

Fifty Short Sermons

by

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PREFACE

These short sermons are brief summaries of sermons preached by the author over a period of twenty-five years. Many precious souls have come to Christ under the teaching contained therein. Because of the warm reception recorded to a little volume entitled *Musings* the author has been persuaded by faithful brethren to bring out this larger work. Other volumes of short sermons may follow. These have appeared in the columns of the *Gospel Advocate*, Nashville, Tenn., of which the author is one of the staff writers. This volume is affectionately dedicated to all faithful and humble servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. May God use it to the salvation of many.

FRED E. DENNIS,
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JUNE 20, 1942.

INTRODUCTION

As far back as I can remember, as a Christian, the name of Bro. Fred E. Dennis has been very prominent. I read one article after another of his in the gospel papers, especially the Gospel Advocate. I also remember very vividly that of reading his regular reports of his meetings in Ohio and West Virginia.

Bro. Dennis has preached the gospel for many years in the area of Marietta, Ohio where he and his wife make their home. No telling how many gospel meetings he has conducted and of the many that have obeyed God through his great work. There can be no way of estimating the good that he has done. The fruits of his labors will continue for time and eternity.

Some years ago I began to correspond with Bro. Dennis. Although he has spent his life preaching in the area of his birth, still through his writings he has been able to reach into many different parts of the world. He has been especially interested in our work in Asia, and even to the point of helping some with it. He has also given me permission to print his books here and I am truly grateful to him for that.

This is volume one of fifty short sermons. Although they are short in length, they are not short in content. You will find a wealth of material in each one. They are ideal for study, for preaching, and in sharing with your friends. They are both for the Christian and the one who

is not a Christian.

It is indeed our pleasure to be able to print this volume and to send it forth to you for the good it will do.

**J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
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September 14, 1985**

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PREACHERS AND PREACHING

In this article we want to study several things that pertain to preachers and preaching.

First, who is to preach? I am sure there are many who are preaching who should not be. On the other hand, no doubt, there are many who are not preaching who should be. Paul was a great preacher; Timothy was a great preacher. Paul, by inspiration, wrote this in 2 Tim. 2:2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." We learn from this verse that God wants faithful men to do the preaching. Most of us have a pretty good conception regarding what a faithful man is.

We can learn more about who is to preach by carefully reading Rom. 2:21: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" We ought to practice what we preach and preach what we practice. No doubt there are some who ought to stop preaching until their practice catches up with their preaching!

Titus was Paul's "son after the common faith." The inspired Paul wrote to him after this manner: "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the

contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." (Tit. 2:7, 8.) This just about epitomizes what a preacher ought to be. In all things he should be a pattern of good works. He should be grave and sincere. He should show no corruptness in doctrine. His speech should be such that could not be condemned. He should so live and teach that no evil could be truthfully said of him. May God help us preachers to be exactly such.

Second, what should a preacher preach? First we shall notice something that he should not preach. He must not preach a perverted gospel. A perverted gospel is one different from the one that Paul and the other inspired preachers preached. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8, 9.) The very curse of high heaven rests upon any preacher who preaches another gospel than the one plainly taught in the New Testament.

The gospel preacher must preach Christ. We should hide behind the cross of Christ. We are told in Acts 8:5 that "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Upon one occasion Paul wrote this: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Eph. 3:8.) And again he wrote: "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2) The world would have been infinitely better off had all preachers in all ages known nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. What this old world needs

is Jesus Christ; what the church needs is Jesus Christ; what you need, my friendly reader, is Jesus Christ.

Of course when we preach Jesus Christ we preach all that he wants preached. We preached peace. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10: 15.) "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." (Eph. 6:15.) "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14.)

In the last chapter the great Paul ever wrote he said this to his son in the faith: "Preach the word." (2 Tim. 4: 2.) The gospel preacher should be so full of the word of God that it will just ooze out naturally. To preach the word is to preach the faith. "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed." (Gal. 1:23.)

Third, how shall they preach? Paul said that he was not to preach "with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." (1 Cor. 1:17.) The simplicity of Christ must not be covered by useless verbiage and verbosity.

How should we preach? "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4:11.) We must preach in the name, or by the authority, of Christ. "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:47.) The preaching should be bold, earnest, kind, and loving. There are no contradictions of terms here. The boldest and most earnest are usually the most

kind and loving. Paul is an outstanding example of these traits. "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Eph. 6:19, -20.) "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Acts 20:31.)

Fourth, why should any man preach? I can see three outstanding reasons. First, it is a command of God. God, through Paul, commanded Timothy to preach the word. Christ commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15, 16.) Second, we should preach to escape woe ourselves. The man who can preach, but will not preach, is in danger of losing his soul. (1 Cor. 9:16.) Third, we must preach to save souls. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21.) God has no other way of saving souls than by having the gospel preached to them. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16.)

There is a final question to be considered briefly in this study, and it is this: Where should the preaching be done? This is an easy question, easily answered. The blessed Christ answers this question in Mark 16:15. Hear him: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This the early church did. About thirty years after this command was given we hear Paul saying: "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature

which is under heaven.” (Col. 1:23.) I am sure these early Christians had no more wealth than we have. I am sure they did not have the convenient ways of going that we have. Brethren, could it be that they had more love for God, more zeal, and a greater passion for souls? May the dear Lord help us to think on these things.

2

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE?

The above heading is a misnomer. It is impossible for two people to understand anything and not understand it alike. If we understand a thing, of course we understand it alike. We understand facts alike; we understand commands alike. It is possible to misunderstand a fact or a command, but our differences arise from our misunderstanding and not from our understanding.

There is a divine and inspired rule running all through the Bible that should be our guide in matters religious. We want to call attention to this rule in various passages.

First, we shall read Deut. 29:29: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” It would be a happy day for all of us if we would learn this principle. Secret things belong to God; revealed things belong to us. Too many want to pry into the secret things, or to speak where the Bible does not speak.

Again, we read in 2 Tim 4:1, 2: “I charge thee there-

fore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word." In this solemn charge by Paul to his son in the gospel, Timothy, he told him to "preach the word." Timothy was not at liberty to speculate on the word of God, but to preach it. We are not to preach our opinions, but the word. We had better spend more time preaching the word and not so much time preaching *about* the word. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4:11.)

Once again: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Rev. 22:18, 19.) To add unto the word of God means that the plagues that are written therein will be added unto us, and to take away from God's book means that our part shall be taken out of the book of life and out of the holy city and from the things which are written. It is no wonder the inspired Paul wrote after this fashion: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8, 9.) And in 2 John 9 we have this striking language: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

Can we understand the Bible alike? Yes, if we are willing to be guided and controlled by the rule given above. Let us illustrate this rule. If you were to turn to Ex. 3:2-4, you would read about the angel of the Lord appearing to Moses in a burning bush. Now let us try the rule. We want to ask two questions. First, did the angel of the Lord appear to Moses in a burning bush? There is not one but who will answer: "Yes." Why do we thus answer? It is revealed. We are speaking where the Bible speaks. Second, what variety of bush was it? Some may say it was pine; others, cedar; etc. Why are we divided in our answers to this question? We are speaking where the Bible is silent. The answer to that question is not revealed; it is untaught. It is not in the Bible. While we confine our answers to what is revealed, we are a unit. Just as soon as we begin to speak where the Bible is silent, we are divided. My friends, the trouble is we are divided over what is not in the Bible; we are not divided over what is in it.

Let us try once more. In John 3:1, 2 we read about Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night. Let us see if we can understand this alike. First, did Nicodemus come to Jesus by night? There is not a preacher who believes the Bible on the face of the earth but who "sees" this alike. Why? The Bible says plainly that Nicodemus came by night. Why did he come under the cover of darkness? One might say he was a coward and ashamed to come in daylight; another might say he was a very busy man and did not have time to come by day; and still others might say he wanted the personal touch, so he came by night to avoid the multitudes which crowded around Jesus by day! What is the matter? What is causing all of this division? We have forgotten our rule and attempted to speak where

God's book does not speak. The Bible does not say why Nicodemus came by night, and we dare not hazard a guess.

Now for a few applications of this heavenly-inspired rule. How should people be baptized? We all admit that immersion is baptism. We all agree that a burial in water, preceded by the proper requisites, is baptism. Why do we thus agree? The Bible plainly says we are "buried with him by baptism." (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Heb. 10:22.) We can all understand this alike because it is revealed. Someone says that he believes "sprinkling" or "pouring" will do just as well as baptism. We divide over this. We cannot see it alike. We do not "understand" it alike. What caused the division? Is it over what the Bible says? No, it is over what it does *not* say. "Sprinkling" and "pouring" are not baptism, but substitutes for baptism, without one syllable of divine authority back of the practice.

Who should be baptized? We are all agreed that a penitent believer is a proper subject for baptism. Why are we thus agreed? The Bible teaches it. (Mark 16:15, 16; Matt. 28: 18-20; Acts 2:37, 38.) Some religious teacher begins to baptize babies. Division comes in the wake of this. What has caused it? It is caused by speaking where the Bible does not speak; going beyond, not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. Baptizing babies is no part of the doctrine of Christ.

All religious people are willing to wear the name "Christian." We do not divide over this name. We understand this name alike! Where does the division arise? It comes from introducing religious titles foreign to and unknown to the Bible.

All of us are agreed that it is right to sing in worship but some want to "play" too. We are united on the singing, but divided on the use of instrumental music in the worship. One is found in the New Testament, and the other is not. We "see" what is in the Bible alike, but cannot possibly "see" the other alike. No, it was added by mere man hundreds of years after the Bible was a closed book.

We divide over the "millennium" and the so-called "premillennial" reign of Christ. The Bible does not say one word about this, and we ought to keep still where the Bible does. If we were to speak just where the Bible does, this division and agitation over this question would end overnight. My brother, if you have a "theory" that cannot be expressed in the very words of the Bible in unequivocally and unmistakably plain language, you had better keep this "theory" to yourself and not feature it to the disruption of the body of Christ.

3

"RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH"

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15.)

Thus wrote the inspired Paul to his son in the gospel, Timothy. We can see from this that there is grave danger of dividing the word of truth wrongly. In fact, if we do not study diligently and carefully, we will not know how

to rightly divide the word or how to rightly handle it. Timothy had known the sacred writings from a youth. We learn this in verse 15 of the next chapter. But with this excellent background he was still commanded to study.

Even casual readers of the Bible know that there are two grand divisions – the Old Testament and the New Testament. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” (Heb. 1:1, 2.) There are some fundamentals here that all should learn. First, God spoke in time past. He spoke unto the fathers. He spoke unto them by the prophets. Second, God speaks now. He speaks unto us. He speaks unto us by his Son. God has not spoken unto us by the prophets, but by his Son.

On the mount of transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared, talking with Jesus. Peter was in for building three tabernacles – one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Christ. While he yet spake, a bright cloud overshadowed them. God spoke out of this cloud. Hear him: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” (Matt. 17:5.) There was a time when Moses and the prophets were to be heard, but that time has passed away and we must hear the Son.

This does not mean that we are not to study the Old Testament. In fact, we cannot obey the teaching of the New Testament and ignore the study of the Old Testament. Jesus said: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” (John 5:39.) He was speaking of the Scriptures

of the Old Testament. And Paul wrote this: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4.) He was writing about the Old Testament Scriptures. They were written for our learning, not for our ignoring.

Of course there are many things that we need to know which cannot be learned from the Old Testament. We should be vitally concerned about the salvation of our souls. This we cannot learn from the Old Testament. That is not the part of the Bible that answers the question for *us* relative to what we must do to be saved. God has spoken unto us by his Son, not by Moses or the prophets.

Many dear people are confused over what church they ought to be members of. They cannot find the answer to this question in the Old Testament. The Old Testament does not treat of the church. The church is peculiarly a New Testament institution. The church was not establish until after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Christ said; "I will build my church." (Matt 16:18.) It was then yet in the future. The same process that saves one from his past sins makes him a member of the New Testament church. Being saved and becoming a member of the church are not two different things. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47.) The saved were in the church. Such is the case yet.

Other sincere people are confused about the action of baptism. You do not get the answer to this important question in the Old Testament. It does not treat of the

subject. Baptism is a New Testament subject. We are not left in the dark there about who should be baptized and how it must be done. We learn that penitent believers are to be baptized, and that baptism is a burial. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38.) "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16.) "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us." (1 Pet. 3:21.) "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4.)

From the Old Testament we cannot learn how to worship God acceptably today. It was not written to teach Christians how to worship. Our authority for acts of worship are not found in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament.

The first four books of the New Testament give us the history of the life of Christ. We learn of his birth, his life, his miracles, his teaching, his death, his burial, his resurrection, and his ascension. The evidence is indisputable that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. When an honest man honestly studies these four books, he will be led to have implicit faith in Jesus Christ.

After knowing that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, we should want to know how to be saved from our past sins. We can even learn this from these first four books. We have Jesus telling how Christians are to be made. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16; Luke 24:46, 47.) In the

next book, the books of Acts, we have the application of this great commission. We have the history of the conversion of thousands in the early days of the church. Every one of the cases of conversion recorded in the Acts took place under the direct supervision of inspired preachers. These are genuine and authentic. The beautiful thing about it all is that every case of conversion is exactly the same — that is, the terms of pardon are alike. They all heard the gospel of Christ; they believed this gospel; they repented of their sins; they acknowledged that Christ is Lord; and they were buried by baptism for the remission of their sins. This made them Christians, members of the church of Christ.

