Us Sing for Joy

*“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation” (Psalm 95:1).*

God calls people to worship Him. Does God accept any type of worship? This 95th Psalm points out the need for gratitude and humility. Our lives need to demonstrate humility, and we should desire to express our homage to the Creator.

## **I. The First Command Is to Come.**

What a sad picture we see today. Families are so busy that they have no time to heed the call of God. Come to Jesus for rest and salvation (Matthew 11:28-30). Come to the God of heaven for comfort (Matthew 5:4). Come to the Lord God for strength (Psalm 27:1).

## **II. Come and Let Us Sing!**

What a wonderful way to express our thanksgiving, praise, and homage. Sing for joy. We are saved! We enjoy the forgiveness of sin! We have the hope of heaven. How could one ever keep quiet? Sing to the Lord. Does He not deserve my singing? What a beautiful blessing to lift our voices together as a church and to give adoration to the Almighty One. *“I will proclaim Your name to my brothers. I will sing hymns of praise to you among the called-out people” (Hebrews 2:12).*

## **III. Let Us Shout Aloud to the Rock of Our Salvation.**

Isn't it strange that we can shout at a ball game, but we can hardly whisper to the Rock of our salvation? Verse two continues in Psalm 95: *“Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and*

*extol Him with music and song.*” Do you extol Him daily? Do you make sure you praise Him each Lord’s Day? *“For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods”* (verse 3).

*“Paul and Silas were praying at midnight, and singing praises to God, and the prisoners were listening to them”* (Acts 16:25). Even at midnight, after being beaten and having their feet fastened in stocks, these two Christians sang hymns. Surely we today, who are free in Christ, should sing to the Lord.

# The Keeper of Israel

Psalm 121 is a passage that shows the truth that the people of God have divine protection. *"I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth"* (verses 1,2).

A rhetorical question is asked in verse one. *"Where does my help come from?"* The answer is clear and very important. Help comes from the Lord. Who is this Lord? He is the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth. He is the omnipotent, all-powerful God. This God controls the universe, and He has all power.

This great, powerful Lord does not sleep. He is alert to the needs of His people. *"He will not let your foot slip. He Who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, He Who watches over Israel will neither slumber or sleep"* (verses 3,4). What a blessing to have a Keeper Who always keeps watch over His people.

God is not only our Keeper, but also our Shade and the One on the right hand. The Psalmist wants us to know that we have complete protection. The hot sun will not harm you. Whether by day or night, there is constant protection. *"The Lord watches over you — the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night"* (verses 5,6). He gives twenty-four-hour-a-day protection!

*"The Lord will keep you from all harm. He will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore"* (verses 7,8). Did this God protect Israel in the wilderness? Did He provide the necessary protection when Israel conquered Canaan? Yes! Yes! In times of sorrow He is

there. In times of stress and anxiety God is there. This same God is there to be our Keeper today.

*“Cast all your worry upon Him, because He is concerned about you” (1 Peter 5:7).*

*“Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and God’s peace, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).*

# A Great Gospel Meeting

You have invited an evangelist to preach a gospel meeting. You expect him to bring Biblical lessons. Now what can you do to make a gospel meeting great? Let us look at twelve characteristics of a great gospel meeting.

1. **Your Attendance!** *"I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'"* (Psalm 122:1).
2. **Your Prayers.** *"Finally, brothers pray for us, that the Lord's message may run and be honored, even as with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for the faith is not in all"* (2 Thessalonians 3:1,2).
3. **Your Enthusiasm.** *"Whatever you do, do heartily as to the Lord, and not to men"* (Colossians 3:23).
4. **Your Invitation.** *"The master replied, 'Go into the highways and hedgerows and constrain them to come, that my house may be filled'"* (Luke 14:23).
5. **Your Encouragement.** *"Let us consider one another, encouraging in love and good works"* (Hebrews 10:24).
6. **Your Interest.** *"If, therefore, you were raised up with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is sitting at God's right hand. Focus your mind on things above, not on the things of the earth"* (Colossians 3:1,2).
7. **Your Open Bible.** *"Now these were more high-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they willingly received the message, and examined the scriptures daily, to see whether or not these things were true"* (Acts 17:11).

8. **Your Friendliness.** *“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* (Proverbs 17:17).
9. **Your Singing.** *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and plucking the strings of your heart to the Lord”* (Ephesians 5:19).
10. **Your Love.** *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any merit, nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love”* (Galatians 5:6).
11. **Your Priorities.** *“But seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given you”* (Matthew 6:33).
12. **Your Attitude.** *“Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 2:5).

You can have a great gospel meeting by following these characteristics.



# **Divorce! Drugs! Murders! Even at Schools!**

## **WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO AMERICA?**

*"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach (disgrace) to any people"* (Proverbs 14:34, NKJV).

Are we a nation that no longer is shocked at our sins? What does it take to wake us up? When half of our marriages end in divorce, something is very wrong. God never planned it that way. *"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband"* (Romans 7:2, NKJV). Children suffer emotionally, financially, and spiritually. God's plan is for every child to have a godly father and mother.

Why do people divorce? No commitment? Selfishness? Lack of true love? Greener grass? Families are in big trouble.

Why do people turn to drugs? Lack of discipline? Instant pleasure rather than what is good and right? Lack of teaching by word and example? There is no doubt that drugs make people slaves. Why do people drink alcohol and use tobacco? Why the needles for hard drugs? Can men not see there is shame and reproach? The devil has blinded this great nation.

Can I send my child to school and feel he is safe? Will some "madman" shoot him? Will a fellow student bring a gun to kill or maim my grandchild? Who would have ever thought that such could happen in this blessed land?

The answer is really quite simple. We have removed God

from our homes, schools, and daily lives. “The Bible is an antiquated book written for people long, long ago.” Not so. The Bible is the word of God. Every scripture is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Man cannot live without this word (Matthew 4:4). When our rulers, teachers, parents, and businesses put God and the Bible back into our lives, we will enjoy righteousness. Righteousness exalts a nation. Righteousness cannot exist without God. We learn about righteousness, God, and His Son Jesus through the Bible (John 20:30,31).

I challenge you, dear reader, to take a stand for *righteousness*. Do this for yourself, your family, and your city, state, and nation. Resolve that you will become acquainted with the God who made the world and made man in His image (Genesis Chapters 1-2). Open your Bible, read, and study it daily. When all of us do this, righteousness will flourish and this nation will be exalted.

# Do Not Wear Yourself Out!

*“Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle”* (Proverbs 23:4,5).

## I. A Warning Is Given!

1. *Do not wear yourself out and do not overwork to be rich!* Two facts to ponder here.

1. Most people will never become rich. Jesus said: *“You always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish, you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me”* (Mark 14:7). Remember what Paul wrote: *“But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world and can take nothing out; and since we have food and clothes, let us be content with these”* (1 Timothy 6:6-8). The chances of us becoming millionaires are very small.

2. The cost of trying to become rich is too great. Many a person has ruined his health with so much time and energy being used to gain more and more. By the time some accumulate wealth, they are too tired, weak, or old to enjoy it. What a pity to use one's energy and time for that which will be destroyed.

## II. Have Wisdom.

How is this done? *Show restraint! Cease! Stop!* Why? Those riches will be gone. They will sprout wings and fly away like an eagle. What a sad situation. Rich one day and poor the next. His soul will never be satisfied with money, houses, cars, and wealth.

Listen to Jesus Christ. *“Do not hoard up for yourselves treasure on the earth, where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. Instead store up treasures in heaven, where neither moths nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:19-21).

Listen to Paul. *“Charge the rich in this world neither to be proud, nor to put their hope in uncertain riches, but in God who richly supplies to us all things for enjoyment; that they work that which is good; that they be rich in kind deeds, willing to give and to share, laying up in store for themselves an excellent foundation for the future, that they may lay hold on the true life”* (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Where is your treasure? In heaven or on earth? Let us strive to be rich in good deeds as we serve Christ.

# Buy the Truth

*"Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23, NKJV).*

We have just completed a season when a lot of "buying" was done, including food, presents, and travel expenses. December marks a month when many merchants do 25 percent of their business in that one month. Of course, stores sell items daily, and we do buying daily. Is it wrong to buy and sell? No, not at all. Of all the nations on the earth, we are blessed with a multiplicity of goods to buy. Now let us look at God's word and consider what we **must** buy.

## **I. We Are Told to Buy the Truth.**

Yes, we need to buy eggs, milk, bread, vegetables, fruit, and all kinds of food for the physical body. We need to buy clothes, insurance, house payments, or rent. All these items are important, but let us not forget to buy the most important item. ***Buy truth!***

Truth is the thing of highest value. Spare no pains, cost, or sacrifice. It is worth more than any physical item or earthly pleasure. I cannot please God without the truth. I cannot go to heaven without truth.

## **II. Truth Is the Word of God.**

Jesus said to God His Father, *"Set them apart in the truth; your teaching (word) is truth"* (John 17:17). Jesus claimed to be truth in John 14:6. *"I am the way and the truth and the life: no one comes to the Father except through Me."* The doctrines or teaching of men are worthless. They produce vain worship. *"They worship Me in vain, teaching for doctrines the command-*

ment of men” (Matthew 15:9). To “buy” the word of God will cost us something. Time and effort must be expended to obtain truth.

### **III. This Truth Must Be Loved and Obeyed.**

Men who love not the truth will perish. Those who love not the Lord and His teaching will not obey His word, and thus they are condemned. *“The coming of the lawless one is according to Satan’s working, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with every deceit of wrong doing in those who are perishing, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. On account of this, God sends to them a working of error, that they should believe a lie, in order that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but enjoyed wrong doing”*(2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Do you know the truth? Have you taken time to buy, study, and learn the truth? I challenge you to make sure you read, study, and meditate on the truth daily. Make sure you are present for every period of worship and Bible study so you can learn more truth. Then obey that truth. Have you been baptized into Christ? Have you repented of every sin? ***Buy the truth! Do not sell it!*** You will be richly blessed!

# Ask for the Ancient Paths!

*"This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the cross roads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.' But you said, 'we will not walk in it'"* (Jeremiah 6:16).

It was a sad picture in words painted by the prophet Jeremiah. The people of Judah refused to walk in the old paths given by God through Moses. God made His appeal to His people through His spokesman, Jeremiah. ***"Ask for the ancient paths."*** Make the right choice. ***"Choose My way"*** was the message of God. However, the people refused to walk in the ancient paths of God. Men today need to ask for that good way which is God's way. Men, like Judah of old, refuse to walk in the path of God. Look at some ways man has changed God's ancient way.

1. Man is teaching that there are many roads or paths to heaven. Jesus said He was the way, the only way to the Father (John 14:6).
2. Man teaches that salvation can be obtained without baptism. God's word teaches baptism is necessary to take away sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
3. Man teaches that one church is as good as another. God tells us of only one church and that church is the body of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22,23).
4. Man teaches that we can worship God anyway we wish, but God tells us in His Word that true worshippers will worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23,24).
5. Man teaches that you do not have to take the Lord's Supper

each Sunday, but God's Word is plain that this is not the case (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

6. Man teaches that once you are saved, you are always saved, but the Scripture of God teaches that a Christian can fall from the grace of God and be lost (Galatians 5:4; Revelation 2:4,5).
7. Man teaches that Jesus is coming again to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem, but God's Word teaches that all must serve him to go to heaven and that the earth will be destroyed (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:10-13).
8. Man teaches that the preachers are to seek and teach the lost, but God teaches that all of us should seek the lost (Acts 8:4).

Isn't it time we all ask for that ancient path? Then when we have found it, let us follow it to heaven. ***Start today!***



# God Delights in These!

*"Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord"* (Jeremiah 9:23,24, NKJV).

## **I. Man Has a False Standard of Glory.**

Men tend to glory in their accomplishments. Does the wisdom of man bring security or salvation? The great scholar may receive fame, but the wisdom of man is foolishness before God. *"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"* (1 Corinthians 1:20, NKJV).

Who can run the fastest for one hundred meters? Who can run the greatest distance in one hour? Who can jump the highest or leap the greatest distance? Who can win the "slam dunk" competition? These are the great men in the eyes of the world. The Lord God through Jeremiah tells us to glory not in this might or strength. How quickly can it be taken by disease, accident, or death.

The rich man must not boast or glory in his riches. Jesus reminds us of the temporary nature of riches in (Matthew 6). *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your*

*treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (verses 19-21, NKJV). How quickly these items of wealth can be taken from us by storms, earthquakes, inflation, robbery, or death.

## **II. God Gives Us the True Standard of Glory.**

We must know God. Who is He? Only when we truly know God can we trust Him. When we truly know God, we will have great grounds for putting our confidence in Him. He is a God of loving-kindness. He not only sees our needs, but He supplies the needs of man, physically and spiritually. He is the one who supplies food, clothing, shelter, and, yes, life itself. He is the One who saw man in sin and sent His precious Son to die for us.

He is a God of justice. We fear not the judgment of God, for He is a God Who is always fair. *"Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality'"* (Acts 10:34, NKJV). Yes, man can glory that this God is One Who exercises righteousness on earth. What a contrast in man's wickedness and God's righteousness!

When we see (understand or know) this God, then we can have true glory. When we see this great God, we will submit to Him in complete obedience. Have you surrendered to Jesus in obeying the gospel? Today is the right day to do that.

# Despised the Law of the Lord

*"Thus says the Lord: 'For three transgressions of Judah and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments. Their lies led them astray, lies after which their fathers walked'" (Amos 2:4, NKJV).*

Amos set forth woes against Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. Now the prophet brings the judgment of God upon Judah. God is not guilty of partiality. All will be judged, even His own people. What was the sin of Judah?

## **I. They Despised the Law of the Lord.**

What does this mean? They had rejected His will! Why? What caused them to despise the law of the Lord? Did they respect God? Can a person reject the law of God and still respect the One who gave it? These people had a heart problem. They did not love God with all their heart, soul, and mind. What a tragic picture! What a terrible situation! When a man rejects or despises the law of God, he has already rejected God.

## **II. They Did Not Keep His Commandments.**

Their hearts were not right. The despising of the law led them to disobedience. Action is the expression of the sentiments of the heart. What was in their hearts? Lies! Their lies had led them astray. By the word "lies", we are to understand this refers to idols. They denied God and His authority and placed something else in their hearts. Every idol is a lie in embodied form. When that takes place, man does not keep God's commands.

## **III. They Would Be Punished By God.**

*"But I will send fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem"* (Amos 2:5, NKJV). The promise of judgment was made by God through Amos, and God did keep His promise. Judah and Jerusalem were destroyed.

Dear reader, does this have a message for us today? Do we despise the law of God today? Do we reject His law? Do we keep His commandments? When we reject or despise His law, we show that we reject and despise the God who gave His commandments. I often wonder why we cannot find *time every day* to read, study, and meditate upon His word? If we neglect His word, are we not neglecting God? When I cannot find time to be present for Bible study with fellow Saints and find it too inconvenient to return on Sunday and Wednesday nights, I have a heart problem. Someone or something else has first place in my heart. Will God judge us? Is He a partial God? *"It is time for judgment to begin from God's house; and if first from us, what will be the end of those who do not obey God's gospel? If the righteous is saved with difficulty, what will become of the godless and the sinner?"* (1 Peter 4:17,18).

# He Shall Save His People!

*“She shall bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).*

Joseph was engaged to Mary, but before they came together, a discovery was made. Mary was pregnant! Since Joseph was an honorable man, he decided to break the engagement quietly to save embarrassment for Mary. However, an angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph. *“Do not be afraid to marry Mary your fiancée, because her conception is by the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20).* Then came the words of the verse quoted above.

## **I. Mary Would Bear a Son Who Would Be Called Jesus.**

The name to be given was the name Jesus. This word “Jesus” means “God is salvation” or “Savior”. What a wonderful and apt name for the Son of God. This word is the Greek form of the word “Joshua”. He would also be called “Immanuel”. *“Behold! The virgin shall be pregnant, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name ‘Immanuel,’ meaning ‘God is with us’” (Matthew 1:23).* When we look at Scripture, we can see clearly that this Son was and is the Savior, and He is Immanuel, God with us.