We then have twenty-one books in the New Testament written to individual Christians and to congregations of Christians. From then we learn how they became Christians, how to remain Christians, how to worship God. The last book is the book of Revelation. It was written to Christians too. It is highly symbolical. However, there are many simple and pointed statements in this book. It tells of the triumph and glory of the redeemed. It gives us an inkling of what heaven will be. "Blessed is he that readeth." May we humbly read and honestly study this book and all other books of God's great book, but leave wild guessing and speculation to others.

4

MY CREED

In this sermon I want to call your attention to my creed, or what I believe and preach, and why I believe

and preach what I do. No preacher should be ashamed or afraid to tell what he believes and preaches, and, of course, he ought to be able to give his reasons for thus believing and preaching. We have this language in 1 Pet. 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Thus we propose to do, and we shall try to remember the meekness and fear.

There is nothing wrong with the word "creed." It comes from an old Latin word meaning "I believe." What one believes is his creed. He may believe the truth; this would be his creed. He may believe error; this would be his creed. The New Testament church has no human creed. We have no written creed separate and apart from God's word. We believe in the all-sufficiency of the word of God.

I believe in the personality of Jesus Christ. I believe he is the Son of God. This I preach with all the power that in me is. This is the center and circumference of the Christian's creed. After Jesus had been with the apostles for nearly three years, he asked them this question: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13.) They gave different opinions relative to his identity that they had heard expressed. Some of his contemporaries thought he was John the Baptist; others thought he was Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Jesus then propounded the question directly to the apostles, saying: "But whom say ye that I am?" And Peter, speaking for the twelve, said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16.)

The evidence is mountain high and indisputable that

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30, 31.) At every opportunity we should confess our faith in Jesus Christ. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom 10:9, 10.) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31.) Of course when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ we will do whatever he commands us to do.

I believe in the name of Christ. Human names as religious designations are wrong and sinful. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 12, 13.) These brethren at Corinth were severely condemned for wearing human names. They were following men. This is a terrible sin. Of course Christ is not divided, and neither should Christians be. Neither Paul nor any other man was crucified for us. To become Christians we are baptized into his name and by this authority. On the birthday of the church when the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" was asked, they were told to "repent and be baptized" in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. (Acts 2: 37, 38.)

The name of Christ is preeminent. It is above every

other name. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil 2: 9-11.)

Some folks will tell us that there is nothing in a name, but that is not true. Salvation is in the name of Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) The name of Christ has been divinely bestowed upon his disciples. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26.) God called the disciples by this name. It is of divine origin. When Paul preached to King Agrippa, the king said: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28.) Well did this king know that if he became obedient to what Paul preached it would make him a Christian, a member of the church; and well do I know that if I preach the gospel that Paul preached and folks become obedient to it they will be Christians, members of the church, or body, of Christ.

All authority is vested in the name of Christ. We should do nothing that we cannot do in the name, or by the authority, of Christ. Religious people are doing many things today without any authority from Christ. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:9.) This is what Jesus Christ said about it. It is vain worship. Again he said: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (Matt. 15:13.) Why be in a

thing that shall be rooted up? Why not be a member of the institution which shall not be rooted up? My friends, let me urge upon you not to do anything in the religious realm that you cannot find authority for in the New Testament. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Col 3:17.) Christians must be guided by the word of Christ.

I believe in the all-sufficiency of the word of Christ. Human creeds, confessions of faith, catechisms, and religious dogmas are wrong and sinful. We are commanded to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Col. 3:16.) Human creeds originate with men and shall perish with men, "but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:25.) Jesus said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35.) Ask the makers and users of human creeds why they make and use them, and they reply by saying that they have them for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. That is exactly why God gave us the Bible. Why not use it for these express purposes? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) Nothing has been left to the whims and fancies of men. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:3.) It is a fearful thing to add to or take from the word of God. Hear the warning: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doc-

trine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9.) We can leave the doctrine of Christ, but when we do it we leave both the Father and the Son. Let us hear the great and inspired Paul: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (Gal. 1:8–10.) It is a fearful thing to preach anything that Paul did not preach. Let me ask the preachers: Are you seeking to please men or God? Remember that if you are seeking to please men you are not servants of Christ. God’s Book closes with this awful warning: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” (Rev. 22:18, 19.)

I believe in the church of Christ. I mean by this I believe in the church Christ established, the one that he purchased with his own precious blood. It is absurd to talk about believing in Christ, but not believing in the church which he started. He said: “I will build my church.” (Matt. 16:18.) This he did. We read about its beginning in Acts 2. The gospel was preached for the first time after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ. Many of the ones who heard were pricked in their hearts.

After hearing and believing, they wanted to know what they must do to be saved. These believers were told to repent and be baptized. (Acts 2:37, 38.) Thus was the Lord's church started. Thus were responsible people saved, and thus are they being saved today, and the Lord adds all the saved to his church. (Acts 2:47.) Our being added to the church hinges on our being saved, and our being saved hinges on our obedience to Christ. It is impossible to be saved and remain out of the church. The same thing that saves one makes him a member of the church. The Lord does the adding. He adds the saved, and they are added to his church.

I believe in the ordinances of Christ. I believe in baptism and the Lord's Supper — or, rather, I believe in Christ, and I believe in these things because he authorized them. Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16.) Christ does the saving, but salvation is upon stipulated conditions. These conditions must be met. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper for his people. The early church met on the first day of the week to observe this supper and worship God. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; Acts 2:42.) Faithful Christians today do the same thing.

I believe in the unity as taught by Jesus Christ. He prayed that his followers might be one. All true disciples try to keep this unity enjoined by the Holy Spirit. Hear Jesus: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:20, 21.) There is no more prolific source of infidelity in the world today than the divided state of the so-called religious world, and

even divisions among brethren. Such things ought not so to be. It is a fearful thing to divide the body of Christ. I would rather have been guilty of dividing his physical body than his spiritual body, the church. My brethren, may I appeal to you to do nothing that would bring division in the body of Christ? When division takes place, someone is guilty. Lord, is it I?

Finally, I believe in consecration to Christ. We need to walk humbly with our God. Brethren should confess their sins, repent of them, and ask God's forgiveness. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1: 8-10.) The Head of the church said: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2: 10.) Brother, if you are not faithful, you will be eternally lost. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:14.)

May the Lord bless us all, and help us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

5

SIX SEARCHING QUESTIONS

1. What Are We?

We are beings endowed with a moral conscience,

therefore responsible for our conduct. Animals have no moral conscience, hence are not responsible for their conduct. Our consciences should be educated in conformity to the teaching of God's word. Conscience is a matter of education. Conscience by itself does not attest to the right or wrong of a thing. Paul never violated his conscience, but he committed some terrible sins. (Acts 23:1.) We should strive for a good conscience, and in all things be willing to live honestly. (Heb. 13:18.) "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:12.) We are responsible to God for our actions.

2. Whence Came We?

Much has been said about the origin of the species. There is just one satisfactory explanation. We came from God. Hear it: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2:7.) "In him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28.)

3. Whither Are We Bound?

The body is destined to return to the earth, and the spirit shall return unto the God who gave it. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Eccles. 12:7.) God made our bodies of the dust of the ground. The body goes back to the dust of the ground. God breathed into our bodies the breath of life. At death the spirit returns unto God who gave it.

We are all bound for the judgment bar of God. This is a serious, solemn thought. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9: 27.) "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10.) "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

We are bound for eternity. Jesus said: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:46.) We are on our way to judgment and eternity.

4. What Is Our Duty?

Our duty is to hear God. At the transfiguration God spoke from heaven, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. 17:5.) There was a time when folks were to hear Moses and the prophets, but that time has passed away. God speaks to us by his Son. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manner spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Heb. 1:1, 2.) Our faith comes by hearing God. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17.)

Our duty is to believe the gospel. Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) Virtue does not lie in simply hearing, but in believing the truth when it is heard.

Our duty is to obey the gospel. Jesus became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey. (Heb. 5:8, 9.) God will not save us and God cannot save us unless we obey. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3.) The Bible ends with a blessing pronounced on the obedient: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:14.)

5. What Is Our Danger?

There are two great dangers confronting all. One of these is that we will neglect the great salvation. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2:1-4.) How shall we escape if we neglect? There is no escape. However, "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9.) If we perish eternally, it will not be because God willed it so. He wills just the opposite of that, but he cannot save us against our stubborn wills.

We are in danger of losing our souls. The devil would have us to believe that we are in no great danger, but such is a lie. Jesus raised this warning: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16: 25, 26.) Jesus would not talk about losing our soul if we were not in very great danger of doing that very thing.

6. What Is Our Destiny?

There are two destinies before us. One is heaven and the other is hell. The writer of this sermon and each reader thereof are facing one of these destinies. Which will it be? May God grant that we may realize that we are beings endowed with a moral conscience, and, therefore, responsible for our conduct. May we appreciate our high and holy origin. May we think of the solemn, serious fact that it will not be long until these perishing bodies will go back to earth and the spirit will return unto the God who gave it. May we hear, believe, and obey the truth, and thus be made free from our old sins. May we keep right on hearing, believing, and obeying. By doing this we are not neglecting the great salvation, and neither shall we lose our souls. May heaven be the happy lot of each one of us in the sweet afterwhile.

6

GOD'S PLANTS

The blessed Christ said: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

(Matt. 15:13.) The world is full of plants which God did not plant. Some of these plants are social plants, some political, some fraternal, and some religious. All these plants shall be rooted up. There is a grand "rooting" time coming.

God has two plants in the world at this time. He started both of them. One is the home and the other is the church. In this study we want to learn something about these two divine institutions. God wants us to be happy here and hereafter. To bring about this happiness he has given us these two institutions. If we conduct ourselves properly here in them, we are happy now and will be happy eternally. To be thoroughly happy we need companionship, home, and religion. These are amply provided for in these two plants.

In every well-regulated Christian home the husband is the head. For the wife to try to be the head mars the happiness of the home. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." (Eph. 5:23, 24.) From this passage we can learn many lessons. Two of the outstanding ones are that the husband is the head of the wife, and that Christ is the head of the church. The pope may be the head of something called a "church", but I vehemently deny that he is the head of the New Testament church. The preachers are not the head, and neither are the elders. Jesus Christ has all authority. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22, 23.)

God made one man and then made one woman for that one man. God knows, and we ought to know, that one woman is enough for one man. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. 2:24.) There is one Christ and one church of Christ. Jesus Christ did not start more than one church." I will build my church." (Matt. 16:18.) "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Rom. 12:4, 5.) "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." (1 Cor. 12:12-14.) "But now are they many members, yet but one body." (1 Cor. 12:20.) "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:4-6.)

The woman came from the side of man. God opened the side of man, took out a rib, and made woman. "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Gen. 2:22, 23.)

The church came from the side of Christ. It was necessary for his side to be opened. He gave his blood to

make the church possible. "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." (John 19:34.) "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Cor. 6:20.) "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." (Rev. 1:7.)

In the family relationship between husband and wife there is just one cause for divorce. That cause is unfaithfulness to the marriage vows. The head of the church said it after this fashion: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." (Matt. 5:31, 32.) How could he have taught more plainly? Can a husband put away his wife? yes, for one cause. What happens when a woman has been put away and then some man marries her? Jesus said that was adultery. We had better just teach what Jesus taught on this and on all other questions. The "divorce question" just will not stay answered. Why? Too many are not willing to answer it the way Christ answered it. The "baptism question" will not stay answered, but Jesus answered it, and it stays answered to all who believe him. "And I say unto you, whosoever shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth committ adultery." (Matt. 19:9.)

There is just one cause for divorce in the church. If we are unfaithful, we will be "put away." Christ said to certain Christians: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I

will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10.) Christians are married to Christ. He will be true and faithful to us. Lord, help us to be faithful to thee.

The man and woman wear the same name. There is just one name. "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." (Gen. 5:2.) The woman takes the name of her husband. The faithful wife wears her husband's name. She would not think of wearing some other man's name. The faithful Christian wears the name of Christ. You could not get him to wear some other name. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." (Eph. 3:14, 15.) "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26.) "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28.) "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Pet. 4:16.)

7

TO BE SAVED

On the birthday of the church, after the gospel had been preached, this question was asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37.) Saul of Tarsus said: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10.) The trembling jailer at Philippi inquired: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30.) No more important

question can engage the mind of a thinking person. Upon the correct answer to this question our very soul's salvation depends. In this sermon we want to give some consideration to this all-important question and the Bible answer thereto.

First, what must we know to be saved? Many poor souls do not know enough to be saved. We cannot be saved until we know the truth. Jesus said: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) It takes a knowledge of the truth to save us from our sins. To be saved we must know the Lord. We have this language in Heb. 8:11: "And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." This is a quotation from Jer. 31:34. In the New Testament plan of salvation one is taught a knowledge of the Lord before becoming a Christian. This precludes infant church membership. Now would be a good time to say that infant church membership is unknown to the New Testament. To be saved one must know the doctrine of Christ. The blessed Christ said: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:17.) One can be saved for time and eternity and be in total ignorance of the doctrines and commandments of men, but one cannot be saved and be ignorant of the doctrine of Christ.

What Must We Believe?

We must believe that God is. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of

them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6.) We must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31.) We must believe the gospel of Christ. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16.) In his farewell commission to the apostles. Christ said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) We must believe in our own ability to do all the things which God commands us to do. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13.)

11

How Must We Feel?

There has been much controversy in the religious world relative to the part that feelings play in matters religious. One cannot be saved until he feels that he is a sinner and in need of salvation. The prodigal son finally came to himself and felt that he was in need of the blessings that only his father could bestow. He said: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." (Luke 15:18, 19.) He certainly did feel his sins and his unworthiness. Thus ought the sinner to feel in coming to the heavenly Father. We should indeed feel sorrowful for our sins. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Cor. 7:10.) We must feel determined to do

what the Father commands us to do. However, if we were to feel that we are saved before obeying the commands of God we would have the wrong feelings.

What Must We Do?

There are four things the sinner must do to get rid of his past sins. He must believe or have faith. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30, 31.) Jesus did many things which are not written, but there are enough written to cause any honest soul to believe that he is the Son of God. After believing, we must repent of our sins. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30.) "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38.) We must confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This is the way he said it: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32, 33.) Again, in Rom. 10:9, 10 we have this language: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." To get into Christ we must be baptized. In no other way can we

receive the remission of our sins. We have already learned this from the quotation given above from Acts 2:38. There are many others that could be given, but space forbids.

How Must We Live?

Getting saved and keeping saved are not the same thing. We may be saved from our past sins, thus becoming Christians, members of the body of Christ, but finally be lost in hell. We must keep saved. How must we do this? We must live godly. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." (Tit. 2:11, 12.) My brother or sister, do these adverbs describe the way you are living? If God were telling it, would he say that you are living soberly, righteously, and godly? I am afraid there are many members of the church, even preachers, who are not thus living. And please note that this living is to be done now, "in this present world." It does not sound much like a "second chance", does it? No, my friends, the doctrine of a "second chance" is of the devil – devilish. The Christian must be busily engaged in the work of the Lord. Thus Paul admonished the brethren at Corinth. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58.) We may do many things in vain, but, thanks be to God, what we do in the Lord is not in vain, The Christian will do good unto all men, and especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6 : 10.)

Dear reader, if you are not a Christian, may I beseech you to become one by faith in Christ, repentance of your sins, confession of your faith, and by being buried by baptism for the remission of your sins? (Rom. 6:3-5.) If you a Christian, may God help you to be faithful in your work and worship.

8

**“THE WORD OF GOD IS QUICK,
AND POWERFUL”**

We are living in a world of death, dissolution, and decay. This old earth is a veritable charnel house. “Change and decay in all around I see.” Man is no exception. “It is appointed unto men once to die.” (Heb. 9:27.) “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” (James 4:14.) “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” (Job 14:1.) “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” (Ps. 90:10.) We are here today, but gone tomorrow. “But truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.” (1 Sam. 20:3.)

But, thanks be to God, in the midst of all this death and decay there is something that is not dead nor never will die. Now we are ready to read our text. Here it is: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12.) “But the word of the Lord

endureth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:25.) "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35.)

What a consummation to be desired for all to learn that the word of God is living, active, and powerful! In 2 Kings 5 we have an account of a man who learned this great lesson. Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria. He was a great and honorable man, but the record says he was a leper. He had an incurable disease. The Syrians had gone out to the land of Isreal and had brought back captives. Among them was a little maid. She waited on Naaman's wife. This little girl said unto her mistress: "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

Finally the king of Syria fitted Naaman out with fine horses, a chariot, ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment, and sent him to the land of Israel. The king of Syria wrote a letter unto the king of Israel. He wrote to the wrong fellow! How many today go to the wrong source for their spiritual light! The little maid had not directed him to the king of Israel, but to the prophet of God. When Naaman presented himself to the king, the king was wroth, He thought the king of Syria was seeking a quarrel against him.

But Naaman did at last contact Elisha, the man of God; and this old prophet told him how to get rid of his leprosy. The cure was simple; in fact, it was too simple for the "great" man from Syria. It filled him with wrath. He was told to go to the Jordan River and dip himself seven times and he would be clean. He was indeed mad at this, but finally his servants persuaded him to obey. He dipped seven times, and his flesh came again like unto the flesh

of a little child, and he was clean. Where did the virtue lie? Was it in the waters of the Jordan? We all know that it was not. The virtue was in the obedience to the word God. "The word of God is quick, and powerful."

When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he learned the lesson of the power of the written word. At every turn Jesus met the devil's temptations with the simple statement: "It is written." So ought we to meet the temptations that confront us along life's pathway; in fact, in no other way can we successfully overcome the devil.

In John 9 we have an account of Jesus opening the eyes of a blind man. How did he do it? Here is what the divine and inspired record says: "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him. Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." What opened his eyes? Was the virtue in the spittle? Was it in the clay? Was it in the waters of Siloam? We all know it inhered in the word of God. The virtue was in the obedience to this word. Again we must say: "The word of God is quick, and powerful."

In the latter part of the fourth chapter of Mark we have a description of an awful storm on old Galilee. Jesus was with the disciples in a ship. He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow, when the storm broke. The disciples awoke him and said unto him: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" The record further says: "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." What stilled the wind and the sea? Where

was the power? Of course it was in the word of the Lord. It is no wonder the disciples "feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" So again we say: "The word of God is quick, and powerful."

In John 11 we have an account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Jesus was not there when he died, but he came after Lazarus had been dead four days. He and the sisters of Lazarus and others went out to the grave. The grave was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus had this stone rolled away. After this he had his little prayer to the Father. Then he cried with a loud voice, saying: "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus came forth. Wherein was the power? We all agree that it was in the word of God. You have stood by the side of your dead and talked to them, but there was no response in any way; but when God talks to the dead, there is a response. The same power that called Lazarus from the grave will raise the teeming millions. We hear Jesus saying this in John 5:28, 29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

Before closing this sermon we want to call attention to one other thing. Before leaving this world Jesus gave a plan for making Christians. It is simple and plain. Of necessity it must be this way to suit all classes of the human family. It is too plain to be misunderstood. Let us read it: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) The gospel preachers of those early days had not trouble in understanding this. They went out and preach-

ed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. People heard and believed the gospel. On the birthday of the church the gospel was preached, folks heard it and believed it, and in answer to the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" they were told to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37, 38.) The record goes on to say: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." It made them Christians. Nothing else under God's sun will do it. "The word of God is quick, and powerful."

9

THE PERFECT CHURCH

We read about this perfect church in the New Testament. Nothing that man makes is perfect. This perfect church, of course, would have to have a perfect head. The head of any institution reflects honor or dishonor upon the institution. Jesus Christ is the head of this perfect church. "And he is the head of the body, the church." (Col. 1:18.) "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22, 23.) "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23.) "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:8, 9.) Jesus said: "I do always those things that please him." (John 8:29.)

How profoundly thankful we imperfect human beings ought to be that we can be members of a perfect church with a perfect head! The laws of this perfect church are perfect. They do not have to be revised every few years. In James 1:25 this law is spoken of as "the perfect law of liberty." Perfection cannot be improved upon. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) If we ask the makers and users of human creeds, disciplines, confessions of faith, etc., why they have and use them, they would reply by telling us that they need them for doctrine, correction, instruction, etc. That is exactly what the Scriptures are for. Do you not suppose that God could, and did, give everything that is needful for the government of his church?

The great and inspired Paul said: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16.) What lost souls and a sin-cursed world need is the gospel of Christ.

When we try to worship according to human arrangements, our worship is vain. Hear the head of the church: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt: 15:0.) How dangerous it is to go beyond what is written! "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.) "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now

again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal. 1:8, 9.) “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” (Rev. 22:18, 19.)

This perfect church, with a perfect law, governed by a perfect head, is built upon a perfect foundation. Jesus Christ is this tried and precious foundation. Paul wrote after this manner: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 3:10, 11.) Again he said: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” (Eph. 2:20.)

This perfect church wears a perfect name. Before the church came into existence, the head of it said: “I will build my church.” (Matt. 16:18.) It is his. He purchased it with his own precious blood. There is no salvation in any other name under heaven. It is in his name we must be saved, so states the inspired apostle Peter in Acts 4:12.

This perfect church has a perfect system of worship. There are two essential elements to acceptable worship. Jesus stated these in John 4:24 when he said: “God is a

spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The first thing that is said of the church after it came into being is that "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42.) Every loyal congregation of the church does this very thing. In the early days of the church we find this said of one of the congregations: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." (Acts 20:7.) The thing that brought them together was the breaking of bread. The same thing brings faithful Christians together today. There is a lot of difference between coming together to *hear* a man and coming together to *worship* God.

This perfect church has a perfect financial system. Each member is to give as he has been prospered. (1 Cor. 16:1, 2.) How simple! How efficient! Real Christians delight in giving as they are prospered. They abound in this grace of giving. (2 Cor. 8:7.) Of course, after the money is given, every cent of it should be used to the glory of God. It should not be left lying idly in a bank, but should be used for the purpose for which it was contributed.

This perfect church has a perfect law of entrance. In giving the law of entrance, the head of the church said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) How absurd it would be to dispute the authority of the head of the church! On the birthday of the church, when inquiring believers "said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" they were told by these inspired apostles to "repent, and be baptiz-

ed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:37, 38.) This was exactly what Jesus had said about it. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." (Acts 2:41.)

And, in conclusion, dear reader, may I say to you: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16.)

10

THE WAY TO HEAVEN

We are living in an age of religious confusion. False teachers are on every hand. What is an honest soul to do in the midst of this Babel? Thanks be to God, the Bible plainly maps out the way to heaven.

Hundreds of years before the way of salvation was opened, God, through Isaiah, said this: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (Isa. 35:8.) God said he was going to make a way for fallen man to save his soul so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." This he certainly has done. Therefore, if we know not the way to heaven, the fault lies with us. The way has been plainly mapped out.

Let us hear Jesus: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to

destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7: 13, 14.) Jesus here speaks about a broad way and a narrow way. Jesus says this broad way leads to destruction and the narrow way leads to life. Had we not better travel in this narrow way and finally reach heaven than travel in the broad way and go to hell? My friend, are you in the narrow way?

What is the way to heaven? One religious teacher will say one thing and another one something else. Let us see what the Bible says about the way. In John 14:6 we hear Jesus saying plainly: "I am the way." That settles it. He is the way to heaven. "The way of the cross leads home." The way to heaven is not by Martin Luther, John Wesley, Joseph Smith, Charles T. Russell, or Alexander Campbell, but by Jesus Christ. There is no other way but his way.

We certainly ought to be interested in getting to the way. You know we have to get *to* a thing before we can get *into* it. The steps that bring us *to* something are not the same as the ones that put us *into* it. Do not forget that we are talking about a plain way, so we can easily learn not only how to get to the way, but we can learn just as easily how we get into it.

From John 6:44 we learn that Jesus said: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." To all who believe in Jesus that settles it. We cannot come to him unless the Father draws us. How does the Father do this drawing? Going ahead with our reading from Jesus, we hear him saying, according to the next verse: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall

be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." From this we learn that teaching precedes our coming. This does away with infant church membership. "They shall be all taught of God." Infants are incapable of this teaching. Jesus says we "hear" and "learn" and "come."

The gospel must be preached. In his farewell commission to his apostles Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16.) The gospel is God's power to draw people to Jesus Christ. Hear Paul in Rom. 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Honest souls hear the gospel of Christ in its ancient simplicity and purity, and by the power that inheres in this gospel they are brought to Christ, or *to* the way to heaven. Now, after coming to Christ, how do we get into Christ? This is a great and important question. The very salvation of our souls depends upon the correct answer. What a fearful thing to live and die out of Christ!

In Gal. 3:27 we have this language: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." How did these Galatian Christians get into Christ? The record plainly says they were "baptized into Christ." They were not sprinkled into Christ; they were not poured into Christ; they did not pray themselves into Christ; they did not mourn themselves into Christ; but they were "baptized into Christ."

Let us read again: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3.) How did these Christians at Rome and others get into Christ? You have the answer before you. We cannot misunderstand the answer. Some one is ready to say that the blood of Christ takes away our sins. So it does! Where did he shed his blood? He shed it in his death. When do we reach the blood? We reach it when we are "baptized into his death."

Some dear, honest soul may be wondering "how" he should be baptized. My friends, there is just one way to be baptized. Sprinkling and pouring are not baptism. Here is how God tells you to be baptized: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:4, 5.) When we are scripturally baptized, we are "buried", "planted," and "resurrected."

Once again we read: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13.) We are baptized "into one body." What is this body? "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body." (Eph. 1:22, 23.) Again: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5. 23.) What is the body? It is the church. How do we get into it? We are baptized into it. Of whom is Christ the Saviour? "He is the saviour of the body."

“BUT HE LIED UNTO HIM”

“And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.” (1 Kings 11:43.)

Solomon was the world's wisest ruler. Never was there one like him before, and neither shall be again. After the death of Solomon, his son, Rehoboam, was made king. Shortly after becoming king, representative Jews came to him with a request. Here it is: “Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.” (1 Kings 12:4.)

This request seems altogether reasonable. Too many rulers are prone to make for their subjects “grievous service” and a “heavy yoke.” Rehoboam showed a streak of wisdom when he said: “Depart yet for three days, then come again to me.” Many times our decisions would be much wiser if we would take time to think over them seriously and pray over them understandingly. Another mark of wisdom upon the part of Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?” Wisdom and discretion are more apt to be found with the old than with the young. No doubt this is one reason why God put elders in the church to be overseers.

These old men gave the king good advice. "And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever." How different the subsequent history of Israel and of Rehoboam might have been had this advice been followed! It is possible to lead people into paths of right, but all but impossible to drive them. Rulers should serve their subjects and speak good words unto them. Much friction in congregations of disciples of Christ would be avoided if the elders would thus act.

But alas! "He forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him: and he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke., I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

The king followed this wild and reckless advice. He spoke roughly unto the people. What happened? The saddest hing that can happen among God's people took place. They divided. Ten tribes revolted, set up a rival government, and made Jeroboam their king. Two tribes remained under Rehoboam.