## **II. This Jesus Would Save His People from Their Sins.**

Man’s greatest problem would now have a solution. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1,2). Sin defiles us and makes us slaves of Satan (John 8:32-34; Romans 6:16-18). Sin brings death and destruction (Romans 6:23). This Jesus was born to save men. He performed many great miracles and taught wonderful lessons, but He came to save men from sin. Praise the God of heaven and earth!

This gift of heaven was God's answer to sin. He paid a debt He did not owe, for He was sinless. We owed a debt we could not pay, but the Savior died that we might be freed from sin. When Christ Jesus died, He took our sins to the cross. *"He made Him who had not known sin to be a sin offering in our behalf, that by Him we might become God's righteousness"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

### **III. We Can Enjoy His Salvation When We Submit to His Will.**

*"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, and after He was made complete, He became the cause of eternal salvation to all who are obeying Him"* (Hebrews 5:8,9). Without the death of Christ on the cross, we would have no hope of eternal salvation. However, this salvation is only for those who are **obeying Him**. Does this mean man can "earn" his salvation? Absolutely not! Yet we must do what He commands to receive this gift (Mark 16:15,16; Luke 13:5; Mathew 10:32,33; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

Has He saved you?

# Saving People!

*“She shall bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).*

These were the words spoken by the Lord’s angel to Joseph concerning Mary. Yes, she, a virgin, would bear a son. His name would be “Jesus”, which means the one who saves. Is the statement true that Jesus saves people from sin?

## **I. Look at the Testimony of Jesus Himself.**

*“Indeed the Son of man has come to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10).*

*“God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17).*

## **II. Look at the Testimony of Peter.**

*“God exalted Him, the Prince and Savior, to His right hand, to give a change of heart to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).*

*“You know that you were redeemed, not by perishable things (as silver or gold), from your worthless manner of life inherited from your forefathers, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of an unblemished and spotless lamb” (1 Peter 1:18,19).*

## **III. Look at the Testimony of Paul.**

*“On the other hand, God displayed His love toward us, because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).*

*“This saying is reliable, and deserving of full acceptance:*

*that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst” (1 Timothy 1:15).*

#### **IV. Look at the Testimony of the Hebrew Author.**

*“He is therefore able fully to save those who are coming to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).*

#### **V. Look at the Testimony of John.**

*“We have seen and we testify that the Father has sent the Son as the world’s Savior” (1 John 4:14).*

The evidence is clear. Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins. He is the only Savior. We can obtain that salvation by obedience to His will. *“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, and after He was made complete He became the cause of eternal salvation to all who are obeying Him” (Hebrews 5:8,9).*



## Search Carefully for the Child!

*“Herod then secretly sent for the wise men, and found out precisely what time the star appeared, and sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search carefully for the child. When you find Him, let me know, that I also may go and worship Him’”* (Matthew 2:7,8).

Herod gave good instructions to the wise men, but he had no intention of worshipping the child who was God’s Son. When the wise men did not return and tell Herod where the child was, Herod gave orders that all of the boys in Bethlehem and that region up to two years of age should be destroyed. He was afraid this new king of the Jews would take away his throne. He failed in his effort to kill Jesus, but others suffered death and grief because of his wicked deed.

The instructions to the wise men were good. ***Search carefully for the child!*** The wise men did search for Jesus and they found him. The chief priests and scribes gave the wise men from the east the correct information from the prophet Micah. *“You, Bethlehem-Judah, are by no means least among Judah’s rulers, for from you a ruler shall come who shall be a shepherd for my people Israel”* (Matthew 2:6). They continued to follow the star until it stood over the place where the child was. These men had been following the star for some time, and they finally found their objective. They found Jesus, the King of the Jews!

Note now what these men did:

1. They fell down and worshipped Him. *“And entered the house, and saw the child with Mary His mother, and fell*

*down, and worshipped Him*” (Matthew 2:11a). Time, money, and energy had been spent in their search. Now they had been successful. No time was wasted once they have found this King. They fell down and worshiped. They recognized this child as one far greater than they. He was a person who deserved worship.

2. They presented this child with gifts. *“They opened their packages, and presented gifts to Him, gold and frankincense and myrrh”* (Matthew 2:11b).

We can learn some good lessons from these wise men from the east.

1. They were willing to spend large sums to travel great distances to worship this new king.
2. They spent weeks, perhaps months, on their journey.
3. They did not give up until they found Him.
4. They had help from Scripture to locate Him.
5. They did give him worship.
6. They gave gifts to Him.

Let us be wise men today by carefully searching for Jesus the King. Let the Scriptures be our guide. It is worth the time, effort, and money. When we find Him, let us worship Him and give Him gifts. Thus we can be blessed also.

# Consumed with Anger

*“Then Herod saw that he had been deceived by the wise men, and he was consumed with anger (thumos). He gave orders to destroy all the boys in Bethlehem and all the region around it up to two years old, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men” (Matthew 2:16).*

Herod, the king, was filled with rage because he was ignored by the wise men. This jealous, ruthless ruler, who had numerous rivals killed, including his wife and three sons, proceeded to kill all the children two years of age and under. God’s Son escaped the slaughter by fleeing with His parents to Egypt.

## **I. A Look at the Word “thumos”.**

This word is found eighteen times in the New Testament. It is translated “rage”, “exceedingly angry”, and “furious”. Another Greek word translated anger or angry is “orge”. Vine states, “thumos” indicates a more agitated condition of the feelings, an outburst of wrath from inward indignation, while “orge” suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view to taking revenge.”

## **II. Thumos and the Orge of God.**

*“But those who are selfishly ambitious, who disobey the truth and obey wrong doing, He will repay with wrath (thumos) and fury (orge), distress and calamity: indeed to everyone who is doing evil, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 2:8,9).*

Does that passage get your attention? God has wrath and fury. He will repay those who are “*selfishly ambitious*”. His anger will be toward those who disobey the truth, which is God’s

word. In fact, all who do evil will see and feel the wrath of God. Why do we encourage people to read, study, and obey the truth? One reason is to escape the *thumos* and *orge* of God.

### **III. There Is an Escape.**

*“He will repay each one according to his works. Those who seek glory and honor and imperishability by being dependable in good works, He will repay with eternal life” (Romans 2:6,7).*

God wants all men to be saved, but to those who reject and disobey the truth, there will be fury and anger. Isn't it time for you to obey the gospel of Christ today? *“It is time for judgment to begin from God's house; and if first from us, what will be the end of those who do not obey God's gospel?” (1 Peter 4:17).*

# Show Proof that You Are Changed!

*“But when he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming for his immersion, he exclaimed, ‘Brood of vipers, who warned you to escape from the coming wrath? Show proof that you have changed your hearts’” (Matthew 3:7,8).*

## I. What Was the Message Preached by John?

John preached **Repentance — A Change of the Heart**. *“In those days John the immerser came preaching in the Judean desert, saying, ‘Change your hearts (repent), for heaven’s kingdom is drawing near’” (Matthew 3:1,2).*

It may not have been a popular message to some, but that was his message. Your hearts must be changed! You must change your way of living. He started not with the life style but with the heart.

## II. Was His Message Effective?

It was very effective. *“Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the area around the Jordan were going out to him, and were being immersed (baptized) by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:5,6).* What attracted the people to do this? Was it a beautiful building that brought out the people? **No!** Was it the beautiful clothing worn by John? **No!** John had come to prepare the way for the Lord. To do that, he had to preach repentance so the people would be ready for the Messiah. Be assured of this truth. **People who do not repent are unprepared people!** A decision must be made to leave sin and follow the way of the Lord.

### **III. Why Did John Refuse to Baptize the Pharisees and Saducees?**

They showed no sign of repentance. Their hearts had not been changed. John called them a “*brood of vipers*”. You poisonous snakes! Who had warned them to flee from the wrath of God? John suggests that it was fear and not repentance that caused them to come to John the baptizer. Did John baptize them? There is no indication that he baptized anyone before that person had a change of heart (repented).

### **IV Does the New Covenant Teach Repentance?**

*“Peter said to them, ‘Change our hearts (repent), and let each one of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’”* (Acts 2:38).

*“Change your hearts (repent) therefore, and turn, so that your sins may be wiped away”* (Acts 3:19).

*“God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now He orders all men everywhere to change their hearts (repent)”* (Acts 17:30).

Will you not repent (change your heart) and be baptized into Christ today?

# I Am Well Pleased

*“Behold! A voice out of heaven was saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased’”* (Matthew 3:17).

## I. Whose Voice Spoke These Words?

It was God the Creator of heaven and earth. The voice who spoke was the One who loved man enough to send His only Son to die a cruel death on the cross. The voice came from the God Who is the giver of every good and perfect gift. The voice was from the One who will judge all men some day.

## II. Who Was His Son?

His name was Jesus of Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem of Judah, but He was the One who was there even at the beginning. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1:1). This Word took on human flesh. *“The word became flesh and lived among us, and we saw His splendor as of the unique One from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14).

## III. Why Was God Well Pleased with His Son?

This Son willingly came to the earth in the form of a man so that men and women might be saved. This Son came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). This Son was willing to be tempted in all points, as we are tempted, yet He sinned not (Hebrews 4:15). He was willing to do the will of His Father. *“He went forward a little, fell on His face, and prayed, ‘My Father. If it is possible, let this cup pass away. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will’”* (Matthew 26:39).

#### **IV. What Can This Mean to Us?**

1. As God's children, we need to be busy seeking and saving the lost by teaching His gospel.
2. As God's children, we need to reject the temptations to sin and live holy, godly lives each day of the week.
3. We need to submit our wills to the will of our Father.

Is the Father able to say of us today, "***I am well pleased with you!***"?



# How Can a Man Live?

*"The tempter came and challenged Him, 'If you are God's Son, command these rocks to become bread.' Jesus' reply was, 'It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from God's mouth'" (Matthew 4:3,4).*

## **The Challenge.**

Are you God's Son? Forty days before, God had said: *"This is my beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17b). Did God speak the truth? If you are truly the Son of God, why are you hungry? *"After He fasted forty days and nights He was hungry"* (Matthew 4:2). The tempter wanted to fulfill two aims.

1. Jesus could satisfy His hunger by turning the rocks into bread.
2. By turning the rocks into bread, He could prove His Sonship.

## **The Answer.**

*"Man shall not live by bread alone!"* Where did Jesus learn that truth? He turned back to the book of Deuteronomy and quoted chapter eight and verse three. Was it wrong to eat bread? No, for, in fact, the Israelites had eaten manna (bread) for forty years in the wilderness. Did that give them life? Physical life, yes. True life, spiritual life, no! Those Israelites died in the wilderness even though they ate the physical bread from heaven.

Man *does* live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Did Jesus Christ have life? Yes, He did! Physical life? Yes,

but it was terminated at the age of 33 on a cross. Did Jesus have spiritual life? Most assuredly He did! He had this life by “eating”, hearing the word of God. He knew the word of God. He was obedient in every way to the message of God. Thus, He was alive. They would kill His fleshly body, but He still lived on.

Note the word *every*. Which part of God’s word is not important? What words has God given that are without meaning? The Bible has 66 books. Which book is of no importance? Not one is unimportant. That is why you and I should be reading and studying the precious word of God daily. That is why we need to hear every message from God. His message is found in the book called the Bible. How can we be obedient to the word if we have not heard, read, and understood?

Are you a daily Bible reader? Do you take time each day to study that word? Do you make sure that every time a message will be given at the church building that you are there? Maybe you have no life, because you have not the word, the word of God.

## Not By Bread Alone

*“Jesus’ reply was, ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’ (Matthew 4:4).*

Jesus was baptized by John and then He was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). In the desert, Jesus fasted for forty days, and the Bible reads: *“He was hungry”* (verse 2). *“Then the tempter came and challenged Him, ‘If you are God’s Son, command these rocks to become bread’”* (verse 3). In verse four the Lord quoted Moses in Deuteronomy 8:3. Yes, the Israelites were fed with manna in the wilderness for forty years. The people of God were kept alive by the physical food, manna. However, this did not mean that they had spiritual life. Read carefully the passage in Deuteronomy. *“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know, **that you may know, that man does not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God**”* (Deuteronomy 8:3, NKJV).

Yes, one can be dead spiritually but alive physically. This is what Paul wrote: *“You were dead in your trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1). *“Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together in Christ (you are saved by grace)”* (Ephesians 2:5). *“You, who were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He hath made alive by Him, forgiving us all trespasses”* (Colossians 2:13).

Now note again what Jesus said. How does one live? Man must have the **word of God**. You may be well fed with plenty of food on the table but be undernourished, or even starving to death

spiritually. Why? There is little or no intake of the word of God. In fact, Jesus said that man lives by **every word of God!** In a land where Bibles are so plentiful, one finds it hard to believe that there are dead and undernourished men and women, boys and girls. Yes, my brothers, right in the church we have members who are starving spiritually. If we knew of people starving physically, there would be a great outcry in this land, but hardly a whisper is heard when we see people dead and dying spiritually.

The elders of the church want every member to be fed the word of God. That is why lessons are delivered on Sunday morning and Sunday night. The word of God is presented again on Wednesday night. Every effort is made to encourage people to read, study, and meditate on the word of God daily. I often wonder, what is the problem? Are people (members) so ill that they cannot see their true condition? Dear reader, look at yourself. The Bible is just filled with wonderful spiritual food. Why do you have little or no time to listen to God? Has the world such a hold on us that we cannot find four hours each week out of 168 to meet for worship and a time to hear the word of the Lord?

It is time to change.

# Fishers of Men!

*“Jesus invited them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men’”* (Matthew 4:19).

## I. Who Gave the Invitation?

His name was Jesus. He was the Messiah, God’s anointed One. He was and is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the One who lived a perfect life with no sin. He is the One who died on the cross at Calvary for our sins. He is the One who has all power both in heaven and on earth.

## II. Who Did Jesus Invite?

He invited Simon Peter and Andrew, his brother, plus James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Who were these men? They were fishermen. They had jobs to do each day or night. They made a living catching and selling fish. Honest work? Yes! Hard work? Yes!

## III. What Was the Invitation?

*Come After Me!* Follow Me! Do as I do. I will show you the way as your teacher. You will learn how to live in a righteous way when you follow Jesus. You will learn how to worship and serve God, the Father, when you follow Jesus. You will learn to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength when you follow Jesus. Will it be an easy life? No! No! Will you have to give up some pleasures and luxuries? Yes! Yes! The way is narrow and difficult, but it leads to life eternal.

## IV. What Did Jesus Promise to Make of Them?

*Fishers of Men!* They knew how to catch fish, which was

good, but Jesus wanted them to catch something greater. He wanted them to catch men for the Lord. Would it involve time to learn some new things? Yes! Would it involve changes in their way of living? Yes! Jesus promised to *make* them fishers of men. He could change them if they would follow him. Did Jesus change them? Did they become fishers of men? They did. Look at Pentecost day in Acts chapter 2. On that day, Peter, who was called by the Lord, preached. Were any “fish” caught that day?

*“Peter said to them, ‘Change your hearts (repent), and let each one of you be immersed (baptized) in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (verse 38).*

*“The ones who gladly accepted his message were immersed, and about three thousand souls were added that day” (verse 41).*

Jesus still invites us today to follow Him. He can still make us fishers of men if we will open our hearts and lives to Him and His word. Are you a fisher of men?

The Lord can make us fishers of men.

# Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom

*“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and infirmity among the people” (Matthew 4:23).*

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. *“Indeed the Son of man has come to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10).* Some grumbled when they saw him go into the house of Zacchaeus, the wealthy tax collector. *“All who saw what happened were grumbling, saying, ‘He has gone to be a guest of a sinner!’” (Luke 19:7).* Did the grumblers stop Jesus in His work? Not at all. He knew that He, as the great Physician, must heal those sick in sin.

*“Then Levi made a great feast in his home for Jesus, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were there, sitting with them. The Pharisees and their scribes murmured against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus replied to them, ‘Healthy people do not need a physician, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous to a change of heart, but sinners’” (Luke 5:29-32).*

Yes, Jesus spent His time teaching, preaching, and healing people. People were sick physically, and He had the power to heal every disease and infirmity. News about Jesus and His work spread even to Syria. He taught the word of God in their synagogues. What a wonderful blessing to hear Him expound the precious words of God.