Jeroboam made Israel to sin. He did not want the people to go to Jerusalem to worship. He was afraid that their hearts might turn back to their former king and relationships. Gradually he led them away from the right ways of the Lord. He made two calves of gold, and set one of them in Bethel and the other in Dan. He told his people it was too much for them to go to Jeruslaem! How much that sounds like some religious teachers of our day! He also made priests of the lowest of the people who were not of the sons of Levi. He also ordained a feast in the eighth month unto the feast that was in Judah. And he offered upon the altar. In giving the record of this we are told "he had devised of his own heart." Much that is carried on in religious circles today has been devised by the hearts of the people, and the Lord thinks no more of it than he did of Jeroboam's altar, priests, and worship. He would have none of it.

God sent a man of God to Bethel to cry against this altar. God never makes a mistake in choosing the right man for the right place. It took courage and fidelity to carry out this trust. But the prophet of God was equal to the occasion. Of course God had given him the exact message which he wanted spoken at Jeroboam's altar in Bethel. The man of God delivered it. What were the "visible results"? "And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him." (1 Kings 13:4.) The king did not like the sermon! So many times it is thus. A religious leader or teacher who tries to find out what the people "want," and then give them that rather than what

God wants them to have, is not a true man of God. The world is full of these false teachers, and some have crept in among "us." "Beware of false prophets." I know of no "soft" way of handling false prophets and false teaching. Furthermore, the Bible knows of no such way.

But back to the "text". The king saw he was in an awful predicament. He asked the man of God to pray for him that his hand might be restored him again. The man of God prayed to this end, "and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before." Now for the crucial test. "And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward." But thanks be to God, the man of God stood the test. Listen: "And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel."

This preacher could not be scared. He could not be bought. God told him not to eat or drink in Bethel, and not to go back the same way that he had gone down. Of course he could understand these explicit directions. When the very salvation of our souls depends upon obedience to God, it is an absolute necessity that the commands of God be made plain. Thus it has ever been. Of course this man of God may not have been able to understand why God gave these commands, but he could and did understand the commands. That is all that is required on our part.

But there was a lying preacher in town. He ran after the man of God. This lying prophet said: "Come home with me, and eat bread." Of course the man of God told him why he could not do this. The old prophet said unto him: "I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water." Now listen carefully: "But he lied unto him."

This prophet of God could not be intimidated and he could not be bought, but he could be deceived, and he was deceived. Because of this disobedience he did not reach his earthly home. If we turn away our ears from hearing God, listen to false prophets and false doctrine, we shall not reach the heavenly home. "Be not deceived." Jesus Christ said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16.) This is the only thing under heaven that will make a Christian. Do you believe it? Have you obeyed it? Are you a faithful Christian?

12

MAN'S TEACHING VS. GOD'S TEACHING

In this sermon we want to direct the reader's attention to several things that men teach, and then further direct our minds to what God teaches on the same subject. God knows we have no desire to misrepresent either the teaching of man or God. We do not mean that all men teach these things, but we do mean that some men teach them. We ought not to receive anything simply because

some man teaches it, but we ought to receive whatever God teaches. But now to the law and the testimony.

Men teach that there are many churches; in fact, we have more than two hundred of these man-made churches right here in our own beloved country. I say they are man-made because God did not make them. God made one church. Jesus said, according to the statement in Matt. 16:18: "Upon this rock I will build my church." Please note that he did not say "churches." He built one church. This is his body. We are told plainly in Eph. 4: 4 that there is one body.

Men talk about "joining the church." God does not talk that way. That addition to the church takes place in heaven. When we obey the Lord, he adds us to the church. Being saved and becoming a member of the church are one and the same thing. There is no such thing as being saved and then "joining the church of our choice." "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47.)

Men teach that we are saved by "faith only." God does not so teach. We do have the words "faith only" coming together in the Book, but in that one place it is to refute the idea that we are saved by faith only. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:24.)

Men teach that baptism is not essential to salvation. God does not teach this. The blessed Christ said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16: 16.) He did not say anything about being saved without doing this; but he did say that if we do not do this we

shall be damned. After Saul had believed and repented genuinely, he was told to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16.) Yes, God says baptism is essential to our salvation. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21.)

Men teach that infants should be baptized. God does not teach infant baptism. Baptism is for penitent believers. On the birthday of the church, after persons had heard and believed the gospel, they were told to "repent, and be baptized." (Acts 2:38.) In the latter part of Acts 8 we read about a man who was taught the gospel by an inspired preacher. After hearing the gospel, he expressed a desire to be baptized. The inspired preacher said: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He expressed his faith saying: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:37.) Infant baptism originated with men hundreds of years after the New Testament was a finished book.

Men teach that sprinkling and pouring will do for baptism. God does not so teach. He teaches that baptism is a burial and a resurrection. He teaches that in baptism we have our bodies washed with pure water. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:4, 5.) "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the opera-

tion of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” (Col. 2:12.) “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Heb. 10:22.)

Men teach that there is nothing in a name. God teaches that there is salvation in a name — that is in the name of Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12.) We must do everything in the name, or by the authority, of Christ. (Col. 3:17.) In this name we are to glorify God. (1 Pet. 4:16.)

Men teach that we cannot apostatize — we cannot fall from grace. God does not teach this. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” (Heb. 3:12.) Yes, there is danger of departing from the living God. Paul was afraid that he might be lost. Hear him: “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” (1 Cor. 9:27.)

Men teach that we should eat the Lord’s Supper occasionally. God teaches that members of the church ought to eat the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s day. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” (Acts 20:7.) What did these disciples come together for? The inspired record says they came together to break bread. When was this meeting? The record says

it was upon the first day of the week. Yes, the early disciples "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42.)

Men teach closed communion. God does not teach this, but he does teach: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." (1 Cor. 11:28.)

Men teach that it is all right to finance the church by socials, fairs, and many other questionable ways. God does not teach this. He teaches that Christians are to give as they have been prospered. (1 Cor. 16:1, 2.) Christians should abound in this grace of giving also. (2 Cor. 8:7.)

Men teach that it is all right to have instrumental music in the worship of Christians. God does not teach this. Instrumental music in the worship of Christians was not introduced until the church was more than six hundred years old. Of course it is purely of human origin. It is a modern innovation. It did not become general in Christian worship until about the thirteenth century. God is the one to be worshiped. He is the one to tell us how to worship him. He tells us to sing; he tells us what to sing; he tells us how to sing. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph. 5:19.) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. 3:16.)

Men teach that it is all right for us to do our good works through human organizations. God does not teach

this. He says that whatever Christians do is to be done in the name of Christ. It is not to be done in the name of some human organization, and that human organization get the honor and glory. The honor and glory are to go to Christ. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph. 3:21.) Brother, read that twice!

13

"WILL A MAN ROB GOD?"

On first thought, most of us would say that we would not be guilty of robbing God; but after more serious deliberation in the light of God's eternal truth, we might be forced to change that answer. God's ancient people thought that they were not guilty, but the record says this: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." (Mal. 3:8, 9.)

There are many common ways of robbing God. We may rob him of our hearts. Of course we are talking about the Bible heart, and not the physical heart. We have this admonition in Luke 10:27: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." This is about all there is of us. We must love God supremely and our neighbor as ourself. To do less is robbing God of our hearts. Too many are too much in love with the sinful things of this world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the

world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17.) When we are in love with these sinful things, we are robbing God of our hearts.

We may rob God of the right uses of our bodies. They belong to him. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:20.) Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome after this manner: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1.) We should use every member of our body in such a way that God will be glorified. When we misuse the physical body, we are robbers in God's sight.

Time is one of the most valuable gifts from God to man. How we do waste it! Hours and minutes are much more precious than dollars and cents. Some one has said that time is the stuff life is made of. So it is. Benjamin Franklin said that "if time be of all things the most precious, then wasting time is the greatest prodigality." In Ps. 90:12 we have this from one greater than Benjamin Franklin: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Kind reader, if you knew that your life consisted of but one hundred days more, how would you employ those hundred days? Do you know how many more days you will have? The blessed Christ said: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can

work.” (John 9 : 4.) How soon the night of death may overtake us! May we not rob our God of this valuable thing called time.

God’s ancient people robbed him of money. They did not give as their law directed. God called this robbing him. (Mal. 3: 8, 9.) Many members of the church today do not give as the New Testament law directs. (1 Cor. 16:1, 2.) God would class all such in the robber class. The first hypocrites in the church lied about what they were giving. (Acts 5.) Many today are acting a lie, which is equal to, if not worse than, telling one. We profess to give as we have been prospered. Are we doing it? When we love God and our fellow man as we should, giving will be easy. “The gift without the giver is bare.”

A very common way of robbing God is to rob him of a good influence. Many a dear soul has been led to Christ by the salutary influence of a real Christian. On the other hand, no doubt many a soul will be damned for eternity by the bad influence some one exerted over him. We may not be able to preach great sermons by our words, but the most humble child of the King can preach powerful sermons by the way he lives. Some one has said: “I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day.” How careful we should be of the sermons that folks “see!”

Many in our day are robbing God of worship. Jesus said, according to John 4:24: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Those who are not Christians after the New Testament order rob God by not worshipping as it is written. Those of us who have come into the church by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, and then worship as the New Testament directs, but are not sincere in our worship, are

robbing God by not worshipping "in spirit." Millions are trying to worship God according to the doctrines and commandments of men. (Matt. 15:9.)

Many are robbing God by wearing human names as religious designations. Of course if one has not obeyed the gospel plan of salvation, he is not a Christian and would have no divine right to wear the name Christian. The human names we hear on every hand today in so-called religious circles are inventions of men. God calls his people Christians. We learn when this name was first given from Acts 11:26. Paul preached to King Agrippa. After the king had heard the sermon, he said unto Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28.) Evidently this heathen king knew that if he obeyed the gospel that Paul preached he would be a Christian.

Preachers are sometimes guilty of taking a title that belongs to God alone and appropriating it to themselves. All about us today we hear people referring to preachers by the title "Reverend." Many seem to think that there is some Bible authority for this. No man was ever called by this name in the Bible. We do have this language in Ps. 111:9: "Holy and reverend is his name." God's name is "holy and reverend," but man's is neither. And then again some so-called religious teachers take the name of "Father." Jesus knew this would come to pass, so we hear him saying: "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." (Matt 23:9.) To take these titles which belong exclusively to God is disobeying and robbing God. Let us not be guilty of any such thing.

REPENT OR PERISH

Jesus said to those who were contemporaneous with him: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repeat, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3, 5.) The very salvation of our souls depends upon repentance. The subject looms large in the teaching of the New Testament. The forerunner of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:1, 2.) In the next chapter we hear this: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt 4:17.) Both John and Jesus held out the coming of the kingdom as a motive for repentance. In their day the kingdom was at hand. Jesus chose the twelve and sent them out to preach. What did they preach? Among other things they preached repentance. "And they went out, and preached that men should repent." (Mark 6:12.) It is still true that men should repent. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, he said that repentance should be preached. "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46, 47.) We should note what was to be preached and where this preaching was to have its beginning.

We follow the apostles till we come to the day of Pentecost. Then for the first time after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ the gospel is preached. This was the birthday of the New Testament

church. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37.) The gospel had been preached to the ones who had betrayed and murdered the Son of God. The preaching of this gospel had pricked their hearts. It made them ask the important question just quoted. This was in Jerusalem. Do not forget what Jesus had said should be preached, beginning at Jerusalem. So they no sooner asked Peter and the rest of the apostles what they must do than they had the answer. What was it? Hear it: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38.) Thus the apostles were preaching exactly what Jesus said should be preached, and they were beginning this preaching at the exact place where Jesus said it was to have its beginning.

Paul preached repentance. We hear him from Mars' hill, Athens, as he stands there and preaches Jesus Christ to those Athenian philosophers. Listen: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31.) God wants repentance preached to all men, and he wants all men to repent. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9.) My friend, have you come to repentance?

To get people to repent is one of the hardest things in the world to do. We must reckon with the stubbornness and obstinacy of the human will. It is comparatively easy to get folks to believe and to be baptized if we can get them to repent.

What is repentance? Some would tell us that it is a confession of sins. But such is not the case. It is possible to confess sin without repenting of it. Of course when one repents he will confess, but he may confess without repenting. Others tell us that repentance is reformation of life. And neither is this true. Reformation of life is a fruit of repentance. And then still others think that godly sorrow for sin is repentance, and they even think the Bible says this. But it does not. Godly sorrow for sins leads to repentance, but it is not repentance. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Cor. 7: 10.)

Our question is still unanswered. Jesus explained it this way: "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented and went." (Matt. 21:28, 29.) Now, if we can tell what that son did, we have what Jesus meant by repentance. Even a child would say that boy changed his mind, and that change of mind led to a change of conduct. This, my reader, is repentance.

Again, Jesus said: "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." (Luke 11:32.)

Whatever these people of Nineveh did, Jesus called repentance. He said they repented at the preaching of Jonah. We turn back to the book of Jonah to learn what they did. Jonah went there and preached. The people believed the preaching. They turned from their evil way. (Jonah 3: 10.) The preaching caused them to change their mind, and this change of mind led to turn from their evil way. This is repentance.

What would cause anyone to repent? The Bible holds out two motives to repentance. One of these is the fear of punishment. Jonah held out this motive when he said: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." (Jonah 3:4.) This "plain" preaching caused them to repent. It takes mighty plain preaching to cause some to repent. Jesus was using this method when he said: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The fear of eternal punishment in hell will cause some to repent and turn to God. We ought not fear to preach anything that is plainly taught in the Bible. Punishment in hell is taught for those who will not repent.

The goodness of God will cause some to repent. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4.) If we can get people to contemplate the goodness of God, many will be led to repentance. No doubt most are caused to repent by the co-mingling of both motives — the fear of punishment and the goodness of God. Children obey their parents through the fear of punishment and the goodness of their parents.

Sometimes folks ask how long they should “repent” before they are baptized! Of course, this shows a lack of understanding of the subject. It does not take long to change one’s mind. Saul of Tarsus changed his mind immediately when he saw that he was wrong. He thought that Jesus was an imposter; but when he saw his mistake, he was ready to say: “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6.) The Philippian jailer was baptized “the same hour of the night.” (Acts 16:33.)

15

BAPTISM

There are many honest souls confused on baptism. This is not the fault of the Bible, but it is the fault of false teachers. In this study we want to learn something about what God has said on this important question. Of course when men differ from God, they are wrong to the extent of the difference.

Action of Baptism

Just what is the act performed when one is scripturally baptized? In Matt. 3:16, 17 we are told of the baptism of Jesus. We read: “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Of course he could not have gone up out of the water unless he had first gone down into it. It does look like he was immersed, does it not?

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In the latter part of Acts 8 we have one of the very plainest cases of conversion — that of the Ethiopian nobleman. Let us read a little about his baptism. We read Acts 8:36—39: “And as they went their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” This record says that they came to the water, they went down into the water, and after the baptism they came up out of the water. My honest friends, it does look like immersion, does it not?

In John 3:23 we have this significant statement: “And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there.” Again it sounds like immersion.

But now we shall read where God tells beyond the peradventure of a doubt what the action of baptism is. First we read Rom. 6:3—5: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” We have the same teaching in Col. 2:12: “Buried with him in baptism,

wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." In baptism our bodies are washed with pure water. (Heb. 10:22.)

Subjects of Baptism

Who should be baptized? No one is a proper subject for baptism unless that one has been taught the gospel. In giving the Great Commission, Jesus said: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:19, 20.) You will note that teaching precedes baptism. The ones who are baptized are to be further taught to "observe all things."

No one is a proper subject for baptism unless he is a believer. Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16.) On the birthday of the church the ones that gladly received the word were the ones who were baptized. (Acts 2:41.) Of course these were believers.

No infant can meet the requirements for baptism, hence is not a proper subject for baptism. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:12.)

Persons must repent of their sins before they are bap-

tized. When the church was started, the ones who believed and cried out, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" were told to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:37, 38.)

Purposes of Baptism

Why should any and all responsible persons be baptized? We have already learned from Acts 2:38 that one of the primary purposes of baptism is "for the remission of sins." We cannot expect to have our sins forgiven unless we will do the things that bring about that forgiveness.

We are saved by baptism. Many will deny this positive declaration, But it is exactly what the divine record says. Hear it: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21.) While it remains in God's Book that baptism saves us, we had better comply with this condition of forgiveness.

We become children of God by baptism. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal 3:26, 27.) How many are in Christ? Just as many as have been baptized are in him. You cannot get into Jesus Christ in any other way. All who are in Christ have been baptized into him.

There are many sectarian bodies calling themselves churches that one can become a member of without bap-

tism, but you cannot become a member of the church that you read about in the Bible without being baptized into it. "For by one Spirit are we are baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13.) This one body is the church. (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 23.)

We have now learned the three great things about baptism. First, we have learned what the very act of baptism is — it is a burial; we have learned who the proper subjects for baptism are; and we have learned what some of the purposes of baptism are.

No doubt many dear, honest souls who are not Christians will read these lines. May I urge upon you to study carefully, and honestly, and diligently the word of God. The very salvation of our souls depends upon this. You cannot afford to take the word of a preacher for it. The world is full of false teachers. God's Book teaches all the same thing. Hunt up a congregation of the church of Christ in your community. If there is no congregation of the true church in your community, get in touch with some of us gospel preachers and let us see if we can start a church after the New Testament order in your community. By doing this you will not only save yourself, but you will be doing the thing that will bring about the salvation of many others, even after you are sleeping the long sleep. May God bless you in your efforts to find the truth.

BAPTIZED INTO WHAT?

Into the Name

We are baptized into the name of Christ. In giving the Great Commission, Jesus said: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:19, 20.)

Some say, "There is nothing in a name;" but the Scriptures do not so teach. There is much in the right name. Remission of sins is in the name. In Luke's account of the Great Commission we have this very significant language: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46, 47.)

Salvation is in the name of Christ. In fact, there is no salvation in any other name. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4: 12.) If we are ever saved, it is going to be in the name of Christ.

All authority is vested in the name of Christ. In all of our religious activities we must do all that we do in the name of Christ. "And whatsoever ye do in word of deed,

do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col. 3:17.) All that we ever do is something that we do either in word or deed. Christians should do nothing that they cannot do in the name of the Lord. Of course, to do it in the name of the Lord means to do it by his authority. If he has said nothing about it, then it is obvious that we could not do it in his name, or by his authority.

The name of Christ is pre-eminent. It is above every other name.. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:9–11.)

“Into His Death”

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

What is in his death? His blood is in his death. There is where his blood was poured out. “But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came

there out blood and water.” (John 19:34.) Remission of sins is in his death. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper, he said: “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matt. 26:28.)

The cleansing power is in the blood. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7.) “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” (1 John 5:6.) Christ sealed the New Testament with his blood.

Into His Body

We are baptized into the name of Christ; we are baptized into the death of Christ; and we are baptized into the body of Christ. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:13.)

This body of Christ is the church of Christ. “And he is the head of the body, the church.” (Col. 1:18.) Christ is the head of the body. There is one head and one body. “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. 22, 23.) This body is a divine organization. And there is just one! (Eph. 4:4.) In this body are the children of God. It is the family of the Lord.

“Into Christ”

We are baptized into Christ. There is no other way of getting in. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:26, 27.) What does it mean to be in Christ? Those who are in Christ are new creatures. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17.) When the old things have not passed away, you may be assured that person is not a new creature; and when he is not a new creature, he is not in Christ. To be in Christ means there is no condemnation. (Rom. 8:1.) While we remain out of Christ, we are condemned.

Redemption is in Christ, not out of him. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Eph. 1:7.)

All spiritual blessings are in Christ. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” (Eph. 1:3.)

Gentle reader, are you in Christ? do you know you are in him? It is a fearful thing to remain out of him. Do not be deceived. Many false teachers are gone out into the world. We are living in perilous times. Men are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. We have a form of godliness. Life is too short; death is too certain; judgment is too sure; and eternity is too long to take chances. Believe with all of your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Genuinely repent of all your past sins. Make a humble confession of your faith in Christ. Be baptized

into the name of Christ, into his death, into his body. Rise to walk in newness of life. Read the word of God daily. Pray without ceasing. Worship regularly. If you live right and worship right after becoming a Christian, all the bad men on earth and all the demons in hell cannot keep you out of heaven. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:14.) "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10.) "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." (Rev. 14:13.)

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SEVEN GREAT THINGS ABOUT PENTECOST

Great Day

Pentecost was a great day. It was one of the three annual feasts of the Jews. Seven weeks, called "sabbaths," were to be completed, and the forty-nine days must be finished, and the next day, the fiftieth, is what from the Septuagint we call "Pentecost." (Lev. 23:15.) The church of Jesus Christ had its beginning on the first Pentecost after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was fifty days after his resurrection from the grave. Pentecost always came on the first day of the week; hence, the church of the New Testament had its beginning on the first day of the week, or the Lord's day.

Great Place

Jerusalem was a great place. This was the holy city,

the beloved city of the Jews. Jesus wept over it, saying: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37.) What a bitter lamentation!

Jerusalem was the beginning place of the New Testament church. Any church that had its beginning at any place other than Jerusalem, or had its beginning time any other time than the first Pentecost after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, could not be the church that we read about in the Bible. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:2, 3.) Thus we have the birthplace of the church indicated hundreds of years before its beginning.

Just before Jesus ascended he gave to his apostles the Great Commission. Luke records it in these words: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:

46—49.) These apostles were to tarry in Jerusalem. Thus they did. “And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.” (Luke 24:51—53.)

Great Audience

When the day of Pentecost came, the apostles were all with one accord in one place in the city of Jerusalem. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:2—4.) Thus we have the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, enabling them to “speak with other tongues.”

The multitude was not there present when the Holy Ghost was poured out on these apostles; but “when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.” We would be *confounded* if we were to hear men who know but one language get up to preach with many different languages represented in their audience, and every man would hear them speak in his own language. This happened on the birthday of the church. It is not happening today. Men are not speaking with other tongues today. There were Jews there from every nation under heaven.

Great Preacher and a Great Sermon

The outstanding preacher of the day was Peter. He had been chosen many months before this by the Lord for this very occasion. He was the man with the keys of the kingdom of heaven. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:19.) It is the part of wisdom for us to note what Peter *bound* on the day of Pentecost; and do not forget that is what is bound in heaven.

Peter preached a great sermon. He had a great theme. He was preaching to lost men. His subject was salvation from sin. He preached Jesus Christ to this dying multitude. He preached the death of Christ for our sins, his burial, and his resurrection — yea, and his ascension to the right hand of God. Upon another occasion this same Peter said: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) There is no salvation in human names.

Great Question

In bringing his sermon to a climax the great preacher said: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." He was preaching to the very betrayers and murderers of the Son of God. They saw their lost condition. They saw that they were without God and without hope. They had been led by the preaching of the gospel to see that they were miserable sinners.

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2: 37.)

Great Answer

This multitude had asked the greatest question that can engage the mind of a thinking person. What was the inspired apostle's to this great question? Hear it: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” And do not forget that these conditions of pardon are bound in heaven. What did these people do to be saved? They heard the truth; they believed it; they repented of their sins and were baptized for the remission of their sins. This made them Christians. It saved them from their past sins. It made them members of the right church. It will do the very same thing for you.

Great Results

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” They were now saved from their past sins. How did they keep saved? “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2: 42.) “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord

added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:46, 47.)

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CAN A GOOD MAN BE SAVED OUT OF THE CHURCH?

It goes without saying that there are multitudes of good, honest, and sincere people who are not Christians; but it does not follow that their goodness, honesty, and sincerity will save one, then Christ died in vain. If one good man can be saved out of the church, there would be no reason why two good men could not be saved out of church, then all good men could be saved out of the church. Thus such reasoning would render the church a superfluous institution, the blood of Christ without any efficacy whatsoever, and the God of heaven guilty of a stupendous mistake! What rational person is ready to take such an untenable position?

I know of no better way of getting this lesson before the reader than by taking up the case of conversion recorded in the Acts of one of the very best of men. I am sure there is no better man out of the church than was Cornelius. In fact, his manner of life would put many who profess to be Christians to shame. But in spite of all of his goodness he was instructed to get a gospel preacher who would tell him what he ought to do to be saved. "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." (Acts 11:13, 14.) Of course he was not as yet saved, or he would not have needed to send for a preacher who would tell him words whereby he might be saved.

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It will be highly profitable to take a look at this good man before his conversion to Christ. He was a centurion in the Italian band. He was an officer in the Roman government. He was an army captain over a hundred men. He was stationed in Caesarea. The record says he was a devout man. That is a characteristic that is all too lacking even among professed Christians. "Devout" means pious, religious, sincere. One who is devout is devoted to religion or religious feelings, duties, or exercises. He is warmly devoted, not lukewarm. Cornelius was devout. I tell you, my friends, he was a good man, but he was not as yet a saved man.

The record further says that he was "one that feared God with all his house." He had a godly and wholesome fear of God, and this fear had permeated his household, and some, at least, of the soldiers under him partook of this godly fear. This characteristic is so rare in this wicked and adulterous age. So few are imbued with a fear of God. This Gentile army officer feared God. He did not want to offend God. It is no wonder he became a Christian as soon as he learned how. It does not take long to teach a man what to do to be saved if he really fears God and wants to keep his commandments.

This good man gave much alms to the people. He was working for a rich government. He had a stipulated income. There were many poor folks in the city where he was stationed. There are many poor folks in the community where you live. "For ye have the poor always with you." (Matt. 26:11.) In my humble judgment, we always shall have the poor with us, and whensoever we desire we can do them good. Cornelius gave "much." If God were writing the record of many "Christians" today, he could not use the word "much" in describing the

amount of their giving. Some members of the church will spend more for tobacco, soft drinks, shows, entertainment, etc., than they put into the work of the Lord. Surely such are not giving much! And this man was not a saved man!

And he "prayed to God alway." In fact, when we are introduced to him in our lesson he is observing the evening hour of prayer among the ancient Jews, "the ninth hour." There is power in prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16.) There is much told about prayer in this short verse. The prayer must be effectual and fervent and offered by a "righteous man." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Ps. 66:18.) Prayer must not be substituted for obedience. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." (Prov. 28:9.) Cornelius was a praying man, but not a saved man. We have many today who "pray always," but who are not saved.

Cornelius was a just man. He violated no right or obligation. He was fair and impartial. Here is another significant statement in the history of this good man: He was of good report among all the nations of the Jews. Cornelius must have been an exceptionally good man. Ordinarily the Jews would have had very little respect for a Gentile stationed in their midst, but they had a high regard for Cornelius. There are members of the church in our day who do not have a good report.

Now, what have we found about this good man? He was a devout man. He was one who feared God with all his house. He gave much alms to the people. He prayed to

God always. He was a just man, and was one of good report. And he was a lost man!

With such a record standing before us on the pages of inspiration, who can entertain the thought even for a moment that one can be saved out of the body of Christ? There was nothing wrong with this man's goodness and morality. There may be nothing wrong with yours, but unless you come in contact with the blood of Christ by virtue of your obedience to the gospel of Christ, you are lost and will be lost throughout a never-ending eternity. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

An angel of God told Cornelius to send for Peter. He made no delay. Men and women who fear God are not procrastinators. Although it was three o'clock in the afternoon, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier and sent them after the inspired preacher. Peter had never preached to Gentiles. It took a miracle to convince him that "God is no respecter of persons: but every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." In three days Peter was there. "Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends." What sincerity! What a worker!