He also preached the gospel (good news) of the kingdom. The kingdom of God was near. Jesus had come to establish His

kingdom. This kingdom was not an earthly kingdom in competition with the kingdoms of this world. "*Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but My kingdom is not of this world'*" (John 18:36). Yes, this was good news to all mankind, for the kingdom of the Lord would be open to Jew and Gentile.

This was the message Peter preached on Pentecost. The very person they had killed had been raised from the dead and was sitting on David's throne in heaven at God's right hand. God had made him both Lord (ruler) and Christ (God's Anointed One). Those people were stabbed in their hearts and asked what they needed to do. Peter told them to repent and be baptized and that very day 3,000 were baptized. That was good news (Acts 2:32-41).

All men need to hear the words of God. Let us invite all to come and hear how Jesus can save men from sin. Let us invite men to hear the ***gospel of the kingdom!***



# Hear Him!

*“While he was speaking, behold! A radiant cloud overshadowed them, and behold! A voice from the cloud was saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him’”* (Matthew 17:5).

Jesus was on a high mountain with Peter, James, and John when He was changed in form. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus. Peter then made the following statement: *“Lord it is good for us to be here. If You wish, I will build three tents, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”* (Matthew 17:4) In the eyes of Peter these three seemed to be equal. One tent was to be built for each one. Was Moses a great person? Yes, he was a great servant of God. Was Elijah a great prophet? He certainly was.

Then came the voice of God the Father with three important statements.

1. ***This is My beloved Son!*** He is the Son of God! These words were also given by God at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:17.
2. God said He was well pleased with Jesus. Why? He was busy doing the will of the Father.
3. Then there is the clear command by God. ***Hear Him!***

Moses was a great law giver, and Elijah spoke the word of God to the people of his day. Now someone greater was there. ***Listen to Him!*** Yes, there was a point in time when God's people should have listened to Moses and then Elijah, but now there

is a new spokesman for the Father. Who is it? *Jesus Christ!* (Hebrews 1:1,2).

Who do you and I “hear” today? Satan? Remember, he is a liar and a deceiver (John 8:44). Those who would have us follow the commands and traditions of men? If we do, our worship will be in vain (Matthew 15:9). Should we listen to the world? The world and its desires will pass away, but the one who does the will of God will live forever (1 John 2:15-17). Who are you listening to today? I plead with you to listen only to Jesus Christ, God’s beloved Son. When you hear Him and do His will, you can enter into heaven’s kingdom (Matthew 7:21).

## Enter Into the Joy of the Lord!

*“His Lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord’”* (Matthew 25:23, NKJV).

What beautiful, wonderful words! *“Enter into the joy of your Lord.”* These are the same words spoken by the Lord in verse 21 to the first servant with whom he had entrusted five talents. Yes, there is the opportunity and invitation to participate in the joy of the Lord. This is a joy which will be shared with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a joy that will last through eternity. Can words fully describe this joy of the Lord? Just imagine the place where: *“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away”* (Revelation 21:4, NKJV).

However, there are some other wonderful words spoken in verse 23. *“Well done!”* Christianity or following Christ is a religion in which something is done. Both the five-talent and two-talent men had been busy. *“Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also”* (verses 16,17, NKJV). Look at the verbs: *“went and traded”* *“made”*, *“gained”*. Yes, if we want to enter the *“joy of the Lord”*, we must do something. The Lord expects us to use what we have. He expects things to be done.

Now look at the adjectives used to describe the first two servants. *“Good and faithful.”* The Lord had seen their character

by their actions. Each one is called "good". They were upright men. They were virtuous. They were faithful. Look at the contrast drawn by Jesus when you see the man who had received the one talent. He is called "*wicked and lazy*". Not "*good and faithful*" but "*wicked and lazy*". He had hidden his talent in the ground. This servant was not only "*wicked and lazy*", but he was also **unprofitable**. Faithful servants use what they have for the Lord. Lazy servants are unfaithful. They fail to use the talent or talents given to them.

Dear reader, don't you want to hear the welcome words "***well done!***" and "***enter into the joy of the Lord!***"? Yes, obey the gospel today, for today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). You who have fallen, turn back today and ask for His forgiveness (2 Corinthians 6:17,18; 1 John 1:7-2:1). Failure to do so brings doom. "*And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (verse 30).

# Choke the Message!

*“Others are those who are sown among the thorns. These are the ones who hear the message, and the cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things coming in choke the message, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:18,19).*

Jesus taught many wonderful messages by the use of parables. A parable has been defined as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” This parable of the “sower” or the “soils” has great lessons for mankind today. The seed, the Word of God, that fell by the wayside, produced no fruit for the birds, or Satan quickly took the message away lest one should believe and be saved (Luke 8:12). The seed or message of God on the rocky ground did not produce fruit. Why? They did receive the word with joy, but because they had no root in themselves they lasted only a little while. Distress and persecution caused them to stumble. No fruit was brought forth.

One of the saddest pictures given by Jesus is of that message sown among thorns. What are these “thorns” that choke the message?

## **1. The Cares of the World!**

Worries about this age will kill the word of God in our lives. The heart of a person who has allowed this thorn to grow will find the true message has been choked.

## **2. The Deceitfulness of Riches!**

Wealth or the promise of wealth deceives man by promising a satisfaction which it does not bring. Indeed, it cannot bring true

satisfaction. Jesus said: “*Children, how difficult it is for those who trust in riches to enter God’s kingdom*” (Mark 10:24b).

### **3. The Desires for Other Things!**

Yes, the lusts or desires for other things can fill the heart and crowd out the message. These lusts enter our hearts like thorny sprouts; they shoot up and fill up all the available space in the heart.

What is the result? ***The message is choked and the ground bears no fruit!*** What a sad picture drawn by the Lord Jesus Christ. Were there people like that in the first century? Yes, of course there were. What about today? Yes, some, too many, are allowing thorns to grow. These thorns cause us to find no time to read, study, and meditate upon the message of God daily. They keep us away from Bible class on Sunday morning and Wednesday nights. Yes, the cares of the world have even kept people from surrounding the table of the Lord to remember our Lord’s suffering each Lord’s Day.

Brethren, let us root out these thorns today and bear fruit for the Lord!

## There Was a Great Calm

*"He arose, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace be still!' The wind quieted and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39).*

Jesus had spent a busy day preaching and teaching. He entered a boat to cross to the other shore. However, a strong windstorm arose. Waves were pouring into the boat so that it was filling with water. Where was Jesus? *"He was in the rear, sleeping with His head on a cushion" (Mark 4:38a).*

What was the situation with the disciples of the Lord? Were they concerned? Some of them were seasoned sailors and had seen many a storm on this very sea, since they were fishermen. However, look at their feelings in the storm. Mark tells us that they thought they were perishing. Death was close at hand. What was their solution to this death-threatening storm? They went to the Son of God who was sleeping. *"Teacher, are you not concerned that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38b).*

Did the Teacher heed their cries? Yes! He rebuked the wind and it quieted. He spoke to the sea and it became calm. This One Who created heaven and earth could still the wind and quiet the sea.

Then the Teacher asked two questions.

1. Why are you afraid?
2. Do you not have faith?

Good questions to pose to these followers of Christ. Why were they afraid? Had they lost their faith? We may wonder today at this event and these penetrating questions. Yet, we may be like them.

When storms of life come our way, what do we do? Today there are “storms” of illness, death, and financial setbacks. We may think we will “perish”. What do we do? Do we turn to our Lord? Can He help? Does He care? Do we have faith? Are we afraid? Consider the following Scriptures.

*“Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and God’s peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).*

*“Do not be greedy, but be content with what you have, for He Himself has promised, ‘I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you’ Therefore, we may boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid! What will a man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5,6).*



# Tell Them!

*"Jesus did not permit him, but said, 'Go to your house to your people and tell them how many things the Lord has done for you, and that He had mercy on you'" (Mark 5:19).*

The man who was possessed by an unclean spirit was cleansed by Jesus Christ. He was clothed and sane. This man begged Jesus to let him go with Him. Jesus refused the request but gave the words quoted above.

## **I. Jesus Told Him Where to Go.**

*"Go to your house to your people."* Would they know him? Yes! They knew that this man had been living among the tombs and in the mountains. He cried out continually and cut himself with stones. No one had been able to bind him with chains. Would they be able to see the difference? That reminds us of Cornelius when he knew a preacher was coming to his house. This man had invited his relatives and close friends to hear all that God had commanded (Acts 10:24,33). Does Jesus still want us to go today to our relatives and friends?

## **II. Jesus Gave This Man a Message.**

*"Tell them how many things the Lord has done for you, and that He had mercy on you."*

What a wonderful message! The unclean spirits were gone. These were the spirits that left the man called Legion. They entered a herd of 2,000 pigs, and the pigs dashed down the slope into the sea and were drowned (Mark 5:13). When the people came to see this man, they were afraid. He who had been demon-possessed was sitting, clothed, and sane. The people could see the

change. There was an “open door” to tell all that Jesus had done for him. He could happily tell of the great mercy of the Lord. Can we not do the same today? Yes! Tell men of God’s mercy! Tell of how He has saved us from all past sin. Tell them of how Jesus is with us day and night.

### **III. The Man Obeyed the Lord.**

*“He went away and proclaimed in the Decapolis what great things Jesus had done, and all marveled”* (Mark 5:20). The Lord loves obedience. *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”* (John 14:15). *“If you do the things that I command, you are my friends”* (John 15:14). Are we obedient to Jesus today? Listen again to His great commission. *“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature’”* (Mark 16:15). Those who are friends of the Lord will do this. Those who love the Lord will tell of His saving gospel. Those who truly appreciate all that the Lord has done for them will tell others. The starting place is at “home” with our relatives and friends.

Bring someone with you on Sunday.

# Make a Profit!

*"What will a man profit by gaining the whole world and losing his soul? What will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mark 8:36,37).

What is the bottom line? What will it cost me? Can I make a profit? These are questions we hear in the business world. Are they not questions we need to ask concerning our spiritual welfare? Are you making a profit? What has your life as a Christian cost you? Is it worth it?

## **I. Being a Disciple of Jesus Has a Cost.**

*"Jesus summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me'"* (Mark 8:34). The worst enemy we battle is self. Jesus is clear. You and I must deny self. I must avoid ease and self-indulgence. That is the opposite message we hear in the advertisements. Buy this! Eat this! Wear this! Take this vacation! Why? Because we live in a selfish age.

Next, Jesus tells us to take up the cross. Be willing to endure reproach and dishonor for Christ. Criminals had to carry their own crosses to the place of death. The world and its pleasures and lusts must be crucified. The cross is not a small cross on a chain hung around the neck.

## **II. There Is No True Profit in Gaining the Entire World and Losing Your Soul.**

Yes, one can make a lot of money, acquire vast properties, and accumulate many possessions. Thus he seems to make a profit, but it is only physical. Look at the spiritual loss. Can all that

physical wealth buy a ticket to live in heaven? You and I must remember that such a *profit* is only for a brief time. Death comes to all. Then what about all that physical wealth that you worked so hard to obtain? Will you use it in heaven or hell? There is no way you can enjoy it now and certainly not in the hereafter.

The wealth of the world does not bring satisfaction. Look around at wealthy people and those who are striving to get another dollar. Are they really satisfied and happy? Now look at the spiritual loss. Did these possessions really lead us closer to God? My observation is that many times our money, boats, RV'S, airplanes, and cars only lead us away from God. What will you give in exchange for your soul? What about your children's souls?

Isn't it time for a good look at making a true profit?

# Beware! Be on the Alert!

*"Beware! Be on the alert! For you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:33).*

## **Why Watch? Why Be on the Alert?**

Because no one knows the day or hour when the Lord will come again. Is the Lord going to return? Yes, He will.

1. That was the promise of the messengers of God.

*"As they were staring into heaven, while he was going away, behold! Two men in white clothing stood by them, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why are you standing and peering into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you saw Him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:10,11).*

2. This was the promise of Jesus Himself.

*"Do not let your heart be disturbed: you believe in God; believe in me also. There are many rooms in my Father's house. If this were not true, I would have told you, because I go to make a place ready for you, and if I go and make a place ready for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1-3).*

3. This was the promise of the Apostle Paul.

*"The Lord Himself, with a shouted command, at the archangel's voice and God's trumpet, will come down from heaven, and the dead ones in Christ will arise first. Then we who are living, the ones who remain, will be*

*caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord!"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

4. This was the promise of the Hebrew author.

*"And as it is appointed for men once to die, and judgment after this, so Christ also, once offered to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time without sin, to those awaiting Him for salvation"* (Hebrews 9:27,28).

### **The Point We Need to Remember Is that We Must Be Ready!**

How few are truly prepared for His return. Many have never obeyed the gospel of Christ. Are they prepared? *"He will punish those who do not know God, and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer eternal ruin, and exclusion from the Lord's face, and from the splendor of His might"* (2 Thessalonians 1:8,9).

Many have turned their backs on Christ. Are they ready? *"If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, by the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled and overcome, their last things are worse than the first"* (1 Peter 2:20).

***Jesus will come again!*** Are you ready for His return? If not, let us help you today.

# Saved By:

## Hearing and Believing the Message

*“Those beside the path are ones who heard; then the devil comes and takes the message from their hearts, in order that they may not believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12).*

## Believing and Being Immersed

*“He who believes and is immersed shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).*

## The Son of God

*“God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17).*

## Grace Through Faith

*“By grace you have been saved through faith, but this is not of yourselves! It is God’s gift” (Ephesians 2:8).*

## Hope

*“Now we are saved by hope; but hope that is not seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees?” (Romans 8:24).*

## The Gospel

*“Brothers, I make known to you the gospel which I proclaimed to you, which also you accepted, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold fast the certain message which I proclaimed to you, unless you have believed in vain. I gave to you — as the most important things — what I had also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the*

*scriptures; that He was buried; and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).*

### **Entering the Door Who Is Christ**

*“I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be safe, and go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9).*

### **Baptism**

*“There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21, NKJV).*

### **Enduring to the End**

*“You will be hated by all men for My name’s sake. He who endures to the end, this one will be saved” (Matthew 10:22).*

Are you saved?



# The Cares and Riches and Pleasures of Life

*“That which fell among the thorns are the ones who heard, but as they went their way, the cares and riches and pleasures of life choked them, and they bore no fruit to maturity” (Luke 8:14).*

Jesus told the parable of the sower who sowed his seed. Some seed fell by the side of the path where it was trampled on and eaten by the birds. Other seed, which is the Word of God, fell on a rock, but when it grew up, it withered, because it had no moisture. *“Other seed fell on good ground, where it grew and produced fruit a hundredfold” (Luke 8:8).*

## **I. The Seed Has Power to Produce.**

The precious word of God is powerful. This word produces fruit by turning men from sin and turning them to Jesus Christ. Men are born again by the imperishable, living word of God. *“You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring message of God” (1 Peter 1:12).* We thank God for that precious message, His word. However, not all soil produces fruit.

## **II. Some Soil Does Not Produce Fruit to Maturity.**

Worldly concerns keep many today from producing fruit. Soil, hearts of men and women, that is not cleansed of roots and thorns will not produce a crop. Does man have to make a living? Yes, he does, but Jesus reminds us that when we seek first His kingdom and righteousness, all our needs will be met (Matthew 6:33). Is it wrong to be rich? No, but how easy it is for riches to

turn our eyes away from the Lord and be turned toward money and possessions.

*“Those wanting to be rich fall into temptation and a trap, and into many senseless and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and ruin. A root of all evils is the love of money, after which some have striven, and have wandered away from the faith, and have stabbed themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Timothy 6:9,10).

Does life have pleasures? Yes, it does. There are good and bad pleasures. Moses made a good choice in the long ago. *“By faith, when Moses had grown up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, having chosen to suffer ill-treatment with God’s people, rather than to enjoy the temporary pleasure of sin”* (Hebrews 11:24,25).

Look at your own life. I will look at mine. Are you and I bearing fruit for the Lord? If we are not, is it because we have allowed the cares, riches, and pleasures to **choke** our lives? Why do we not find the time to meet with the church each time the meeting house doors are opened for worship? We get so busy with the cares of this life that we have no time left to teach others of Christ and to help those in need.