Peter preached Christ unto them. They heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, believed it, obeyed it, were saved by it. Cornelius reached the blood of Christ when he was baptized into his death. Good men and bad men are saved by the blood of Christ. Jesus shed his blood in his death. We reach the cleansing blood by being baptized into his death. This is the way God saved this good man. This is the way you will be saved if you are ever saved. Make no delay. Come today.

“AND ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD”

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” (Gen 5:24.)

What a grand privilege it is to walk with God! So many would like to walk with the “great” of this earth, but so few are interested in walking with God. Different men require different things in order to walk with them. With some you cannot walk unless you have attained unto certain social standards. With others you cannot walk unless you have certain educational attainments. Others require political prestige, etc.

What does the Lord require? “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:8.) You can walk with men without doing justly and loving mercy and being humble, but you cannot walk with God without these. I fear that many who think they are walking with God are not.

When do men walk with God? Enoch walked with God in this life. “And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters; and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” (Gen. 5: 21–24.) That is a long time to walk with God.

In Amos 3:3 we have this question: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Enoch and God walked together. They agreed. A husband and wife cannot walk together except they agree. Brethren cannot walk together except they agree. To walk with God we must agree with God. Too many pretend that they want to walk with God, but they refuse to agree with God. It is too much to ask God to agree with us. The makers and users of human creeds want God to agree with them. We have the will of God in the Bible. We must conform our wills to God's. When we bow to his will, we can walk with him.

The Lord knows the way to heaven. We have never been over the way. We must allow him to lead. He will show us the way. To get into that way we must be buried by baptism. To stay in the way we must continue to obey the Lord in all of his divine appointments.

To walk with the Lord we must allow him to lead the way and show us the way. Too many are wanting to walk in their own ways. When folks ignore the Bible and follow the doctrines and commandments of men, they are walking in their own ways. You cannot tell by the way you feel whether you are right or wrong. Our conscience will approve whatever we have been taught to believe. One may feel perfectly right when he is just as wrong as he can be. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23.)

There is just one way to heaven. To get to heaven in the sweet afterwhile we must walk in this way with the Lord. Hundreds of years before this way was opened the

prophet Isaiah said: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (Isa. 35:8.) This was written a little more than seven hundred years before Christ came. When he came, he talked about the way. In the sermon on the Mount he said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13, 14.)

You will note that both Isaiah and Christ talk about "the way." They say nothing of "ways" to heaven. What is *the* way? Jesus answers in John 14:6, when he says: "I am the way." We get to that way by being drawn by God through the power that inheres in the word. In John 6:44 we are told by Jesus that we cannot come to him unless the Father draws us, and then in the next verse he explains that this drawing is done by teaching. The same thought is expressed by Paul in Rom. 1:16, when he says the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

We are drawn to the way by hearing the gospel of Christ, and then we are baptized into the way. Thus we are told in many different places. In Rom. 6:3 we are informed that we are baptized into Christ. We further learn from 1 Cor. 12:13 that we are baptized into one body. This one body is the church. (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 23; Eph. 5:25-28.) We become children of God and get into Christ by baptism. (Gal. 3:26, 27.) There is no other way to walk with God but this way.

To walk with the Lord we must walk in the light of his word. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:6, 7.) There has been a lot of unnecessary talk about big in fellowship with such and such people. We may be in fellowship (partnership) with men, but not with the Lord. To be in fellowship with him we have to walk in the light. When we do this, we are in fellowship with every other person who thus walks. All Christians are in fellowship with the Lord. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that bideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

To walk with the Lord we must walk by faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please him." (Heb. 11: 6.) To walk by faith means to walk by the word of God. Our faith comes by hearing him. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10: 17.) When we can hear God, we are walking by faith. When we are doing things about which God has not spoken, we are walking without faith. Not one step should be taken in matters religious unless we can read the directions in the Bible. When we thus go beyond what is written, we are leaving God and Christ. We have neither. We are walking without them. This we cannot afford to do.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the

law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Ps. 1.)

20

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Much has been said and written upon the above subject. I cannot hope to add anything new, but I do want to direct our minds in a simple study of this question. Every argument that has been advanced in favor of using instrumental music in the worship of Christians has been met and demolished times without number. About the best that some can offer in its favor is: "We want it, and we are going to have it." I am not vain enough to think that I can reach such with reason, but there are many who are honest and who are honestly mistaken regarding this serious matter.

The inspired Peter said that Christians should "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15.) In this article I want to give some

fundamental reasons why the church of Christ does not use mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God.

Does it take the use of instrumental music in worship to make the man of God perfect? Is it a good work? If so, it would not be hard to find authority for its use in the sacred writings. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)

Does the use of instrumental music in the worship pertain unto life and godliness? If so, God has told us all about it. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and goldliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:3.)

Suppose there is no divine authority for its use, then what? Suppose it is no part of the oracles of God, and that men have had the presumption to add its use to divine worship, what then? Listen: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.) Instrumental music in the worship of Christians is no part of the doctrine of Christ. It is an addition. It is going beyond. It is transgression. What a serious thing!

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I

now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1: 8, 9.) The use of instrumental music in Christian worship was no part of the gospel that Paul or any other inspired preacher preached. It was not used in the apostolic church. Its use came in hundreds of years after the last inspired preacher was dead. The curse of God is resting upon those who would preach something that Paul did not preach. Again we say this is a serious thing!

God's blessed Book closes with this solemn warning: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Rev. 22:18, 19.) And again we exclaim that this is a serious matter!

Some will say that they cannot understand how a thing could be all right in our homes, but wrong in the Church. I believe we can make this plain. It is perfectly all right to have ham and eggs on our tables at home, but it would be sinful and wrong to add them to the Lord's table. Why right in the one case and wrong on the other? My dear reader, God has legislated regarding what shall be on his table. We are at liberty regarding our own table. There is just as much authority for the adding of ham and eggs to the bread and wine of the Lord's table as there is for worship. God has not told us what not to have on the Lord's table, but he has told us what to have; hence, everything else is excluded. God tells us to make melody,

and even mentions the organs upon which that melody, is to be made. It is the heart. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph. 5: 19.)

Some will say that there is nothing in the Bible for its use in Christian worship, neither is there anything against it. If this were true, that would make the use of it a sin. It has not been left to our discretion how God shall be worshiped. He has spoken. When we go ahead and do things as acts of worship when God has not spoken, we do so without faith. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10: 17.) Faith comes by hearing God. You cannot hear God on the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. He has not said a word about it. It is impossible to use it by faith.

Others try to justify its use upon the grounds that it was used in Jewish worship. We are not under Moses, but under Christ. God says we must hear his Son. (Matt. 17: 5.) You are not hearing the Son of God when you try to justify the use of instrumental music in Christian worship by the law of Moses. God spoke unto the old Jewish fathers by the prophets, but he has spoken unto us by his Son. (Heb. 1: 1, 2.) Instrumental music in Jewish worship was introduced in the darkest days of Israel's history about four hundred fifty years after Sinai. Why try to bring over instrumental music, but leave out animal sacrifices and the burning of incense? "O consistency, thou art a jewel!" Instrumental music in connection with Jewish worship is mentioned about three dozen times in the Old Testament, but it is not named once in the New Testament in connection with Christian worship. Does this mean nothing to you?

It is dangerous to go to the old law of Moses to try to justify our practices today. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2: 10.) In the days of Paul some Jewish Christians were trying to bring over circumcision as a religious rite, trying to justify themselves in thus doing by the law. How did Paul reason along this line? Hear him: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Gal. 5; 1-4) Listen to these significant statements: "yoke of bondage;" "Christ shall profit you nothing;" "debtor to do the whole law;" "Christ is become of no effect unto you;" "ye are fallen from grace."

All Bible students are agreed that the holy place of the old Jewish tabernacle was a type of the church. There was no instrumental music used in this holy place.

My friends, the use of instrumental music in Christian worship is of human origin. The idea is not in the original Greek of the New Testament. Christ and his inspired apostles left it out of the New Testament worship. It came from Rome instead of from Jerusalem. It came from the pope instead of Christ. Why not be satisfied with the kind of music that God wants? (Matt. 26: 30; Acts 16: 25; Rom. 15: 9; 1 Cor. 14: 15; Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16; James 5: 13.)

HOW A RELIGIOUS MAN BECAME A CHRISTIAN

All Christians are religious, but not all religious people are Christians. We have millions of people in our beloved country who are deeply and sincerely religious, but who are not Christians. One may be religious, but religiously wrong. We have accounts in the book of Acts of individuals who were very religious, but who were not Christians, consequently were not saved.

In Acts 8: 26—40 we have a rather minute description of a man who was sincere and honest and who was certainly very religious but he was not a Christian. This man was an officer under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He evidently was a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish religion. In our lesson we are introduced to him after he had been to Jerusalem to worship and was on his way back to Africa. In other words, he had made a journey of a thousand miles to worship the God of heaven. He had dropped the heavy duties of his office and had gone to worship God. He had a very lucrative position. In those days Ethiopia was one of the great countries of the world. This man was the Queen's treasurer. But he took time off to go to worship. This man knew nothing but the Old Testament law. He knew that under that law God had recorded his name in Jerusalem, and that every male in Israel was to go there to worship at the three annual feasts. How sincere he was!

After being at Jerusalem he was on his way back. He was going along the road reading the Old Testament. He was reading a hard passage for an unconverted Jew to

understand. He was reading this passage from Isa. 53: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth." He was pondering on this Scripture. He could not understand it. He knew not of whom the prophet spoke.

In this neighborhood there was a gospel preacher by the name of Philip. An angel of the Lord spoke to the preacher. Please note that the angel did not appear to the man who was to be converted. The man who became a Christian knew nothing of the appearance of the angel unless the preacher told him. Even had the angel made his appearance to the man, he would not have told him what to do to be saved. The Lord had committed the preaching of the gospel into the hands of men. We have the treasure of the gospel in earthen vessels. (2 Cor. 4: 7.) The angel was a heavenly vessel; so he made his appearance to the preacher, an earthen vessel.

The angel of the Lord told Philip: "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert." This way was the road the eunuch was travelling. The preacher "arose and went." The Lord is well pleased with any individual who will thus obey. Of course when the preacher had gotten into this road he had done what the angel told him to do. What next? This religious man was passing along the road. Now the Spirit speaks to the preacher. Please note that the Spirit did not speak to the man who was to be converted. The Holy Spirit is a heavenly vessel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels."

The Spirit told the preacher to join himself to the chariot. How readily he obeyed! The record says: "And Philip ran thither to him." How anxious gospel preachers ought to be to "run" to the unsaved! Philip heard the man reading the passage from Isaiah. The first thing he did was to ask this question: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Well did Philip know that if a man understood this passage he knew something at least about the blessed Christ. But he did not understand it! He answered the question by saying: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" He desired some one to teach him. How easy to reach one who wants to be taught! He desired Philip to come up and sit with him.

So we have the beautiful picture of an earnest, humble gospel preacher and a lost soul riding along the highway. What did the preacher preach? This great question can be answered in one word. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." What a religious revolution would be worked if all preachers knew nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified! What this old world needs is Jesus Christ. What you need, my gentle reader, is Jesus Christ. Philip began preaching with a prophetic declaration concerning the Christ. He would come up to his birth, to his life, to his vicarious death, his burial, and his resurrection. He kept right on until he had told this dear soul what the Lord commanded him to do to be saved.

No preacher is preaching Jesus Christ who does not preach what Christ wants preached. No one can preach Jesus Christ without telling lost souls what Christ would have them to do to be saved. No preacher is telling what Jesus says folks must do to be saved unless he tells them

plainly that they must be baptized to be saved. This is what Jesus said to preach. Hear him: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 15, 16.)

This is what Philip preached. How did this honest, sincere, religious man receive such preaching? Here is the record: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Just as soon as he learned what God would have him to do, he was ready to do it. May God help us all to be that honest.

Did the preacher have him to tell some "religious experience?" No, a thousand times no! Did he have some church to vote on it? Indeed he did not! What did the preacher say? Here it is: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Now note what the man said he believed that he was already saved, but he believed that Jesus Christ is God's Son.

Upon this simple confession of faith he was baptized. "And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

22

A MESSAGE FROM HELL

In Luke 16: 19-31 Christ gives us an account of two men. One was rich, the other poor; one was righteous, the other wicked; one was saved, the other lost. The one who

was saved was not saved because he was poor, but because he obeyed God; the one who was rich was not lost because he was rich, but because he refused to obey God. "The rich man also dies, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

The Bible meets all false doctrines which have ever been taught, are now being taught, or which ever will be taught. Christians should be able to refute false doctrines on every hand. This one passage of God's holy word is enough to put to rout many present-day false teachers.

There is in the world the doctrine of universal salvation. According to this doctrine, all men will be saved. Of course not one could be lost without giving the lie to this doctrine. If one were to be lost, salvation would not be "universal." Jesus Christ was not a Universalist. He said this man died, and "lifted up his eyes, being in torments." He has this rich man in hell saying: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." If this man were not lost, what condition would one have to be in to be lost? My friends, the doctrine of universal salvation is false to the core. The inspired men who wrote the Bible were not Universalists. Had they been, there are many passages which would not have been written.