Brethren, let us get rid of the **thorns** which are keeping us from bearing fruit.

## Do Not Be Afraid!

*"I assure you My friends, do not be afraid of those who can kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will show you Whom you have to fear: fear Him Who — after killing — has power to cast into hell. I assure you, fear Him" (Luke 12:4,5).*

Did Jesus contradict Himself? In verse four He said: *"Do not be afraid"*. In verse five He said: *"Fear Him"*. What is the meaning? Do not fear those who can only kill the body. They might be murderers or terrorists, but they cannot destroy your soul. There is One we are to fear. It is God. It is only God Who wields the final authority. Ecclesiastes 12:13 reminds us of this truth. *"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man."*

The words *"do not be afraid"* are found again in verses 6 and 7 of Luke 12. *"Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet God has not forgotten one of them. The hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows."*

What is the point Jesus is making here? God will take care of you. He who knows when a sparrow falls and knows the number of hairs on your head also knows you and will care for you. What a wonderful thought. God knows me! God will care for me!

Yes, thousands of innocent people were killed on September 11, 2001. Did God take note? He did! Does He care? He does. Does He care about His children in the USA? He does. Will He

provide what is needed? He has in the past and will continue to do so. Listen to the testimony of Scripture.

*“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them” (Psalm 34:7).*

*“Every Word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him” (Proverbs 30:5).*

*“No temptation has taken hold of you, except what is common to humanity; and God is trustworthy, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will provide an escape, so that you can endure” (1 Corinthians 10:13).*

*“But He told me, ‘My grace is enough for you, because strength reaches completion in weakness.’ I will therefore boast in my weaknesses most gladly, so that Christ’s strength will remain upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).*

# But God Said to Him, "Fool!"

*"But God said to him, 'Fool, this night your soul is required of you, and whose shall be the things you have prepared?'"* (Luke 12:20).

## **I. The Man Was a Good Farmer.**

His field had yielded an abundant harvest. He had prepared the soil, planted good seed, and cultivated the field. His crops were so large that he did not have barns large enough to store this abundant crop.

## **II. The Man Made Plans to Store His Crops.**

He decided he would pull down his present barns. They just were not big enough to hold this bumper harvest. After that work, he would build larger barns. In these bigger barns, he would be able to store all his grain and goods.

## **III. The Man Made Plans for His Future.**

*"And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many good things laid up for years to come. Take it easy, eat, drink, and rejoice'"* (verse 19). He had wonderful retirement plans. It would be a time of ease. He could eat, drink, and rejoice without a care in the world. He had "covered all bases".

## **IV. But God Counted Him as a Fool.**

Why? He was a good farmer. His crops were abundant. He did not leave any grain to rot. His new barns would be adequate. He had wonderful retirement plans. Or did he? Why did God call him a fool? He had made no provision for his soul. He had failed

to lay up treasure in heaven. *“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, but is not rich toward God”* (verse 21).

He was a wise man in the eyes of the world. He was a prudent man with his grain and goods, according to the standards of the world. But he was a fool. His soul entered eternity unprepared. He had no retirement years. All those goods went to someone else. He went before God at death with nothing. He was unprepared. How many people on September 11, 2001 died being known as good, hard-working people? How many had excellent plans for the “retirement years”? How many were prepared to die and meet God in the judgment? I shudder to think how many church members make wonderful preparations for retirement years but are unprepared to meet God. Then there are those who have never obeyed the gospel. They, too, are fools in the sight of God.

## He Praised God!

*"Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and praised God with a loud voice, and fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. He was a Samaritan"* (Luke 17:15,16).

What a beautiful account of a grateful man! He was one of ten lepers. Leprosy was and still is a horrible disease. I have seen people without hands and feet because of this disease. These diseased men had cried out to Jesus for help. *"Jesus, Master, show us mercy!"* (verse 13). But look at this Samaritan. All ten were told to show themselves to the priests, which was a part of the law for cleansed lepers. As they were going, they were cleansed of their leprosy. What did this one man do?

First, He turned back. He turned back to *his healer*, Jesus Christ. He knew that this one had cleansed him of his disease. In the second place, he praised God with a loud voice. He just had to give glory, adoration, and praise to the person who had healed him. He not only gave Him praise, but he did it with a loud voice. All could hear him. He was not ashamed to announce to all of his healing. In the third place, he fell on his face at the feet of Jesus, giving Him thanks. Was he sincere? Yes! Yes! Was he grateful? Yes! Yes! He let his thankfulness be made known to the Son of God.

Then Jesus asked this Samaritan three questions. *"Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was none found to return to give God the glory, except this foreigner?"* (verses 17,18). Do we know the answers to these questions? Yes, ten were cleansed. Perhaps they did show themselves to the priests, but why did they

not return to thank the healer? Yes, only one came back to give God the glory. Then Jesus spoke some beautiful words to this man. "*Arise and go. Your faith has saved you*" (verse 19). What does that say about the nine who did not return? Did they lack faith as well as gratitude?

Take a look at ourselves. When in sin, we cry out for salvation. We are told what to do by *our healer*. When we are healed of sin, what do we do? Are we like this Samaritan who returned to praise and thank the Lord? Does our faith cause us to serve and obey the healer? Perhaps some of us are so busy that we do not find the time to meet with others to praise and thank the Lord. Maybe the bottom line is that we lack faith.

Let us imitate this Samaritan who was healed!



## Remember Me!

*“Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom’” (Luke 23:42).*

I often take time to remember when I was a little boy on the farm near Lake View, Kansas. I enjoy thinking back to the times when I met with the church that assembled at 9th & Tennessee in Lawrence, Kansas. I remember my parents always made sure we were present each time the “church doors” were open. I have pleasant memories of my daddy always praying before each meal.

I like to remember the time I was in college and especially when I met Donna Taylor from Blue Jacket, Oklahoma. I remember our wedding, our life together as wife and husband. I recall the days that each of our children were born physically and then born again. Donna and I made the promise that we would take time each day to pray and read God’s word together. Then we promised each other that we would each day teach our children about God, Jesus Christ, and His will for man. Those are good memories as we watched our children grow physically and spiritually.

I remember the time in 2002 when the doctor said that Donna would not live much longer. Remembering those days of her illness still bring tears to my eyes. I remember my children coming to see her and especially Nancy caring for her mother. I remember the prayers offered by family and friends. I remember the day in June 2002 when Donna left us to be with her Lord. Even as I write these words, I have to keep wiping away the tears. How blessed I was to have a good wife for over 48 years.

I also remember the Sunday in December of 1944 when I made the decision to obey my Lord by being baptized into Christ. David Fultz was the preacher holding the gospel meeting. I was buried in the waters of baptism and raised to walk in a new life. I remember the years God allowed us to work in Africa preaching, teaching, and training others to spread the message of God.

Yes, I have lots of memories, but I also like to think ahead. How should I spend the rest of my time in this physical body? Is it time for me to retire? Should I return to Africa? Should I move to another place to preach? I do not know all the answers to these questions, but I, like the criminal on the cross, want my Lord Jesus to remember me. I am so weak, but I gain strength through Christ. I do so many foolish things when I leave Jesus out of my planning. I plan to spend an eternity with Him in heaven. I want to be with all the saints in that place where I will not shed one tear.

What do you remember as you read these words? If you and I expect Jesus to remember us, we ought to remember Him daily by serving Him completely. Why not start today? (Matthew 28:19,20; Matthew 16:26). *"Then He explained to them all the things in the scriptures about Himself, beginning with Moses and all the prophets"* (Luke 24:27).

## **I. There Was a Great Teacher.**

This teacher was Jesus Christ. He knew his subject and he desired to pass on the information. The followers of Christ had failed to see that the Christ must suffer and die. However, he would be raised from the dead. *"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter His glory?"* (Luke 24:26). Yes, the master teacher spent day after day teaching and explaining the Scriptures.

## **II. The Students Were Two Men.**

They were on their way to a village named Emmaus. Jesus joined them, but their eyes were held back so they did not recognize Jesus. They were hoping for the *“redemption of Israel”* but knew that Jesus had been crucified. There was disappointment, and yet they heard a strange story that day. Some women reported that the body was not found in the tomb, and some reported a vision of angels who said He was alive. Jesus had some tough words for these two men. *“You foolish men and slow in heart to believe everything which the prophets spoke!”* (Luke 24:25).

## **III. The Subject Matter Was the Best.**

The Teacher took the scriptures and explained to them what they said about Himself. He started with Moses and used the message of all the prophets. Could one have a better subject matter? Most people have a Bible, but so few know its contents. Some know the contents but are confused. They need an explanation. Scripture from Genesis to Revelation points in one direction. It points men to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

## **IV. At the End, Their Eyes Were Opened.**

*“While He sat at table, He took bread and gave thanks and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. Then He disappeared”* (verses 30,31). At last they saw Jesus for Who He was. Jesus had opened the Scriptures to them and at the end they saw “the light”. Their hearts had been burning.

Jesus still is the teacher. He wants all men to be His students. He wants us all to know the Scriptures, for they speak clearly of Him. The sad part is that so few take time to look at Scripture. The pace of life is too fast when we have no time for Bible study

Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. We have filled our lives with temporary things rather than the Scripture, which is God's Word. Are your eyes and hearts still closed?

Read and study His Word daily!

# Behold! The Lamb of God!

*“The next day, he saw Jesus coming to him, and he said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the world’s sin’”* (John 1:29).

John was a great man. He preached effectively. Multitudes came to hear him preach and to be baptized. He came to prepare the way for the arrival of the Messiah. What a wonderful example for us today. What did he do according to the verse above?

## **I. He Pointed People to Jesus Christ.**

Look! Behold! He was not interested in building a big following for himself. He knew he must decrease, but Christ would increase. He was not jealous when crowds followed the Lord. He was given a task to prepare and point people to Jesus. Is that not our task today? We are so focused on pointing our children and others to a better education. Get a good job. Make plenty of money. John’s interest was in making sure people were sent in the right direction. Let us today *point people to Jesus Christ*.

## **II. He Spoke the Truth about Jesus Christ.**

He is God’s Lamb. He can take away the sin of the world. The word “lamb” denoted sacrifice. Blood was to be shed. This blood was precious. This Lamb was a lamb who belonged to God the Father. Why had God sent this Lamb? Why was the Lamb here in the world? This Lamb came to remove the sin of the world. His pure blood had the power to remove every sin. It is still powerful and pure.

*“You know that you were redeemed, not by perishable things (as silver or gold) from your worthless manner of life inherited*

*from your forefathers, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of an unblemished and spotless lamb” (1 Peter 1:18,19).*

Let us thank God for His precious Lamb. Let us be obedient to Him today. *“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, and after He was made complete, He became the cause of eternal salvation to all who are obeying Him” (Hebrews 5:8,9).*

Let us tell others of this wonderful Lamb of God! Have you done that today?

# He Brought Him to Jesus

*"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John speaking and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon, the son of Jonah; you shall be called Cephas (which means Peter)'" (John 1:40-42).*

I like the attitude and work of Andrew. No, I do not know if he was an eloquent speaker. I do not know if he had memorized all the Scriptures. I don't know if he was rich or had a great education. I know not if he was tall, short, thin, or fat. However, what these verses reveal is important.

## **I. He Was a Follower of John the Baptizer.**

*"The next day, John again was standing with two of his disciples, and when he saw Jesus walking, he said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus" (John 1:35-37). John was the one who prepared the way for Jesus. John was the one who preached repentance and that the kingdom of God was near. This same John pointed his disciples to Jesus by announcing that He was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (verse 29).*

## **II. He Took Time to Be with Jesus.**

*"Jesus turned and saw that they were following, and He asked, 'What do you want?' They answered, 'Rabbi' (which means teacher), 'Where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.' They went and saw where he was staying, and they continued with Him that day; it was about four in*

*the afternoon*” (John 1:38,39). Andrew was a fisherman. Did he not have work to do? Did Jesus do some teaching that day? No doubt He did. Andrew took the time to hear the words from the Lamb of God. He knew what was important.

### **III. He Found His Brother Peter and Brought Him to Jesus.**

What caused him to do this good work? First, he was convinced that he had found the Messiah, the Christ. He knew this was God’s anointed One who had been spoken of by the prophets for hundreds of years. In the second place, he wanted his brother Simon Peter to meet this Messiah. Thus he brought him to Jesus. How many others did Andrew bring to the Lord during his lifetime? I do not know, but I am convinced that Peter was not the last. If you are convinced that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Christ, then bring others to Him. Be another “Andrew”. You will be blessed.



# The Food that Perishes!

*“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for that which abides into eternal life, which the Son of man, whom God the Father has certified, will give you” (John 6:27).*

Jesus had just fed 5,000 men with five barley loaves and two little fish. There was enough food that all were satisfied. In fact when the fragments were gathered, they filled twelve baskets! Jesus then crossed over the sea to Capernaum. When the crowd realized Jesus had crossed the sea, they also followed Him to the other side. When they found Jesus they asked Him a question. *“Rabbi, when did you come here?”* (verse 25b).

*“Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I assure you that you are seeking Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled’”* (verse 26).

## I. Physical Food Perishes.

Yes, man is commanded to work. Yes, food has been given by God for our benefit. Food nourishes the physical body. However, man has more than a physical body, which must be fed day by day. ***Do not work only for this food!*** God did not place us on this earth to work only for food. The word “work” as used here means to strive for it.

## II. Spiritual Food Brings Eternal Life.

The spiritual food of God has the purpose of leading man to live forever. This is the food we must strive or labor for. Yes, we might live in these physical bodies for 60, 70, or 80 years. Physical food is necessary to sustain our bodies. Jesus wants us to strive for the ***food*** that will bring life eternal. Jesus came bring-

ing the message of God. He was certified by God that He was the One sent by God the Father. He healed people. He raised people from the dead. He fed 5,000 men with a few loaves and two fish.

### **III. Too Many Are Starving to Death Spiritually.**

*"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God's mouth"* (Matthew 4:4).

*"Blessed are they who hear and keep God's Word"* (Luke 11:28).

*"Jesus said to the Jews who believed in Him, 'If you abide in my Word, then you are truly My disciples'"* (John 8:31).

Brethren, let us labor, strive, work for this spiritual food. Read it, study it, and meditate on it daily. Then put it into practice. Not the hearers will be justified but those who do what His Word teaches.

# Love One Another!

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this will all know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34,35, NKJV).*

Christ was soon to leave His disciples. How would His work be carried on? Who would do His work? How were those left behind to treat one another?

## **I. Christ Commands that We Love One Another.**

Yes, there are differences in social standings and economic positions. Disciples of Christ have different tastes and habits, but the command stands. *We are to love one another!* No, we may not approve of the actions of a brother in the Lord, but the command is still to love that brother. The world does not know this love. The world has suspicion, malice, and envy, but in the body of Christ there must be love.

## **II. The Model for Our Love Is the Love Christ Displayed.**

He loved us enough to come to this world as a man. He came as a servant to serve man. He came to die for the sins of man. Why? *He loved us!* We were not lovable, but He still loved us. He was patient, constant, and forgiving. When we, as His followers, have that same love for one another, we too will be patient, constant, and forgiving. Christ loved us, and He expects us to love one another.

## **III. Loving One Another Is the Proof that We Are Disciples of Christ.**

Fellow Christians can see and experience this mutual love.

Loving one another is another proof to the world that we belong to Christ. How many thousands have been turned away from becoming followers of Jesus when they saw fighting and division? Failure to love one another is a barrier to evangelism. Following Christ is a blessing for all. Loving one another is a foretaste of the sweet place called heaven. Brethren, ***let us love one another!***

## He Will Guide You into All Truth

*"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; For He will not speak on His own authority but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come"* (John 16:13, NKJV).

In John chapter 14, Jesus told His apostles that he was leaving them. He was going to return to His Father. He would prepare a place for them. The apostles were troubled to know that their teacher for some three years would be leaving them. Thomas said to Jesus, *"Lord, we do not know where you are going, and how can we know the way?"* (John 14:5, NKJV). In verse 6 Jesus gave this wonderful answer, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Jesus makes a promise to His apostles that He would send a **helper**. He would send the Holy Spirit to these men. What would this Being do? In the verse quoted above, Jesus said He, **the Spirit of Truth**, would guide them into all the **truth**. What is truth? In Jesus' prayer to His Father, He defines truth as **God's word**. *"Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth"* (John 17:17, NKJV). Don't worry. This Spirit of Truth will guide you into **all the truth**. He will guide you into **all the word of God!**

In John 14:26 Jesus tells the apostles of two other great things the Spirit would do for the apostles. *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to*

*you.*” Look carefully at these great promises. Yes, Jesus, their teacher, was leaving them. However, the Holy Spirit would be sent to these men. He would do three things:

1. Teach the apostles all things.
2. Cause them to remember all that Jesus had taught them.
3. Guide them into all truth.

Did Jesus keep His promises? Yes, He did. The Holy Spirit did come upon the apostles as recorded in Acts chapter 2. They were taught all things. They were able to remember all that Jesus had spoken to them, and they were guided into all truth, which is the word of God. Today we can open the New Testament and read the words of the apostles and writings of other inspired men. We can be confident that we have ***all the truth***. That being true, let us take time daily to read these precious words. Let us put them into practice. Then let us tell others of what Jesus taught. It is vital, for Jesus said: *“You shall know the truth, and the Truth will make you free”* (John 8:32, NKJV).

# Not of This World!

*“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; But now My kingdom is not from here’”* (John 18:36, NKJV).

Jesus was on trial before Pilate who asked Him two questions.

1. Are You the King of the Jews? (verse 33).
2. What have you done? (verse 35).

## **I. Was Jesus the King of the Jews?**

Yes, He was and is a king. According to verse 37, Jesus accepted the title of “King”. *“For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.”* It is true that most of the people do not accept Him as **king**, for most people serve Satan. However, He still is. Not all Jews accepted Him by obeying Him, and the same can be said of the Gentiles.

## **II. Is His Kingdom Like Those of This World?**

No! Not at all. His kingdom is different in origin. It came from God. It is different in power. He, the King, has all authority and power. His kingdom is different in character.

His kingdom was a gift from God. His kingdom came as a result of the action of God. If His kingdom were of this world, then His servants would fight. His Kingdom does not depend on violence or force. He invites people to come into His kingdom but never forces people to serve Him. Man has a choice. Man can serve Satan, who lies and kills, or man can serve this King Who tells the truth and gives life.

### III. How Does One Enter This Kingdom?

*“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5, NKJV). His kingdom is made up of those who have come out of spiritual darkness and have come into the light of life and truth. His kingdom is entered by a spiritual birth. The Holy Spirit works through the saving message of the gospel. The hearer is led to faith and obedience by being baptized into Christ. Then that one enters the kingdom. The Holy Spirit works through the message of the gospel in conversion. When one enters the rule of Christ, His kingdom, then he lives a different life. Many today call Jesus *king*, but few ever submit to His rulership.

I plead with you, dear readers, to enter His kingdom today. Then let us allow Him to rule our lives daily.



# The Blood of Jesus Christ

*“However, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with his spear, and blood and water immediately came out” (John 19:34).*

What does Scripture tell us about the importance of the blood of Jesus Christ?

## **I. We Are Accounted Righteous by the Blood of Christ.**

*“Therefore, since we have now been accounted righteous by His blood, even more will we be delivered through Him from wrath” (Romans 5:9).*

## **II. We Have Peace by the Blood of Christ.**

*“And by Him to reconcile all things — whether earthly or heavenly — to Himself, having made peace by the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:20).*

## **III. We Can Be Purified by the Blood of Christ.**

*“How much more will the blood of Christ (who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God) purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14).*

## **IV. We Are Redeemed by the Blood of Christ.**

*“You know that you were redeemed, not by perishable things (as silver or gold), from your worthless manner of life inherited from your forefathers, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of an unblemished and spotless lamb” (1 Peter 1:18,19).*

## **V. We Are Continually Cleansed by the Blood of Christ.**

*“But if we are walking in the light, as He is in the light, we continue in fellowship with one another; and the blood of Jesus His Son continues to cleanse us from every sin” (1 John 1:7).*

#### **VI. We Are Released from Our Sins by the Blood of Christ.**

*“And from Jesus Christ, the trustworthy witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him Who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood” (Revelation 1:5).*

#### **VII. We Can Overcome the Evil One by the Blood of Christ.**

*“Because of the blood of the Lamb, and the message of their testimony, they conquered him, and did not cherish their life in the face of death” (Revelation 12:11).*

In short, Jesus is the Savior of all who obey Him.

*“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, and after He was made complete, He became the cause of eternal salvation to all who are obeying Him” (Hebrews 5:8,9).*

## That You May Believe!

*“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name”* (John 20:30,31, NKJV).

The word “*signs*” refers to the miraculous events that pointed to the divinity of Jesus Christ. Jesus did many signs in the presence of His disciples, but John did not record all of these miracles in his book. However, he did record enough signs that when studied and examined would produce belief and faith. *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17).

Were these miracles done in a “corner”? Was there any doubt that people who were crippled could walk again? Could those who had been blind see again? Were the lepers cleansed? **Yes!** The evidence was there. John, being an eyewitness, wanted his readers to have faith. His gospel was written to bring people to faith and to strengthen the faith of those who already believed in Him.

Genuine faith is far more than mere intellectual assent that Jesus is the Messiah. Genuine saving faith is faith that acts. It is faith that obeys. It is a faith that has complete trust to do the Master’s will.

The result of this faith is wonderful. ***Life in the name of Jesus Christ!*** Is this physical life? No, it is spiritual life. It is life eternal. The obedient trusting faith means we live in Christ

now. This faith means we can live with Him forever in heaven. What a blessing! What a joy! What a hope!

Do you lack faith? Is your faith weak? Turn to the word. Read and study. There is ample evidence. Submit your will to the will of Christ. Repent of every sin (Acts 3:19). Confess His name before men (Matthew 10:32,33). Be baptized into Christ today (Acts 22:16). We stand ready to help you.

# From Stabbed in Their Hearts to Gladness!

*"They heard this, and were stabbed in their heart, and cried out to Peter and the other apostles, 'Men, brothers, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37).*

## **I. When Did This Stabbing Take Place?**

On the first Pentecost after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. They had been baptized with the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus (Acts 1:5). They were able to speak in other languages, which they had not studied. A multitude came, and Peter preached to these Jews who had come from every nation under heaven.

## **II. What Was the Message Preached?**

*"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene has been attested by God through miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him among you, as you yourselves know. The One Who was delivered up by God's decision and foreknowledge, you have nailed to the cross and killed by the hands of lawless men. God brought the pains of His death to an end, and raised Him up, because death could not hold Him" (Acts 2:22-24).*

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know certainly that God has made this Jesus Whom you crucified both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).*

In summary, Peter proclaimed the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. He proclaimed that He was now both Lord (ruler) and Christ (God's Anointed One).

### **III. Did the People Believe His Message?**

Yes, they did! How do we know they believed his message?

1. They were stabbed in their heart. They were convinced that they were in sin!
2. Their question to Peter and the other apostles shows not only their faith, but also their desire to be forgiven. **“What should we do?”**

### **IV. What Was the Answer to Their Question?**

*“Peter said to them, change your hearts, and let each one of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).*

Two commands were given.

1. Repent (change your hearts).
2. Be baptized (be immersed).

They would then receive two blessings.

1. They would have their sins forgiven.
2. They would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

### **V. What Brought About Gladness?**

*“And the ones who gladly accepted his message were immersed, and about three thousand souls were added in that day” (Acts 2:41).* Did they repent? Yes! Were they baptized? Yes! Did they receive remission of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit? Yes! You and I can move from sin to forgiveness and gladness by doing what the Lord commands.

# Gladly Accepted His Message

*“Then he testified and exhorted them with many other words, saying, ‘Be saved from this crooked generation.’ The ones who gladly received his message were immersed, and about three thousand souls were added on that day” (Acts 2:40,41).*

That day of Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord was a great day. There are many ways to study this chapter in Acts, but in this lesson let us note the different reactions of the people on that wonderful day.

## **I. Some on that Day Were Bewildered, Amazed, and Wondering.**

Why? *“This sound was heard, and the multitude came together, and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were amazed and were wondering, saying, ‘Behold! Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?’” (Acts 2:7,8).* When the Holy Spirit filled those twelve apostles, they could speak in other languages. No wonder the people were bewildered. Did that save the people? No, but this did cause them to listen to God’s message through Peter.

## **II. Some on that Day Were Greatly Perplexed.**

*“They were all amazed and greatly perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’” (Acts 2:12).* Here were twelve men from Galilee who had never studied these languages of the world, but on that day they could not only speak the languages but even do it with the right dialect (accent). Verse 6 uses the Greek word *Dialektos*.

### **III. Some on that Day Sneered.**

*“But others were sneering, saying, ‘They are full of new wine’”* (Acts 2:13).

Peter pointed out that they were not drunk as some imagined, but this was the fulfillment of what the prophet Joel had spoken in the long ago. Many today sneer at the message of God, but that can be removed by a careful study of the law, prophets, and the New Testament.

### **IV. Some on that Day Were Stabbed in Their Hearts.**

*“They heard this, and were stabbed in their heart, and cried out to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Men, brothers, what should we do?’”* (Acts 2:37).

They now knew from Peter’s lesson that they had crucified the Messiah, God’s Son. No wonder they were stabbed or pierced in their heart. This caused them to ask a wonderful question. **“What should we do?”** Peter gave those who now believed the correct answer. *“Change your hearts, and let each one of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38).

### **V. Some on that Day Gladly Accepted His Message and Were Immersed.**

*“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day”* (Acts 2:41). Do you believe Jesus is the Christ? Have you repented and been immersed into Christ? Do it today!



# I Give You What I Have

*“But Peter said, ‘I do not have silver and gold, but I give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk’” (Acts 3:6).*

## **I. The Lame Man Asked for Gifts.**

He was placed daily at the gate called Beautiful at the temple to ask for alms or gifts. No doubt this was a good place to ask for help as those entering the temple would be more apt to be concerned for the helpless. The man was over 40 years of age and had been there begging for thousands of days. When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked them for a gift.

## **II. Peter Did Not Have Money, But What He Had He Was Willing to Give.**

What did Peter have that he was willing to give? **Healing** in the name of Jesus Christ! *“And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and instantly his feet and ankles were strengthened”* (verse 7). Was he really healed? Were his ankles and feet strong? *“He jumped and stood and started walking and leaping and praising God”* (verse 8). Yes, he got more than silver and gold. He received a blessing he never thought possible. What else did he receive? The words of salvation in Jesus Christ. When Peter preached on Solomon’s porch, the healed man heard the message. When Peter and John were on trial, he was there and heard the message that the Jews had killed Jesus, but that God had raised Him from the dead. He heard that only in the name of Jesus is there salvation (Acts 4:10-12).

### III. Children of God Should Give What They Have.

Money? Yes, the Scripture teaches that we are to help the poor, hungry, and naked. However, money is sometimes easier to give than time. Do you and I have time to speak to the discouraged? Do we have or take the time to pray for the weak? Do we have the time to speak to the lost? God gives each of us 24 hours every day. How do we use those hours? Peter took time to heal a lame man. Do we have time to help the sinner who is lame in sin? Of course, that means a change in our present schedules. That means we must think of others and how we can give to them what we have. Perhaps the problem is *we must make the time* to give what we have.

*“God is not unfair to forget your work and the love you have shown because of His name, as you served the saints, and whom you continue to serve” (Hebrews 6:10).*

# Greatly Annoyed

*“While they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people, and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:1,2).*

## **I. Satan Wanted to Destroy God’s People, the Church.**

Will that happen? Jesus promised that the gates of Hades would not overpower His church, His called-out people (Matthew 16:18). Paul left this warning concerning persecution: *“All those wanting to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”* (2 Timothy 3:12). Peter also spoke of sufferings that would come upon the followers of Christ. *“Beloved, do not be astonished at the fiery ordeal among you, which has come to test you, as though a strange thing were happening to you; but as you share in Christ’s sufferings, rejoice, that at the disclosure of His splendor, you may overflow in joy”* (1 Peter 4:12,13).

## **II. The Jewish Leaders Did Not Like Their Teachings.**

Why?

1. They were teaching the people. That was a privilege they wanted for themselves. The apostles had also accused them of killing Jesus, the Messiah (Acts 3:14,15).
2. They were proclaiming Jesus. The Romans had killed Him not long before. To the Jews, He was a trouble maker.
3. They were preaching the resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. Now the apostles not only preached that Christ had been raised from the dead, but that through Him, all could be raised to life.

### **III. This Led to the Imprisonment and a Warning to the Apostles.**

*“They laid hands on them, and put them in prison until the next day, for it was already evening” (Acts 4:3). “They called them, and commanded that under no condition were they to teach or to speak in Jesus’ name” (Acts 4:18).*

### **IV. The Apostles Did Not Obey the Jewish Leaders.**

*“You decide if it is right before God to listen to you rather than God, for we can only speak what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19,20). What a wonderful answer! Look at their action after their release: “The apostles continued to testify with great power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was on all of them” (Acts 4:33).*

Let us be like these men. Yes, some messages may **annoy** some who have other beliefs. However, we must remember that the word of God must be proclaimed (2 Timothy 4:2). ***Proclaim the Message!***

# Gays Win Marriage Rights

“A divided Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled Tuesday that same-sex couples have a right to civil marriages under the nation’s oldest state constitution declaring that ‘the right to marry means little if it does not include the right to marry the person of one’s choice.’” Quote from *The Topeka Capital-Journal* dated November 19, 2003.

Who would have thought twenty years ago that such a ruling would take place? Do judges have the right to change what God created? What else will be legalized in the name of “choice”? Readers, it is later than you think. We must choose the way of pleasing God. This is what the apostles did when told they must not preach or teach in the name of Jesus. *“Peter and the apostles replied, ‘It is necessary to obey God rather than men’”* (Acts 5:29).

Judges, governors, presidents, and legislators can pass and try to enforce laws, but those laws must not go against what God teaches in the book called the ***Bible!*** Did God actually create man? Did He make Adam from the dust of the ground? Did God make Eve from the rib of Adam? ***Yes! We know He did!***

Did God create the first home? Is marriage for a man and a woman? Jesus said: *“Have you not read that the Creator at the beginning made them male and female? And he said, ‘For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh,’ so that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined”* (Matthew 19:4-7).

Does God join a man to a woman in marriage? **Yes, He does!** Does He join a man to a man in marriage? **No!** Does He join a woman to a woman in marriage? **No!** Men think they can do whatever they want and it will be acceptable.

Even religious institutions get into the business of doing what the people want. Does the fact that a council makes a law make it right with God? Wake up! The scripture is our only guide as to what God wants. One might be right with the laws of men, but the bottom line is, ***are you right with God?***

*“Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, completely furnished for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).*

# We Are All Present Before God

*“So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God”* (Acts 10:33, NKJV).

The preacher, Peter, had arrived in Caesarea. He had been invited by a Gentile named Cornelius. Peter had doubts, but the Spirit of God had told him *“go with them, doubting nothing for I have sent them”* (verse 20, NKJV). Peter went along with six Jewish brethren. When Peter arrived at the home of this God-fearing man, he saw a beautiful sight. What did he see?

## **I. Peter Saw a House Filled with the Relatives and Close Friends of This Soldier.**

*“And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends”* (verse 24, NKJV). *“And as he talked with him, he went in and found **many** who had come together”* (verse 27, NKJV). How had these people known to come? Who had invited them? The only answer we can give is this man named Cornelius. For three days he had been inviting people to come and hear a man who would tell them ***what they must do*** (verse 6 and Acts 11:1-4).

## **II. Peter Saw a House Full of People Who Were Eager to Hear the Commands of God.**

What a blessing! What an opportunity for the Evangelist, the Apostle Peter. He found a group of people who wanted to know *“all the things commanded you by God”* (verse 33, NKJV).

Peter took advantage of the situation and preached to them

Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all. He preached that this Jesus was killed, buried, and was raised on the third day. He preached that this one would judge them all. He preached that remission of sins can be found through Christ. At the end of his message he commanded them to be baptized.

We have an opportunity every day to make known the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. We desire to make known all of God's commandments. Will you and I fill the house of God with our relatives and close friends? We can, but it requires work. Good work! Brethren, let us pray. Brethren, let us invite. Brethren, let us be present every time the message of God is preached. God will grant the increase when the seed is planted and watered.