Another very popular doctrine of our day is Russellism. One of the outstanding tenets of this doctrine is that of a "second chance." Jesus did not believe this doctrine. He tells of a man who died and lifted up his eyes in torments. He begged for mercy. There was none extended

to him. How this lost soul would have welcomed the "second chance" doctrine! Now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6 : 2.) "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and wordly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Tit. 2: 11, 12.) When is this living soberly, righteously, and godly to be done? Hear it: "In this *present* world." No, the inspired writers were not Russellites. Had they been, many choice passages would not have been written.

Another very prominent doctrine is the doctrine of materialism. Man is all matter. He is not a living soul. Death ends all. There is no future existence or recognition. Jesus Christ was not a materialist. These two men did not cease to exist when they died. They were as much alive as ever. The spirit of man can live out of the body as well as in it. Paul argued it after this fashion: "I knew a man in Christ fourteen years ago, (Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such as one caught up to the third heaven." (2 Cor. 12: 2.) When the spirit leaves the body, the body is dead, but the spirit does not cease to exist. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2: 26.) The inspired writers of the Bible were no materialists.

Another very popular doctrine of our day is spiritualism. One of the chief tenets of this belief is that departed spirits hold intercourse with morals, especially through a medium. Jesus Christ was not a believer in this kind of spiritualism. This man in hell wanted to get a message back to earth to the boys at home. No doubt he knew they were headed for the same place. What a wonderful

opportunity for him to have conveyed this message to them from the "spirit world!" Why did he not do this? What does Jesus say about this? Listen: "In other words, Lazarus saved his soul by hearing the word of God and obeying it. Those brothers of the rich man had the same thing by which they could save their souls. Evidently this rich man had no time for the word while he was alive on the earth, and even when he was in hell he did not think it was sufficient! However, Jesus taught: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." How true! How true! Since Jesus thus taught, he died, was buried, raised from the dead, and ascended. Before his ascension he gave the plan by which men are to be saved, but many will not be persuaded.

Some teach the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, separate and apart from the word. Here was a wonderful opportunity for the Holy Spirit to thus operate. The Holy Spirit operates upon the heart of the sinner in conversion, but he operates through the word. No Christians are made without being taught the truth of the gospel. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10: 13, 14.) "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10: 17.) The inspired writers did not believe in the direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

In some creeds made by men we have the doctrine of "elect" and "nonelect" —that is, some are "elected" to eternal life and others are of the "nonelect," and there is

nothing they can do about it. Did Jesus thus teach in the passage under consideration? Did he say that two of these boys had been "elected" from all eternity to eternal life and that the other three were "nonelect"? You know he did not thus teach. On the contrary, all could be saved by obedience to God. Thus it is. Who are the elect? The ones who choose to hear and obey God. Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 16.) In the very last chapter of God's inspired Book we have this language: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." My friend, that "whosoever" includes you and me.

We have room to mention one more erroneous doctrine. That is the doctrine of purgatory. I guess all the readers know who teaches this. What is this doctrine? Webster, in defining the word, says: "A state or place of purification after death, where, as Roman Catholics and some others believe, certain offences may be expiated." Roman Catholics and some others may believe this soul-destroying doctrine, but Jesus and the inspired writers of the Bible did not believe it. No, they were not Roman Catholics.

23

"WHAT SHALL I DO THEN WITH JESUS?"

"Pilate saith unto them. What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. 27: 22.)

96

Governor Pilate had Jesus on his hands and did not know what to do with him. For more than nineteen hundred years humanity has had Jesus on their hands. Many are troubled even as Pilate. He knew he had to do something with him. We know we have to do something with him. Never was a question fraught with greater significance. Our future in this life and throughout eternity depends upon what we do with Jesus. We cannot afford to make a mistake. We must not do the wrong thing.

When Pilate asked this question of the Jews, they answered! Of course we could not crucify him in the primary sense, but many crucified him afresh. "Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Heb. 6: 4-6.) "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Heb. 6: 4-6.) What an awful condition! God forbid that any who may read this may ever be guilty of such.

Judas had Jesus on his hands, and sold out to the devil for fifteen dollars! "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him." (Matt. 26: 14-16.) Betrayed by one of his friends! Thus many have done, and some for even less than thirty

pieces of silver. Too many are willing to sell out for money, prestige, or popularity.

And Peter denied him! Let us read this sad story: "And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept." (Mark 14: 66-72.) How easy it is to deny him when you get with the wrong crowd! And there are more ways than one of denying him. We do not have to curse and to swear, saying we do not know him. We may not go that far, but deny him just the same. "When he thought thereon, he wept." My reader, if you have denied him, will you not think thereon? If so, I am sure you will weep even to repentance.

While Jesus was here on earth some of the disciples forsook him and walked no more with him. How could they do it? But ever thus has it been. Some walk with him for a while and then go back and walk no more with him. You can go back on him; but when you do, to whom shall you go? "From that time many of his disciples went back,

and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6: 66-68.) There are thousands of disciples right in our own country who have forsaken the Lord of Glory. Let us find as many of them as possible and get them to repent before they perish.

Pilate tried to be neutral. So many have tried this. There are some things on which we can be neutral, but this is not one of them. Jesus said: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." (Matt. 22: 30.) If we are not actively for Jesus, we are passively against him. We ought to be out and out for him. We ought not to be ashamed nor afraid to take a decided stand for him; and if we do not thus take a firm stand, the devil will get us.

Before his conversion, Paul persecuted Jesus; and when we persecute the least of his disciples, we are persecuting him. Paul was going over to Damascus to bind Christians and bring them bound to Jerusalem to be punished. But on the way Jesus appeared to him. "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (Acts 9: 4, 5.) It is a terrible thing to persecute the Lord. Paul obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly. When he saw his terrible mistake, he left the persecutors and cast his lot with the persecuted. And how he was persecuted!

A very fatal thing to do with Jesus is to postpone our obedience to him. Felix made this fatal mistake. Paul

preached a great sermon to him. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." (Acts 24: 25.) But he never called! It is never convenient to quit sin. That is a very inconvenient thing to do. Felix was a bad character, and it is no wonder that a gospel sermon on righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come would make such a one tremble. I have an idea there would be more trembling done today if we would preach more on righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come.

And then King Agrippa was almost persuaded! Paul preached to him. Agrippa listened with rapt attention. "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26: 28.) Well did this king know that if he obeyed the gospel that Paul preached he would be a Christian. Nothing else under heaven will make Christians but obedience to the gospel of Christ.

And now we have mentioned eight sad things that can be done with Jesus. Let us take a hasty review. (1) We can crucify him afresh and put him to an open shame; (2) we can sell out to the devil; (3) we can deny him; (4) we can forsake him and walk no more with him; (5) we can try to occupy neutral ground; (6) we can persecute him; (7) we can postpone our decision; (8) we can be almost persuaded to accept him.

Now for the happy ending. We can do like so many did on the birthday of the church. They heard the gospel of Christ; they believed the gospel after hearing; they saw that Jesus is Christ; they repented of their sins; they were

baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins. When they did this, they were saved. God added them to the church. (Acts 2: 37-47.) And when you do the same thing, you will be the same thing. The Lord will save you. He will add you to his church. He never makes a mistake. He will not make one in your case.

May the dear Lord help everyone to accept Jesus Christ by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, and then to rise to walk in newness of life. If thus you will do, he will welcome you home in the sweet afterwhile. Glorious consummation!

24

BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH IN EUROPE

We read about this beginning in Acts 16. This beginning was about twenty years after the church had its beginning at Jerusalem. In other words, the gospel had been preached in Asia for about twenty years before it was carried to continental Europe. This beginning in Europe is intensely interesting to all Bible students.

Paul and Silas "went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." Then they came to Derbe and Lystra. Here they found Timothy. Timothy had been converted on a previous journey of Paul to these parts. Perhaps he had now been a member of the church for four or five years. He had made remarkable progress. Paul was ever on the lookout for young men who would make gospel preachers. So ought we to be. Timothy had a good report of the brethren who knew him best. Had he

not had this good report, Paul would not have taken him with him. No man should stand before the public as a preacher who does not have a good report. Paul would be a great help to Timothy and Timothy would be a great help to Paul. There could be no better experienced preacher. Too many boys are sent out to preach before they are ready. These three preachers were travelling together. Paul's mind was to go into Asia, but he was forbidden of the Holy Spirit. His next thought was to go into Bithynia, but again he was forbidden of the holy Spirit. So they kept on going toward the west. They passed Mysia and came down to Troas. Troas was a little seaport on the Ægean Sea. Here Luke, the writer of Acts, joined the company of preachers.

In the night the Lord showed Paul something in a vision. "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia; and help us." Luke very aptly says: "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." They went down to the wharf and caught a boat sailing for Macedonia. They were just two days making the trip over that expanse of water. The winds were favorable. They landed at Neapolis. Philippi, a Roman colony, was ten or twelve miles inland; and they "were in that city abiding certain days."

On the Jewish Sabbath they went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made. A bunch of women were accustomed to come to this place for prayer. It took ten men to constitute a synagogue, but here a bunch of women had gathered. There were

but few Jews in this Roman city. Lydia, a seller of purple, and other women were there. In the absence of a Jewish synagogue, they had gone out by the river to have prayer. Lydia was of Thyatira. She was far away from home over land and water, but she worshipped God. So many in our day when they get away from home almost forget God. Of course, she was wrong in her worship, but under the circumstances she was doing the best she knew.

This was a great opportunity for these gospel preachers. Paul was the preacher. The inspired record says that the Lord opened her heart. This simply means that her mind was enlightened by the preaching of the gospel. The word "opened" is from a Greek term which means "to open up wide or completely like a folding door." This is God's way of opening hearts. The gospel is his power to accomplish this. When honest souls hear the truth of the gospel, they will open their hearts wide and completely.

From one gospel sermon Lydia and her household learned that they must be baptized to be saved. When folks today hear a real gospel sermon from a real gospel preacher, they learn that they must be baptized to be saved—and they learn that in the first sermon they hear! Sermons that do not teach folks what they must do to be saved are not gospel sermons. They do not have the right ring. There is no evidence that Lydia was even a married woman, to say nothing of the infants in her household. Her household consisted of the women who worked for her. Immediately after coming into the church she went to work. She kept the preachers!

The preachers continued in Philippi. The next convert

was the jailer. "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying." This unfortunate girl was possessed with a demon. She followed the preachers, crying: "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." She did this for many days. Then Paul turned on the unclean spirit that was in her, saying: "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." Of course, he came out the same hour.

This brought down the wrath of her masters upon the heads of the preachers. They laid hold on Paul and Silas and brought them into the market place unto the rulers. After they had been charged with troubling the city and teaching customs which were not lawful for the Romans to receive, the multitude rose up together against them. When Paul went into a city, there was either a riot or a revival—sometimes both! The rulers tore the clothes off Paul and Silas, and then they were shamefully beaten with many stripes. The Jewish practice was forty stripes, save one. (2 Cor. 11: 24.) The Roman custom depended upon the whims of the judge. It was a terrible ordeal.

After they had been beaten, they were delivered to the jailer. He was charged to keep them safely. To allow a prisoner to escape meant his death. He took no chances. He thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. How these preachers must have suffered from the terrible beating which they had just received, from their loss of blood, and the torture of being in the stocks!

Listen: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." What praying and what singing that must have been! There was no doubt about the sincerity of this. They were praying and singing "with the spirit and the understanding." (1 Cor. 14: 15.) Who heard them? "And the prisoners heard them." Yes, and God heard them! "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." God shook the foundations of that old prison and tore those doors open.

The commotion woke the jailer. He was just ready to kill himself. Paul cried with a loud voice, saying: "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." He called for a light, and came trembling, falling down before Paul and Silas. He brought them out of the jail and said: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Of course, the answer came in ringing tones: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." He could not believe on one of whom he had never heard. (Rom. 10: 13-17.) So "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." Gospel preachers speak the word of the Lord. They do not speak their own words or the words of men. It takes the word of the Lord to save men. (Rom. 1: 16.)

The jailer heard, believed, and was baptized. We know he repented. Before he was baptized "he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes." Can you not almost see him as he tenderly washes the backs of the preachers who had been so severely beaten a few hours before? After this he was baptized, he and all his, straightway. He did not put it off. There were no children, mere

infants, baptized. The ones who were baptized were believers. After hearing the gospel of Christ, believing it, and obeying it by faith, repentance, and baptism, what were they religiously? We all know they were Christians — members of the church of Christ. So you will be when you hear and obey the same gospel.

Thus had the church its auspicious beginning in Europe.

25

“TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE”

Our text is found in 1 Sam. 15: 22. The whole verse reads this way: “And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than the fat of rams.” All careful Bible readers know that this language of Samuel was addressed to King Saul, the first king of Israel. The great fundamental and underlying principles enunciated in this verse are so sadly and badly needed in the world today.

In the early days of his career Saul was great and sincere and humble in the eyes of the Lord, but he ended this career disgracefully and in shame. How many others have done likewise! God’s ancient people grew restless with God’s arrangement relative to their government and worship. They clamored for a king. One of their chief reasons for desiring a king was that Samuel had made his sons judges over Israel. Samuel made a mistake in setting these boys over Israel. They lacked the necessary qualifi-

cations. The record says: "And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." (1 Sam. 8: 3.) This gave the Israelites a pretext for asking for a king. This request displeased the old prophet mightily. He was sad and downcast. In this condition of spirit he prayed unto Jehovah. God assured him that the people had not rejected him, but that they had rejected the Lord.

God told Samuel to hearken unto the people, but "yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall rule over them." This Samuel did with all the earnestness of his soul. After the people had heard these solemn protests and warnings, they still insisted upon having a king, saying: "Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." (1 Sam. 8: 19, 20.)