# Speak, and Do Not Be Silent!

*“During the night, the Lord spoke in a vision to Paul, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not be silent, for I am with you, for many people in this city are mine.’ He stayed there a year and six months, teaching God’s message among them” (Acts 18:9-11).*

## **I. Do Not Be Afraid.**

It would seem that Paul had enjoyed success, for many of the Corinthians had believed and were baptized (verse 8). Perhaps 1 Corinthians 2:3 will shed some light on Paul’s feelings. *“I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling.”* Most of us have times when we are “down” and need encouragement. The Lord gave Paul the “lift” that he needed. The Lord commanded him to speak! People are lost, Paul. You have the only saving message.

## **II. I Am With You.**

Yes, the enemy has strength. Yes, the devil does not want people removed from his kingdom to the kingdom of God. Paul, you are not in this fight alone. ***I am with you!*** That was the same message He gave to the twelve apostles in Matthew 28:20.

## **III. I Have Many People in This City.**

Had they all heard the gospel and been baptized into Christ? No! However, the Lord knew that many people would be willing to hear the message if Paul would speak and not be silent. Yes, Corinth had fornicators, liars, and robbers, but God knew that many would heed the message and become Christians. *“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not deceive yourselves. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor*

*adulterers, not homosexuals, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor covetous, no drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit God's kingdom. Some of you were these, but you were washed, you were set apart, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of Our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

There are many people in the world who need the word. We do not know who will be receptive and obey the gospel. Our job is to teach. Our job is to invite others to hear the messages. Our blessing is to hear the wonderful words that give eternal life.

## Daily in the School of Tyrannus

*“But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus” (Acts 19:9, NKJV).*

For three months in Ephesus, Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue, reasoning and persuading concerning the kingdom of God. Since some were stubborn and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way of Christ before the multitude, Paul began to teach in the school or lecture hall of Tyrannus. Paul was a teacher of the Word and knew it was important that the people of Ephesus learn of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Was his teaching successful? *Yes!* *“And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (verse 10, NKJV).*

In 1938, I entered the first grade in Douglas County, Kansas. The school, Lakeview, had one room, one teacher, and eight grades. My sister Edith was in grade eight and my brother Earl was in the seventh grade. We walked to the school after doing the usual farm chores of milking the cows and feeding the cattle, pigs, and chickens. I looked forward to going to school. Except when ill with chicken pox and measles in grades one and three, I don't remember missing school. My parents made preparations. They usually bought me a brand new pair of bib overalls. I can still remember the new smell. I had new pencils, an eraser, and a Big Chief tablet that cost 10 cents. Lunch was carried in a Karo Syrup pail painted a light yellow. My parents wanted all ten children to learn how to read, write, and do arithmetic. They instilled within us all a desire to learn.

All ten children completed high school. Six of the children received Bachelor's degrees and five went on to receive Master's Degrees. Our parents encouraged us to get a good education. Ruth, my oldest sister, never missed one day of school the first eight years!

But there was another more important part of our schooling. We always met with the church at 9th & Tennessee in Lawrence, Kansas. Bible class time on Sunday morning, we were there. Morning worship, we were there. Sunday night, we were there. Mid-week meeting, we were all there. We saw in our home that God and His work should be number one. We were taught daily by example that we were to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. I thank my parents for this heritage.

Parents, it is back-to-school time. Some children have already entered the school year and others will commence soon. Encourage your children to learn all they can. They need proper rest, food, and time to study. All these things are good, but don't forget the most important part of their schooling. Let your children see Christ living in you. Make certain your children know that all of you will be present for every Bible class on Sundays and Wednesdays. Yes, every time the church doors are open for worship and study, be there with your children. You are training them for eternity.

# Persuading You to Become a Christian

*“Agrippa said, ‘In a short time are you persuading me to become a Christian?’” (Acts 26:28).*

Yes, it is true. Paul was doing his best to persuade King Agrippa to become a Christian.

## **I. What Method Was Paul Using to Persuade This King?**

In short, he was preaching to him the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was and still is God’s power to save men. *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God’s saving power to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).*

Now read the words recorded by Luke, words that Paul spoke to this lost man, Agrippa. *“That Christ must suffer, and that He would be the first to proclaim light, by the resurrection from the dead, both to the people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23).*

Brethren, preaching Christ is the only way to lead people to become Christians.

*“We preach Christ crucified: to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness; but to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23,24).*

## **II. What Is the End of Those Who Do Not Become Christians?**

People who reject obedience to the good news about Christ and Him crucified will be punished with everlasting destruction.

*“And relief to you with us, who are troubled, when the Lord is revealed from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire. He will punish those who do not know God, and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer eternal ruin, and exclusion from the Lord’s face, and from the splendor of His might” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).*

### **III. How Does One Obey This Gospel and Become a Christian?**

- A. Hear the message, the gospel (Romans 10:17).
- B. Put your faith, belief, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 8:24).
- C. Repent of every sin (Acts 3:19; 17:30,31).
- D. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Christ, God’s Son (Matthew 10:32,33).
- E. Be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sin (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26,27).

We want to help you today to become a Christian.

# I Am a Debtor and I Am Eager

*"I am a debtor both to Greeks and foreigners, both to the wise and to the unwise. Therefore I am eager to proclaim the gospel to you who are at Rome, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's saving power to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Romans 1:14-16).

## **I. Paul the Debtor.**

Paul desired to go to Rome to preach the gospel of Christ. He hoped to have some fruit among the Romans. Paul felt an obligation to proclaim the message of forgiveness and acceptance that he had received. He had been a sinner without Christ and without hope. He called himself the worst. Now he was a saved man. Now he had the hope of heaven. Now he was in debt to tell others of this wonderful word of God's saving grace. He felt this debt toward the Greeks. These were the men of culture, art, and aristocratic tastes. He even took the gospel to kings and rulers. He also said he was a debtor to the foreigners or barbarians. These were the uneducated and uncouth. He had an obligation to the wise and unwise. He truly felt a debt to the entire world.

## **II. Paul the Eager Man.**

Paul had this great, wonderful desire to tell others that Jesus died for our sins. He wanted men to know that this Jesus not only died, but he was also buried and raised from the dead. He wanted men to know that there is salvation only in Jesus. He was ready and ardent. Look at the accounts given in Acts of his work of preaching and teaching. Imprisonment, beatings, and stoning did not stop him from preaching the gospel message.

I would to God that today we were more like Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ. Do we feel the obligation he felt? Are we not debtors also? Someone taught us. Have we taught others? Are we eager to tell others? Who should we tell? The educated or uneducated? The wise and the foolish? Brethren, we owe a debt to all men, for all men are lost. We have been given healing from sin, and we must take that healing message to others.

### **III. The Saving Message of the Gospel.**

Tall tales do not save men from sin. My opinions have no value, but the gospel is the message that saves all who believe. What is the gospel? Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Does man need to obey that gospel? Yes, if he wants to be saved. Read the terrible warning given in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Will you and I let the world go to eternal destruction while we sit idly by? I pray not. Let us start today by telling our families and friends the gospel of Christ.



## Lustful and Shameful Passions

*"They exchanged the truth of God for falsehood, and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator, Who is praised forever, amen! For this reason, God gave them up to lustful and shameful passions. Their women exchanged the natural use for unnatural intercourse, and likewise also the men abandoned natural intercourse with women, and were inflamed in their lustful passion for one another, men with men doing what is unnatural, and receiving in themselves the inescapable punishment of their perversion"* (Romans 1:25-27).

What happens when men reject God? **God gives them up!** To what does He give them up? **To lustful and shameful passions!** What we see today, even in religious bodies, is the abandonment of the word of God and the departure into perversions. One body has a "bishop" who is homosexual. Will there be no end?

Did God make a mistake when He made one man and one woman? *"Have you not read that the Creator at the beginning made them male and female?"* (Matthew 19:4). Marriage is the joining of a man and a woman for life. *"For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh, so they are no longer two, but one flesh"* (Matthew 19:5,6).

Yes, the Bible teaches that homosexuality is a sin! It is shameful! Can one obtain forgiveness for this sin? Yes! *"Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not deceive yourselves. Neither fornicators, not idolaters, not adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor*

*covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit God's kingdom. Some of you were these, but you were washed, you were set apart, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).*

Let us go back to the Bible, God's word. Let us teach His message and then practice the message of God. We will be blessed and can inherit His kingdom.

# Christ Died for Us!

*“On the other hand, God displayed His love toward us, because while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).*

## **I. God Displayed His Love Towards Us!**

What a wonderful, merciful God. Too many fail to see His love. This God made us and provides everything that we need. Did He feel disappointment and despair when man sinned? Yes, but He still displayed His love. Every person is loved by God. No, He does not approve of our sin and neglect, but He still loves us.

## **II. We Were Sinners.**

God saw our condition. He knew we were lost and without hope. He saw men and women who were breaking His laws (1 John 3:4). He saw people failing to do the good that men know they should do (James 4:17). All have sinned and come short of God's glory. In this sinful condition, we were without hope in a world of darkness.

## **III. Christ Died for Us!**

What wonderful news. This is the gospel. Christ died that we might live, and live forever. Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). We who were in sin had someone who paid the debt for us. Brother, Sister, does that compute? Let that truth sink in. We cannot go to heaven without Jesus. He took our place on the cross. Should that make a difference in the way we talk, think, and act?

I am appalled at the attitude of so many who have been baptized into Christ but apparently have no thankfulness for what Jesus did. Why do I say that? Many never meet with the saints week after week to eat of the bread and drink of the fruit of the vine in memory of Him. Many have allowed the first day of the week to be just another day of rest and pleasure. My brethren, I see no hope for your eternal abode with God unless you repent. Do you see any hope in the Scripture with such a style of living? I implore you, repent today.

Come back and serve Christ faithfully. *He died for us all!*

# I Discipline My Body

*"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified"* (1 Corinthians 9:27, NKJV).

## I. Who Is the Real Self in Control?

Is man more than flesh and bone? Who was in control for Paul? Was it his body? No! Paul disciplined his body. The spirit of man, the real person, must be in control. One must not let the body or flesh be the ruler. This pleases Satan but leads to damnation. When we allow our bodies to lie, gossip, and steal, then the body is in control. The body must be restricted. This means my spirit must submit to God. Deny self and follow Jesus (Galatians 2:20).

## II. What Are the Motives for Self Discipline?

Paul did all things for the sake of the gospel. He was willing to sacrifice his own rights and choices if it would further the gospel. *"If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless, we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 9:12, NKJV). *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's sake will save it"* (Mark 8:35, NKJV). My "rights" are not as important as the spread of the gospel of Christ.

Another great motive is to follow Christ's example. Did He suffer? Was He reproached? *"For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who*

*reproached you fell on me*” (Romans 15:3, NKJV). Thus our Lord prayed: *“Not My will but Thine be done!”*

### **III. What Are the Goals of Self Discipline?**

Win as many to Christ as possible. Surely that must be the bottom line. Paul had powers and rights, but he said “No” to them, lest the salvation of others be hindered. Thus to the Jews he became as a Jew. Thus he did not ask for financial help from the Corinthians even though that was his right. He felt a necessity to preach the gospel. Nothing would stop him. Would beatings? What about imprisonments? Thus he was willing to discipline his own body and bring it into subjection. Shouldn't we do the same?

### **IV. What Are the Rewards of Self Discipline?**

First, this would keep him from becoming disqualified or disapproved. Yes, he was a great preacher and brought many to Christ, but failure to discipline his own body would mean he would be disqualified. He did not want to be lost.

Second, he wanted the prize of life eternal. He wanted that crown that could not be corrupted. Brethren, these rewards can be ours. Let us practice this discipline.

# Do This!

*"I received from the Lord what I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, 'This is My body which is for you. Do this in memory of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after eating, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Whenever you drink, do this in memory of me'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).*

## I. What Was the Command of Jesus Christ?

Twice in these three verses Jesus said: **"do this"**. Do what? Eat the bread and drink the cup. Failure to do what Jesus commands is a sin! Children of God who fail to eat and drink at the Lord's Table are disobedient. Can the disobedient go to heaven? Will they be welcomed into the heavenly home?

## II. Why Was This to Be Done?

It was to be done in memory of Jesus Christ. That unleavened bread is the **body** of Christ Jesus. Eat the bread remembering the body of Christ. Drink the fruit of the vine remembering His precious blood. The church at Corinth had forgotten the reason for this weekly feast and thus were rebuked by Paul.

## III. How Was the Supper to Be Eaten?

1. A person must examine himself. *"Let a person examine himself, and let him eat of that bread, and let him drink of the cup in the appropriate manner"* (1 Corinthians 11:28). The Corinthians had made it a time for eating and drinking to satisfy the flesh. The supper is not to be taken flippantly or unthinkingly.

2. If we take of this feast with our minds occupied with other things, we become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. *“Whoever eats the bread or drinks the Lord’s cup in an improper manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 11:27).

Have you, my sister and brother, forgotten this feast? Does the precious blood of Jesus mean so little to you that, week after week, you refuse to meet with the saints to ***do this*** in memory of our Lord? I shudder to think what the Lord will say to you on the judgment day. Can you expect mercy when you have chosen to put someone or something else first before the Lord? It is high time to repent.



# Let Him Be Accursed!

*“But if we or a heavenly angel should proclaim a gospel contrary to the gospel which we proclaimed, let him be accursed. As we have previously said, now I repeat: if anyone proclaims a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8,9).

## **I. What Was the Problem?**

The congregations of Galatia were forsaking the One who had called them through the gospel of Christ, and they were turning to a different gospel (verse 5). Paul was at a loss to understand their deserting the grace of God found in Jesus and turning so quickly to a gospel that was really not a gospel or good news at all. The message Paul had preached to them about Jesus Christ and Him crucified was now being distorted. These men troubling the Galatian Christians were teaching that they had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved.

## **II. What Was the Message Paul Had Preached in Galatia?**

It was the same message he had preached everywhere. *“He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present wicked world, according to the will of God our Father”* (Galatians 1:4). *“We preach Christ crucified: to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness”* (1 Corinthians 1:23). *“I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2:2). *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any merit, but faith working through love”* (Galatians 5:6). *“May I not boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world*

*has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation"* (Galatians 6:14,15).

### **III. What Would Be the Punishment to Those Who Would Preach a Different Gospel?**

The Greek word here is *anathema* translated as accursed.

It denotes, in this passage, an alienation from God, or spiritual death. Anyone, including Paul or an angel, who would preach a gospel different from what Paul had proclaimed would be accursed. Those who would preach a gospel contrary to Paul's message of salvation, in Christ Jesus and Him alone, would be accursed.

Brethren, let us heed the warnings of Scripture. Let us teach the same gospel of Christ. This gospel has facts to be learned and believed. It has promises to be enjoyed and commands to be obeyed. Dare we change His gospel? If we do, we do so to our own condemnation. Read the book of Acts. What did people do when they heard the message taught? Did they not believe this message, repent of their sins and be baptized (Acts 2:37-41; 8:12, 13; 35-40)? Let us heed the warnings given in the word of God so we and those who hear the message can be saved.

# Crucified with Christ

*“Through the law I died to the law, that I might be alive to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. In faith I now live my life in the flesh, faith in God’s Son, Who loves me, and gave Himself for my sake”* (Galatians 2:19,20).

## **I. I Have Been Crucified with Christ!**

The cross of Jesus Christ meant a complete break with this life. The cross meant a radical change in relationship with all things. Paul claims he was crucified with Christ. The things that had mattered in the past, such as zeal for the law, hopes, dreams, and ambitions, were now dead to Paul. He had taken his stand with Christ. He ventured everything on the Lord. Paul’s pride and self-esteem were gone. Have you been crucified with Christ?

## **II. It Is No Longer I Who Live.**

Paul had died to his old life, but now he had a new life. ***Christ was living in him!*** His whole life had been transformed. He was under the possession and control of Christ. This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 16:24:

*“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and then take up his cross, and let him follow me.’”*

Paul now had ***true life*** and Christ was that life. Paul still had freedom and responsibilities, but now it was Christ who guided him in his decisions and practices. Does Christ live in us? He cannot until we are crucified with Him.

### **III. I Live By Faith in the Son of God.**

His life was a life of faith. He was totally dependent upon the Son of God. He did not stand alone. His faith (confidence or trust) was not in himself but in Christ. Could he see the future? No! However, by the eye of faith, he could walk with confidence, knowing the Christ. This was the Christ who willingly gave Himself on the cross. To Paul, Christ was his redeemer. Did Christ Jesus die for you? Do you truly believe that? If that is true, then you and I must deny self and tell others of the cross.

Isn't it time for us all to put to death self and let Christ live in us? We must die to sin and then be raised out of the watery grave of baptism and begin a new life in Christ. Can we help you today? Believe in Jesus Christ. Repent of every sin. Be buried in the waters of baptism (Romans 6:3,4).

# Quit Worrying and Pray

*“Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and God’s peace which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).*

## **I. Do Not Worry or Be Anxious.**

This teaching reminds us of the teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 6:25-34. Men worry about having enough food to eat and what they will wear. However, God feeds the birds of the air and He clothes the lilies of the field. Will He not take care of you and me? Paul was a prisoner in Rome with plenty of reasons to be anxious, but he is very clear: *“Have no anxiety about anything!”* Who is in control? When trouble comes your way, be assured you have a God who cares.

## **II. Pray to God.**

Don’t worry! Pray! Worry and anxiety show a lack of faith in God Who has the power to help you overcome your anxieties. The solution to my cares and difficulties is set forth by Paul. Take everything, by prayer and supplication, to God. Let your requests be known to God! He does hear our prayers. He does answer prayers and requests. Yes, it is true that sometimes His answers are not what I thought they would be. But He did answer. He still knows what is best.

## **III. God’s Peace Will Guard You.**

Look at the wonderful promise of God. Stop worrying and start praying. The result is wonderful. Instead of a mind filled

with anxiety, God will grant you a peace that is beyond man's comprehension. This beautiful peace will guard your hearts and minds. The heart need not be troubled and destroyed by worry. God will give us peace!

Therefore, let us quit worrying about our children. Let us pray and teach them of God. Let us not worry about our jobs. Let us take *everything* in prayer to God. What about a possible war? Take it to God in prayer. He wants to hear your requests. Peace is available to all who do His will by praying and not worrying.

# Satan Hindered Us

*“Brothers, though we have been separated from you for a time (in face, not in heart), we have striven more diligently with intense desire to see your face: we wanted to come to you (I, Paul, indeed more than once), and Satan hindered us” (1 Thessalonians 2:17,18).*

Paul had a great desire to visit the Thessalonians. However, there was a hinderer. Paul had an intense desire to see these saints, but Satan hindered. The word “hinder” means to impede or interrupt. We do not know the exact nature of this hindrance. However, Paul recognized it as the work of Satan.

***“Anything which hinders God’s messengers from doing the work of the kingdom may rightly be viewed as the work of Satan” (Raymond Kelcy).***

## **I. Love for the Things of the World Can Hinder Us.**

*“That which was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the message, but the worry of the times and the deceitfulness of riches choke the message, and he bears no fruit” (Matthew 13:22).*

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world and can take nothing out; and since we have food and clothes, let us be content with these” (1 Timothy 6:6-8).*

## **II. Love for the Pleasures of the Flesh Can Hinder Us.**

*“Do not love the world, neither the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because*

*all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions, is not of the Father, but is of the world. The world is passing away, and its desire, but he who does God's will abides forever"* (1 John 2:15-17).

### **III. Love of Self Can Hinder Us.**

*"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross, and let him follow me. Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it'"* (Matthew 16:24,25).

Brethren, Satan is active. Satan wants us to be interrupted or stopped from doing God's work. Let us make sure that our love for pleasures, possessions, and self will not be used by Satan to hinder the work of God.



# Called by the Gospel!

*"To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:14, NKJV).*

## **I. God Had Called the Thessalonians.**

The word *"called"* indicates a past act of the great God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because we are His creatures, God desires our salvation. *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3,4, NKJV).* How blessed we are to know that God wants us to be saved and that He calls us. He is concerned for our well being physically and spiritually.

## **II. God Had Called Them Through the Gospel.**

The gospel (good news about Christ) is the medium by which God had called these Thessalonians. Luke records concerning the work of Paul and Silas: *"Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ'" (Acts 17:2,3, NKJV).* We thank God for the gospel call.

## **III. They Had Been Called to Obtain the Glory of Jesus Christ Our Lord.**

This looks forward to the day of Christ's coming again. It will be a wonderful time of sharing in His glory forever and ever. Paul had already written in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 about their being

called into God's own kingdom and glory. *"That you should have to walk worthily of the God who called you into His own kingdom and splendor."* This call of God is a call to live holy lives. *"For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness"* (1 Thessalonians 4:7, NKJV).

We are to proclaim the call of God by telling of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We are to tell men that all must leave sin and be obedient to the gospel by being baptized into Christ. Let us make sure we are busy day by day inviting others to hear "the call of God".

# Don't Be Proud!

*"Charge the rich in this world neither to be proud, nor to put their hope in uncertain riches, but in God Who richly supplies to us all things for enjoyment; that they work that which is good; that they be rich in good deeds, willing to serve and to share, laying up in store for themselves an excellent foundation for the future, that they may lay hold on the true life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).*

## I. A Double Warning to the Rich.

***First, do not be proud!*** Wealth can make a man think he is better than others, especially those who are poor. Does the amount of money and possessions make us better than poor people?

***Second, do not trust in wealth!*** Do we dare put our trust in our stocks and bonds? What about the money in the bank? Ownership of wealth is only for a short time. Riches can flee away by reason of dishonest people, or death may knock at our door at any time.

## II. The Rich Have Responsibilities.

***First, they must do good!*** There are so many who need help by our doing good to all men, but especially those who belong to Christ. Dorcas filled her life with good deeds (Acts 9:36).

***Second, be rich in good works!*** Wealth is given to us by God, and we must use that wealth in doing good works. Is it feeding the starving? Clothing the naked?

***Third, be willing to give and share!*** This must be done will-

ingly and quickly as we see the need. As the richest nation on the earth, we should look at the needs here and throughout the world.

### **III. The Rich Must Lay Up in Store an Excellent Foundation.**

The true life is not about my position and possessions, but it consists of putting my trust in God! By doing good and sharing what God has given us, we show we are laying hold on the true life. It is God who has richly supplied us with all blessings.

# Teaching Reliable Men!

*“The things you have heard from me, through many witnesses, entrust to reliable men, who will be able to teach others also”* (2 Timothy 2:2).

These were the instructions of Paul to Timothy over nineteen hundred years ago, and they are applicable for us in the 21st Century. Note the progression. Paul knew the will of God and he had taught this will to Timothy. Timothy was to take that message and entrust it to men who were faithful and reliable. These men in turn would teach others.

Roy V. Palmer wanted to see the nation of Zimbabwe evangelized. To help accomplish this wonderful task, he, with the aid of others, established a school for training preachers at Nhowe, 25 miles north of Macheke, Zimbabwe. In 1971, this school was moved to the city of Mutare in the province of Manicaland. Reliable men have been trained to preach Christ and Him crucified and to teach other faithful men who will pass the gospel to others also.

What subjects have been taught in Mutare Bible School? Every book in the Bible is taught, plus church history, church music, speech, homiletics, teacher training, and personal work. It is a three-year program covering 57 courses. Each year, for eight to ten weeks, the students work in the Field Program where they go into the cities and villages and put into practice what they have learned. They mature as preachers, souls are saved from sin, and the churches are built up. Thus each graduate of this school, when he completes his training, has 30 weeks of practical experience plus preaching on weekends and Sundays.

Today over 400 men have completed this training and have gone forth to teach others about Christ. Some serve as evangelists, others as elders or deacons, and some as teachers. Over 80 percent of the congregations have men who have been trained at this school. For over forty years, the church at Hillcrest in Abilene, Texas, has been the primary supporter of this work with the aid of sister congregations. What a joy for me to visit these churches each year and see faithful men teaching others to teach others.

Indigenous people do the best job of reaching a lost nation. They know the language, culture, and customs. They can move easily among their own people.

If we are to take the whole world for Jesus Christ, we must train others to do this work. I spent 28 years living in Zimbabwe and was engaged in many different works, but the most lasting work is the work Donna and I did in training others to teach.

# Every Scripture Is God-Breathed!

*“Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, completely furnished for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).*

## **I. Scripture Did Not Come From Man, But From God!**

We thank God for Scripture. We are bombarded with doctrines and philosophies of men on a daily basis. We can be confident when we read Scripture that these words are inspired by God.

## **II. Scripture Is Profitable.**

It is useful; it has value. Scripture is beneficial when united with faith (Hebrews 4:2).

## **III. Scripture Is Profitable for Teaching.**

Look at 2 Timothy 3:15: *“And that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise toward salvation which is in Christ Jesus.”* Where do we get our doctrine? It is the Scripture. We have no right to teach anything except what is found in the Bible.

## **IV. Scripture Is Profitable for Reproof.**

This means Scripture convicts. It means to rebuke one who is living in sin.

## **V. Scripture Is Profitable for Correction.**

It means to set straight that which has been crooked. Scripture shows us that we are in sin and how we can correct that sin problem.

## **VI. Scripture Is Profitable for Instruction in Righteousness.**

It disciplines man. It gives us instruction about God and His will for man.

## **VII. Scripture Provides Us with Every Good Work.**

Every good work a person must do is found in Scripture. Works not found in Scripture are not the works of God.

Thank God for Scripture, His word. Let us read it. Let us meditate upon it. Let us study it. Let us obey its precepts. Let us teach it to others.



## The Time Will Come!

*“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables ”* (2 Timothy 4:3,4, NKJV).

Yes, Paul wanted Timothy to know that the time was coming when men would not endure sound doctrine. That is, they would not listen willingly to healthy teaching. What would they do? They would have “itching ears”. They would want someone to scratch them or to speak something that was soothing to the ears.

Paul said that this would take place, and it did! Brethren, ***“the time has come.”*** The world has never been very interested in healthy teaching, but now some in the church seem to want only soothing lessons. How sad! How disturbing!

What are some “soothing” teachings being heard today?

1. It is narrow minded to teach that Jesus built only one church, His body (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22,23).
2. We recommend baptism, but it is not necessary to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).
3. Once one believes, he is my brother (John 12:42,43; James 2:19).
4. You can take the Lord’s Supper on any day of the week (Luke 22:19,20; Acts 20:7).
5. Homosexuality is not a sin, but only an alternate life style (Romans 1:26,27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

6. Using instruments of music in worship is another good way to worship (John 4:23,24; Mark 7:6-8; Ephesians 5:19).

My brethren, let us go back to the good book, the Bible. Let us make sure we have a **book**, **chapter**, and **verse** for what we teach and practice. Let us encourage all evangelists to *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Timothy 4:2, NKJV).

## Finished the Race!

*"I have fought a noble fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Therefore, a crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me in that day; yet not to me only, but also to all those who have loved His appearance" (2 Timothy 4:7,8).*

On Sunday afternoon, June 23, 2002, Donna Mitchell left this world to be with Christ, which is better by far. She truly fought a noble fight and kept the faith. She did complete the race! We would have loved to have her with us longer in the flesh, but we did not want her to suffer more pain. She has gone where there is no death, decay, illness, pain, or sin.

She loved the Lord God. She showed this love by serving Him for 55 years. She taught women and children the Word of God. She taught English to the men in training to be preachers at Mutare Bible School. She left her family and homeland and went to a "dark" continent to help me preach the precious gospel of Christ. She never complained about the lack of money and modern conveniences, because she wanted the lost saved. She traveled thousands of miles over dusty, bumpy roads to help make known Jesus Christ. I do not know how many boxes of used clothes she packed for those in need in Zimbabwe, but they were in the hundreds. Thousands of visitors were fed meals cooked by Donna.

She loved her children and grandchildren. She loved the brethren, and she even loved her enemies. I thank God for her love for me. I thank God for the 48-plus years we enjoyed as wife and husband. I cannot bring her back, but I do plan to go where

she is when I die. I am sure her message to you would be this:  
***Obey the Gospel of Christ and serve Him until death!*** Yes, her physical body died and was buried, but her faith and love still speak. We all miss her!

## Qualifications of Elders

The church in every place needs men to serve as elders or shepherds. When Paul sent Titus to Crete, he was charged to “appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5). Then Paul set forth the qualities or qualifications the men should possess.

*“If any is blameless, the husband of one wife, having believing children, not accused of debauchery or disobedience. An overseer, God’s trustee, must be blameless, not self-willed, not prone to anger, not given to wine, not quick-tempered, not given to shameful gain, but hospitable, a lover of goodness, sensible, upright, holy, self-controlled, firmly holding the reliable message, according to the teaching, that he may be able both to encourage by wholesome teaching, and correct the ones who contradict”* (Titus 1:6-9).

Paul also gave instructions to Timothy about who should be appointed as overseers or elders of the church. The man who desires to be an overseer desires a noble work.

*“The overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, clear-headed, sensible, orderly, hospitable, able in teaching, not given to wine, not quick tempered, but gentle, not contentious, not greedy for money, ruling his own family well, having his children in subjection with all respectfulness. (If anyone does not know how to rule his own family, how will he take care of the congregation of God?) He must not be a novice, lest he might become puffed up, and fall into the devil’s condemnation. Also he must have a good reputation among those who are outside, lest he fall into disgrace and the devil’s trap”* (1 Timothy 3:2-7).

Peter, an apostle, also served as an elder or shepherd. He wrote of the work and qualifications for such men.

*"I, therefore, a fellow elder, and witness of Christ's sufferings, and sharer of the coming splendor, entreat the elders among you: shepherd God's flock which is among you. Do not oversee by compulsion, but willingly; not greedily, but eagerly; not as being masters over those under your care, but being examples to the flock. When the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of splendor"* (1 Peter 5:1-4).

An important factor in the growth of any organization is the quality of the leadership. The church will not grow without good leaders. Elders, shepherds, or overseers occupy an important position as they lead the flock of God. Study the qualifications. Pray that qualified men can be appointed to do this wonderful, but difficult, task of leading the church.

# God Spoke!

*“Long ago, God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at various times and in many ways; but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He has appointed the heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1,2).*

## **I. God Spoke to the Fathers Long Ago.**

He spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He told them what to do and what not to do. They failed to obey God and were punished. God spoke to Noah, telling him to build an ark. Noah obeyed the commands of God and he was blessed by God. He and his family were saved from the waters of the flood. God spoke to Abraham, telling him to leave his country. Abraham obeyed God and was blessed abundantly.

## **II. God Used the Prophets to Make Known His Will.**

Moses delivered the first written covenant of God to the children of Israel. If they would have kept the terms of the covenant, God would have blessed them. However, even in the wilderness, they disobeyed God time and again. They worshipped idols, they committed fornication, they put the Lord to the test, and they complained. God sent prophet after prophet to make known His will to the Israelites. There were times when they repented and followed God, but most of the time they failed to obey the Lord. As a result, Israel was carried away into Assyrian captivity, and later, Judah into Babylonian captivity.

## **III. God Still Speaks Today.**

He no longer uses the prophets, but He has spoken to us by His Son! Yes, we have a new spokesman. He is the Son of God,

Jesus Christ our Lord. He is God's final spokesman. He has the final word. He has the words of salvation. He has the message which can free man from sin. He has the message of how we are to worship the God of heaven and earth. He is the only way to God. There is no other spokesman.

#### **IV. Too Few Listen to This Final Spokesman.**

Man wants to know what this "pastor" teaches or what that "preacher" says. What does the "church" teach? What about our "creed book"? My friends, let us go back to Jesus. What did he say? What did He teach? Open your Bible. Let our Lord speak. On the judgment day, we all will be judged by His word. *"He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings has One Who judges him: the message which I have spoken shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48).



# Drifting Away

*“Therefore, we must all the more hold on to the things which we have heard, lest we drift away”* (Hebrews 2:1).

## I. What Had They Heard?

They had heard the message of God through His Son Jesus Christ. *“But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds”* (Hebrews 1:2). **Hold on to the things you have heard!** There is danger! Pay attention! Give heed! God speaks. They had heard of the salvation found only in Christ, but now they were in grave danger.

## II. What Might Cause Them to Drift Away?

Lack of faith. *“Beware, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil and unbelieving heart, in departing from the living God”* (Hebrews 3:12). When faith leaves us, then we drift away from God.

They were hard of hearing. *“There is much to say about Him, but difficult to explain, since you are hard of hearing”* (Hebrews 5:11). Did they lose their ears? What was the problem? They were closing their ears to God’s message through Jesus Christ. Did they have no time to hear preaching and teaching? Were they too busy with the things of the world that they no longer fed on His word daily?

They were forsaking the assembly. *“Not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as is customary for some; but cheering up one another, and so much more as you see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25).

There were persecutions. *“Remember your former days, during which you endured a severe conflict of sufferings, after you were enlightened: sometimes you were partakers with those who were treated this way. You were sympathetic with the ones in bonds, and you accepted joyfully the seizure of your possessions, knowing that you have for your selves a better and abiding possession”* (Hebrews 10:32-34).

They were being carried away by strange doctrines. *“Do not be carried away by various and strange doctrines. It is good for the heart to be established by grace, not by fools, in which those so living have not benefited”* (Hebrews 13:9).

Are you drifting away? Have you drifted away from God? Jesus Christ? His church? It is high time to repent and serve God again.

# Beware, Brothers!

*“Beware, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil and disbelieving heart, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).*

## **I. A Warning Was Given.**

Take heed! There is danger. Some tell us that we should not give warnings today as this will turn people away. Have you given thought about what God told Jonah to preach to the wicked city of Nineveh? *“Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed”* (Jonah 3:4b). What happened after that warning? *“When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened”* (Jonah 3:10). When men sin, including brethren, someone must give a warning. Someone must point out the danger. This was done by the Hebrew author.

## **II. There Were Heart Problems.**

They were in danger of having evil and disbelieving hearts! They were in danger of leaving God. Why? They had heart trouble! Have you ever wondered why this sister or that brother left the Lord and His church? I am sure we all have. Perhaps this verse lets us in on the “Why?”. They were in danger of having evil hearts. Thus they were in danger of departing from God and His people. What a pity! What a horrible thought! Can one be apart from God in this life and expect to live with Him in the next life? You and I know the answer to that. There is no hope.

## **III. There Was a Solution.**

*“Encourage one another daily, while it is called ‘today,’ lest*

*any of you becomes hardened by sin”* (Hebrews 3:13). Exhort! Encourage! Build Up! This is a mutual obligation. Keep an eye on your sister and brother. The devil is doing his best to get all of God’s people to depart from the living God. Will “George” do it? Will the preacher? The Elders? Scripture is plain. ***Every person has a duty***. Look out for your brother. Do not allow him to depart. Encourage him. Remind him of how much God loves him. Exhort him to be faithful. Encourage him to cleanse his heart of all sin. Help him be present for every assembly of the saints. Exhort him to read and study the Word daily.

Yes, men can be lost by having evil and unbelieving hearts. Each child of God must examine himself daily. However, the work does not stop with you. We must ***encourage*** others lest they be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. If I fail to take heed to my brother, he may lose his soul. Are we not our “brothers’ keepers”? Is it possible that I can be lost because I failed to encourage?

# Christ Was Offered Once!

*“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28, NKJV).*

## **I. Let Us Thank God for the Great Offering!**

God saw the world lost in sin. How would the sin problem be solved? He sent His precious Son as an offering. The blood of bulls and goats could never remove sin, but the Messiah was given that He might bear our sins. *“For He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NKJV).* We should thank God daily for what happened on the cross nearly 2,000 years ago. On every first day of the week, we gather to remember His body and blood by eating the bread and drinking of the fruit of the vine.

## **II. Let Us Look Forward to His Return!**

He will come again to take His redeemed people to be with Him forever in heaven. *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, NKJV).* Yes, the children of God look forward to that home in heaven. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Are you prepared? Do you eagerly wait for His return the second time?

## **III. Let Us Announce This Great Redemption and Proclaim His Second Coming!**

We are to tell men of Christ the Redeemer. We are to proclaim how men can be saved. We are to tell how men can be ready for the glorious return of our Savior Jesus Christ. What can we do to have success?

1. Pray for preachers. Pray for the church. Pray for lost people.
2. Invite! Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to come hear the story of the Great Redeemer.
3. Attend! Make sure you are present for every lesson. You will be built up. You will set a good example. You will encourage others by being present each time. Could you do anything better?

# Not Forsaking the Gathering

*“Let us consider one another, encouraging in love and good works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as is customary for some; but cheering up one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24,25).*

These two verses are so full of great and needed instructions. Let us look at them.

## **I. Consider One Another.**

This command means to give attention or continuous care to one another. Every saint should be concerned about the spiritual welfare of others. When we see a brother overtaken by a sin, we are told to restore that one in a spirit of meekness (Galatians 6:1). Some of the Hebrew saints were in danger of drifting away from the Lord. Thus the teaching to “consider one another”.

## **II. Encourage One Another in Love and Good Works.**

Stimulate one another. We can do this by example and by word. Paul told the Corinthians to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Let others see that you and I have given our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord (Romans 12:1,2). Let others see us busy doing good works: teaching the lost, visiting the sick and those in prison, and looking after those in need. True love for God and others means we will not fail to encourage our brethren.

## **III. Do Not Forsake the Gathering of Ourselves Together.**

Why would some forsake the assembly? Maybe a feeling of superiority? Perhaps because of persecution or the appeal of

Judaism? In this day, it may be that we have forgotten our debt to God. We all owe Him everything. By His grace we are saved from sin. By the strength and encouragement of the Word we have left sin and are on the road to heaven. ***Do not forsake the assembly.*** Are we ashamed of God? Are we not failing to encourage and stimulate our brethren when we choose to miss the gathering? Are we so ungrateful for Jesus' sacrifice that we cannot find a few hours each week to gather together to praise and remember Him?

#### **IV. Cheer Up One Another.**

How we need exhortation day by day. We get down spiritually, but we are told to cheer up one another. This is done when the church gathers, but it should happen daily. *“Encourage one another daily, while it is called ‘Today’, lest any of you becomes hardened by sin”* (Hebrews 3:13).



# Duties of the Members to the Elders

Let us take a look at three passages of Scripture.

*“Remember your leaders who have spoken God’s message to you; and as you observe their manner of life, imitate their faith”* (Hebrews 13:7). Four observations from this passage are important.

1. Remember those who are your leaders.
2. They had spoken the message of God to them.
3. Observe the manner of life of the leaders.
4. Imitate the faith of these leaders.

*“Obey your leaders, and be submissive, for they keep watch for your souls, as they who will give an account, that they may do this with joy, not with groaning (which would be harmful for you)”* (Hebrews 13:17).

1. Members are to obey their leaders and be submissive.
2. Members need to recall that the leaders must give an account for their souls.

*“Now we ask you, brothers, to recognize those who labor among you, and rule over you in the Lord, and warn you. Esteem them very highly in love because of their work, and be at peace among yourselves”* (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13).

1. Recognize these men who do three things:
  - A. They labor among you;

B. They rule over you in the Lord;

C. They warn you.

2. Hold these men in the highest regard because of their work.

Now let us take a closer look at our responsibilities to our leaders, the elders.

1. Do your best to understand them. Yes, they are men of strong faith, but they also have times of disappointment and discouragement.

2. Remember that our best friends are our shepherds/elders. They want us to grow spiritually and to go to heaven.

3. They deserve our support in every Biblical program of work.

4. They deserve our respect as God's shepherds of the flock. Yes, there is a time and place for criticism. *"Do not acknowledge a charge against an elder except on the testimony of two or three witnesses"* (1 Timothy 5:19).

5. There should be a righteous relationship between the leaders and members. Members should feel free to express an opinion, but if a different decision is made, resentment is out of place. All of us are a part of the body of Christ, and we all must work for the upbuilding of the church (Ephesians 4:11-16).

# Thank You, God, for Teachers!

*“Do not many of you become teachers, my brothers, knowing we will be judged more strictly, for in many things we all stumble. If anyone does not stumble with his tongue, he is full grown, and can bridle his whole body” (James 3:1,2).*

Were there too many teachers in the day James wrote? No, that was not his point. Did he want to discourage Christians from becoming teachers? Again, no. Rather, James is giving a warning. There are dangers in becoming a teacher. All teachers will be judged more strictly.

Teachers, do we control our tongues? In our Bible class rooms? In our homes? In our work places? Loose tongues can destroy the work of a teacher. Will our students hear good wholesome words coming forth from our lips? They should. It is so easy to criticize and find fault, yet there is such a great need to build up our students.

We, as teachers, must make sure that we speak the truth in love. Plenty of time must be devoted to study. Will our students understand the lessons? Are the lessons scriptural? Will the lessons fit the needs of our students? These are important questions to ask ourselves.

As teachers, we need to make sure we set a good example in front of our students. How do we dress? What are our priorities? Teachers who choose to miss public worship times with the church will send a clear message to their students. The message is one that says God is not first in our lives.

We all should thank God for good teachers everywhere. No,

the teachers are not perfect, but we believe most teachers love God and love people. We believe that teachers want to see their students go to heaven. That is why teachers prepare and present God's word each week.

Thank you, teachers. Keep up your good work.

# Be Submissive

*“Be submissive therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).*

In this verse, James gives us two commands and then states a beautiful promise.

## **I. Submit to God!**

Man is filled with pride and thinks his way is right or better. That is not the case. God opposes the proud (verse 7). God, being the Creator of man, knows what is best, always. Be submissive. The word translated *submit* is associated with the idea of rank or order, as in the army. Thus we are told to put ourselves in the ranks as a soldier under the chief. We will do what He commands. This is true in matters of salvation, worship, and life style. *Be submissive.*

## **II. Resist the Devil.**

The devil is the ruler of this world. *“I will not talk with you much longer, for the world’s ruler (who has nothing over me) is coming” (John 14:30).* When the devil rules our lives, we follow our fleshly desires and are children of wrath. *“We all once lived among them in our fleshly desires, indulging the cravings of the flesh and of the mind, and were by custom children of wrath as the rest” (Ephesians 2:3).*

When we are friends of Satan and he rules us, we become enemies of God. *“Adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is hatred of God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself God’s enemy” (James 4:4).* Pay no attention to the devil. He is a liar.

He is in the business of deceiving. He knows he will be cast into the fires of hell, and he wants us to go there also. **Resist him!**

### **III. He Will Flee from You.**

How does this take place?

1. Submit to God.
2. Resist the devil.

Is the temptation too hard? Is there a way of escape? *“No temptation has taken hold of you, except what is common to humanity; and God is trustworthy, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will provide an escape, so that you can endure”* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

When we are submissive to God and resist the devil, we need not fear. *“Now to the One Who can guard you from stumbling, and make you stand faultless before His splendor in gladness, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord is the splendor, majesty, power and authority before all time, and now, and forever, amen”* (Jude 24-25).

# Cast All Your Worry Upon Him!

*"Cast all your worry upon Him, because He is concerned about you" (1 Peter 5:7).*

## I. Christians Have a Heavenly Father.

We are not orphans. Our Father knows our every need. He made us. He is our Creator. Too many who claim to be His children live like they have no father. We have daily worries and anxieties. Why? Why? Have we forgotten our great God Who loves us and supplies our every need? Is it a lack of faith? **Yes, He is concerned about us!** If this God is concerned about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field then what about those creatures made in His image?

## II. Cast Your Worry Upon Him.

This was not a new teaching in Scripture. *"Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved"* (Psalm 55:22, NKJV). *"Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He will bring it to pass"* (Psalm 37:5, NKJV).

A Christian can go to bed at night and sleep. No need to toss and turn. Why? He has taken every care to the Lord. *"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and God's peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6,7). Take your concerns to God in prayer. **Take every worry to Him!** Pray! Thank Him daily! Then let His peace guard your hearts and minds.

### **III. Humble Yourselves Under God's Powerful Hand.**

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's powerful hand, that at the proper time He may exalt you”* (1 Peter 5:6). Let us recognize the sovereignty of God and His ability and power to deliver us from every foe and trouble. When we submit to God, He will care for us. Yes, we have many concerns or anxieties. They may concern school, work, sickness, or death of a loved one. How do we handle these worries? Do what you can do and then take the rest to the Lord in prayer. He knows what is best. Let us all cast every worry upon our Lord!



# Blessed Are the Dead Who Die in the Lord!

*“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, write: ‘Blessed from now on are the dead who die in the Lord. Yes, says the Spirit, they shall rest from their labors, for their works follow with them’”* (Revelation 14:13).

## **I. Blessed Are the Dead in the Lord.**

Happy or fortunate are those who depart this life in the Lord. Yes, there is an appointment with death that all must keep. Hebrews 9:27 tells us, *“and as it is appointed for men to once die, and judgment after this.”* These mortal bodies age, become weaker, and finally die. Should we have great sorrow for those who die in the Lord? No, for they are blessed. They will be resurrected, never to die again. *“The Lord Himself, with a shouted command, at the archangel’s voice and God’s trumpet, will come down from heaven, and the dead ones in Christ will arise first”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

## **II. Those in the Lord Have All Spiritual Blessings.**

*“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3). Those in Christ have been adopted into God’s Family and enjoy redemption and the forgiveness of sins. What a contrast to those who are not in the Lord. How many spiritual blessings do they enjoy? **Not one!** They have no rest day and night.

### **III. One Enters the Lord by Obeying the Gospel.**

We cannot please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). If we do not repent of all sin, we will perish (Luke 13:5). We must confess the Lord to be saved (Romans 10:9,10). The final step that puts one into Christ is baptism. *“For as many of you as were immersed (baptized) into Christ clothed yourselves with Christ”* (Galatians 3:27).

### **IV. Rest from Labors Is Theirs.**

This word *“labors”* implies sufferings and persecutions. Their work or deeds will follow with them. Those in the Lord become the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Their good deeds are seen by others and have an influence for good.

On April 12, 2001, my sister Doris Richardson died in Rogers, Arkansas. On April 17, her body was placed in the grave. Tears were shed. We all miss her, but she died in the Lord. She was baptized into Christ while a teen. She and her husband, John, served the Lord faithfully. They taught others the Word and showed hospitality at home and at the meeting places of the church. Yes, the family misses her smiling face and words of encouragement, but we know she is blessed because she died in the Lord.

My friend, are you in the Lord? How will you die — in the Lord or out of Him? I pray that you will enter the Lord today by obeying His gospel. You then can be blessed now and throughout eternity.

# Blessed Are Those Who Are Called to the Marriage Supper

*“Then he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ and he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God’”* (Revelation 19:9, NKJV).

Happy, blessed, or fortunate are those who are called to this great supper. In the Old Testament, God pictures Israel as being married to Him. In the New Testament, we have the picture of Christ being married to His bride, the church. The marriage of the Lamb had come, and the wife was to be ready. She was to be arrayed in fine linen, which is the righteous acts of the saints (verses 7,8).

Yes, the church in the first century was struggling with trials and persecutions. However, there was a great promise. There was a marriage feast! This great wedding feast would last throughout eternity. Throughout the entire Old Testament dispensation, the wedding was announced. The Son of God took on flesh and blood and the betrothal was announced. The price — the dowry — was paid on Calvary. After an interval, Christ will return to receive the faithful.

What a pity that so many never heed the call to the marriage feast of the Lamb! The call to come to Christ is given through the preaching of the gospel. You can be forgiven through the blood of the Lamb. You can enjoy all spiritual blessings in Christ now. Then you can enjoy the great marriage supper forever and ever.

Yes, the call does require faith that Jesus is the Christ, God’s Son (John 8:24). Yes, it does require repentance (Luke 13:3). It

requires a change of heart and life. Yes, this call requires baptism into Christ and His church (Galatians 3:26,27). This call requires faithfulness until death (1 Corinthians 15:58). It is true that most people are too busy to heed that call. Many even make light of it. All things have been prepared and the supper will take place, but many will not be there. Yes, some will not be there because they have turned their backs on the Lord after their initial obedience. Their destiny is to spend an eternity with Satan and his angels.

Do you want this blessedness? Then *heed the call today* (2 Corinthians 6:2).