They were more interested in being "like all the nations" than they were in obeying the Lord. Of course Samuel made a mistake in elevating his sons to be judges over Israel when they were so utterly unfit for the place, but this was no reason why the people should reject the right ways of the Lord. Two wrongs never make one right. In the church today how often men are put into responsible places who are woefully lacking in the necessary qualifications! How many times men are placed in the eldership and deaconship who are so devoid of the characteristics which God says these men must have! This is a lamentable condition confronting us, and can be corrected by allowing the word of the Lord to govern us. Because wrong men may be put into high places does not justify the rest of us in refusing to be humble and sincere

Christians. Substituting some other way for the Lord's way will not solve our problems.

These ancient people of the Lord wanted to be "like all the nations." What a dangerous tendency! Sometimes Christians (?) in our day are by the same bug! The old church of God, with its divine appointments, is just not quite the thing with this class. They would like to "improve" it somewhat! They clamor for a few modern frills and fancies. This very thing has caused division in the church even in our day. Some want this and some want that in the worship when Jehovah has not spoken. Remember, my erring brethren, God said that his ancient people had not rejected Samuel, but that they had rejected the Lord. If we reject him, he also will reject us.

When it came to selecting the first king of Israel, God made this selection. He chose Saul, the son of Kish. The Lord made this choice even before the people knew anything about the selection. God made no mistake in the selection. The record says of Saul that he was "a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." (1 Sam. 9: 2.) He had a fine and pleasing personality and an outstanding physique. He was not "head and shoulders" above all others, as we are wont to say, but he was neck and head higher than any of the people.

God had told Samuel that Saul was to be king. When Samuel imparted this knowledge to Saul, the humility of Saul is refreshing indeed. "And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the

tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (1 Sam 9: 21.) Saul was indeed small in his own eyes. Great men always are. Samuel anointed him king. Samuel called all the people together at Mizpeh. Here he was to be publicly anointed. And when the time came for the ceremonies, he could not be found. He had hid! What strange actions for the man who was to be made king! The Lord said: "Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff." How different his subsequent history would have been had he always been this humble and meek!

Some four hundred years before the days of Saul, in the days of Moses, during the wilderness wanderings, the Amalekites had made war on God's people. (Ex. 17: 8-14.) At that time the Lord said unto Moses: "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." The centuries had come and gone, and still the people of Amalek were a mighty force with which to be reckoned. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet. 3: 8.)

The time had arrived for the carrying out this prophecy. God said to Saul through Samuel: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Sam. 15: 3.) Saul departed on this mission. But here is the sad thing: "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that

they destroyed utterly." Yes, and they took Agag, the king, alive. God said to "utterly destroy," but Saul was going to "improve" on the Lord's command by sparing the best and bringing them back and offer a great sacrifice. Yes, they would have a big public celebration and an "all-day meeting," celebrating their victory over the Amalekites.

What did God say to all this! "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments." (1 Sam. 15: 11.) Even Samuel was grieved and cried unto the Lord all night. Saul returned rejoicing, saying: "I have performed the commandments of the Lord." But he had not. Samuel said to him: "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Saul had been weak and vacillating in listening to the whims of his soldiers. Finally Saul saw his great mistake and said: "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice."

26

HOLY GHOST BAPTISM

In this article we want to study the subject of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and the baptism of water. I am sure that both are misunderstood by many dear souls today. There should be no confusion regarding these two baptisms.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a promise. We read of this promise in Joel 2: 28. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the hand-maids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." There might be some question relative to when this prophecy had its fulfillment, but happily the inspired Peter quoted this very prophecy on the day of Pentecost and applied it to the happenings of that day. In his preface to the quotation Peter said: "This is that." (Acts 2: 16-21.)

The baptism of the Holy Ghost was a promise, not a command. No one was ever commanded to be baptized in the Holy Ghost. Water baptism is a command. On the birthday of the church when inquiring believers asked what they should do to be saved, they were told to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2: 37, 38.) When the first Gentile became a Christian, we have this very significant statement: "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (Acts 10: 48.) The believing, praying, penitent Saul was commanded to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22: 16.) Commands of God should be obeyed. Have you obeyed this one?

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a promise to certain individuals. Just before Jesus ascended he said this to his chosen apostles: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from

on high.” (Luke 24 : 49.) “And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” (Acts 1 : 4, 5.)

The baptism of the Holy Ghost was a limited promise. It was not for all men. Baptism in water is for all men. Jesus said: “Go ye into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16 : 15, 16.) And just before he ascended he said: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28 : 18–20.) Once more we read from the blessed Christ: “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins shall be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24 : 46, 47.)

The baptism of the Holy Ghost was a promise made to certain individuals, and it was to take place within a few days after Christ had made the promise. We have already seen this from the above quotations. In just a few days after this promise was made by Christ to his apostles it was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2 : 1–8.) It was a limited promise. We have seen from the above readings that baptism in water is for all men until time shall be no more.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was to make witnesses. In making the promise Jesus said: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1 : 8.)

The baptism of the Holy Ghost was not to regenerate. It was not to save from sin. Baptism in water is associated with regeneration. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Tit. 3 : 5.)

The baptism of the Holy Ghost was miraculous. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2 : 2-4.)

It was not for good feelings. When we are baptized in water for the remission of our sins, we have cause for rejoicing. "And he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8 : 39.) This was said of a man who had just been baptized in water for the remission of his sins. In Acts 16 : 34 we read of another man who "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." He had heard the word of the gospel, and had obeyed it "the same hour of the night." Have you been made to rejoice in the forgiveness of your sins? You cannot have this cause for rejoicing until you have complied with God's stipulated law of pardon.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was not something that was "better felt than told." It could be seen and heard. In his matchless sermon on Pentecost, Peter said: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2 : 33.) Of course we all know that baptism in water can be seen.

When the gospel was first preached, it had to be confirmed. How did God do this? "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2 : 3, 4.) His holy word needs no further confirmation.

Baptism in water is to save us from our past sins. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3 : 21.)

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

By the term "Christian worship" we mean that worship authorized by God in the New Testament incumbent upon Christians today. The word "worship" occurs in the English translation of the Bible nearly

two hundred times. However, God has never in any dispensation of religious history simply commanded men to worship. He has always been specific, explicit, and definite relative to how he wants to be worshiped. In other words, how to worship God has never been left to man's discretion. When we look around upon the religious world about us today, we might conclude that it makes very little difference how men worship. But, my friends, such is far from the case.

Very early in the history of the human family we have an account of two men, Cain and Abel, worshiping God. We read about this act of worship in Gen. 4: 3-5. Let us hear it: "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Cain must have been one of those fellows guided by "sanctified common sense"! Evidently he reasoned that it made no material difference what was offered in sacrifice just so something was offered. By deductive reasoning we can learn that God had commanded a certain kind of offering. We are told in Heb. 11 : 4 that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." And then we turn to Rom. 10: 17 and learn that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Paraphrasing this language without doing violence to its meaning, we may say that faith comes by hearing God. Abel heard God; Cain refused to listen to God. God accepted Abel's offering, but rejected Cain's. So it is.

My gentle reader, we have come to the very crux of this whole matter of Christian worship. We have a guide-book. That book is the New Testament. If we are to worship God acceptably today, we must be guided in our worship by this book. Upon one occasion the blessed Christ used this language: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4 : 24.) Here Jesus laid down two essential elements relative to acceptable worship. The worship must be according to truth, and it must be in spirit. Much worship in this day is valueless, because it is not according to the truth of God. On the other hand, much worship falls into this same category, because the worships are not in earnest. Many of my own brethren are guilty just here. Worshipping God is a serious matter and should be treated seriously. When we are asleep during the hour of worship, whispering, laughing, visiting, and such like, we are not worshipping the God of Heaven.

In the world today there is much idol worship, and there is much idle worship! One may bow down to the goddess of pleasure. Here would be a good passage for all such to meditate upon: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2: 15-17.) Some worship the goddess of fashion, but we hear an inspired writer saying this: "For the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. 7 : 31.) And yet still others worship the god of mammon. Jesus had something to say about this. Hear him: "No man can serve two

masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6 : 24.) When Jesus Christ says we cannot do a thing, we had better not try it.

We could not well write on this subject without calling attention to an important thing that fell from the lips of the humble Christ. Let us read it slowly and think seriously: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. 15 : 8, 9.) Oh, how many in this age draw near unto God with their mouth and honor him with their lips, but the heart is far from him!

Unless we worship as it is written, our worship is vain. What did the early Christians do when they worshiped? What do Christians today do when they worship? Whatever early Christians did to constitute acceptable worship, we must do. It will be profitable for us to think together along these lines. Of course we can but mention some of the items of worship.

The New Testament teaches Christians to sing. (1 Cor. 14: 15; Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16; Rom. 15 : 9.) The early Christians did this. This is worship. The New Testament does not teach Christians to play on musical instruments in worship. There is not one scintilla of evidence for the use of instrumental music in Christian worship in the New Testament. This is simply part of the doctrines and commandments of men. Such is vain worship.

The New Testament teaches Christians to pray. (Luke 18 : 1; 1 Cor. 14 : 15; 1 Thess. 5 : 17.) The early Christians did this. This is Christian worship. May the dear Lord help his people to pray with the spirit and with the understanding also.

The New Testament teaches Christians to give as they are prospered. (1 Cor. 16 : 1, 2; 2 Cor. 8 : 7.) The early Christians did this. This is Christian worship. To have fairs and suppers and things of that kind to raise money to carry on New Testament work is not worship; it is sin.

The New Testament teaches Christians to observe the Lord's Supper on the Lord's day. (Acts 20 : 7.) The early Christians did this. This is Christian worship. To observe the Supper upon any other day than the Lord's day, or less frequently than every first day of the week, would not be worshipping "as it is written."

The New Testament teaches Christians to teach and preach the word. The early Christians did this; in fact, the record says: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2 : 42.) This is Christian worship. When we fall short of this, we are falling short of the "apostles' doctrine," and, I am fearfully afraid, we will fall short of heaven.

28

"THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT"

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a

question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." (Matt. 22 : 35-38.)

This is the commandment which the blessed Christ called "the first and great commandment." In this short treatise we want to study it.

We are led to wonder why this commandment is the first and great one. We have the answer to this in John 14 : 23. Hear it: "If a man love me, he will keep my word." The devil knows that if we do not keep the commands of God we do not really love him. We may talk loudly and long about loving God, but the acid test is: Do we keep his commandments?

When we love folks, we love to be in their presence. The husband and father that is in love with his wife and children loves to be with them. He will not spend his spare time at the poolroom, the lodge hall, the dancing parlor, and such like places. Nothing will give him greater pleasure than to be with the ones he loves. Thus it is with the Christian. He loves to be in the presence of Christ. He loves to meet with those of "like precious faith." Well does he know that "where two or three are gathered together" in the name of Christ, Christ is in their midst. (Matt. 18 : 20.) You may have two or three hundred or two or three thousand together and no Christ, but where two or three are gathered in his name he is there with them. What a privilege it is to meet with Christ! Christians who are really in love with the Lord will not forsake the assembly. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves

together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Heb. 10 : 25.)

When we love a person, we would not want to be found where he would not go. So it is with members of the church. The tried and true members have no desire to go or to be found where Christ would not go or be found. There are many places that Christians (?) frequent in these evil days that they would not go if they were in love with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the church. A safe rule to follow is not to go where Jesus cannot go with us.

We love to talk to the ones we love. How we do enjoy a sweet conversation with those whom we love! It would be a queer kind of “love” that would cause one never to speak to those whom he professes to love. The child of the King loves to talk with his heavenly Father. We call this prayer. We are admonished in 1 Thes. 5 : 17 to “pray without ceasing.” The Christian does this. He spends much time in prayer. He makes no important decisions without prayer. He prays for the church; he prays for the faithful preacher; he prays for his boys and girls; he prays for the elders; he prays for the kings and presidents and for all those who are in high places. Jesus spent much time talking to his Father. He spent whole nights in prayer. He taught thus: “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” (Luke 18 : 1.)

When we love folks, we love to talk to them; and we love to have them talk to us. The Christian prays much, but he does not do all the talking. He wants God to talk to him. Thus God talks to us through his word. When we

read and study the Bible, that is God conveying his thoughts to us. He does it in no other way. God does not commune with us directly from heaven, but through the medium of the Bible. In Acts 17 : 11 Paul speaks of some being more noble than others. Why were they thus? "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Too many are trying to be Christians without searching the Scriptures daily. The other fellow cannot do our searching for us. It is an individual something. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2 : 15.) We will not know how to handle the word of God right if we do not study it.

Another sign of our love for folks is our desire to eat with them. From time immemorial it has been a sign of love and hospitality to eat with folks. The Christian has the sacred privilege of eating with the Lord—yea, of communing with him. This he does when he sits around the holy communion and eats of the body and drinks of the blood of Christ. How ungrateful we are when we neglect this sacred Supper!

If we love God and Christ, we love the brethren. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how

dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3 : 14-18.) There is no such thing as loving God and hating any brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4 : 20.)

By this time we ought to begin to see why Jesus spoke of the "first and great commandment." Do we love to be in the presence of God? Are we ever found where his presence is not? Do we love to talk to God, and do we show that we do by frequent, regular prayers? Do we love to have God talk to us, and do we show this love by daily, careful, diligent study of the Bible? Do we love to eat with the Lord, and do we show this love by never missing one time at this table? Do we love the brethren?

May the dear Lord help us to appreciate and obey the "first and great commandment."

29

"KEEP THYSELF PURE"

The words that stand at the head of this article are the words of the inspired Paul to his son in the gospel, Timothy. How badly this admonition is needed in this sinful and adulterous age! Where there is impurity there is weakness. Some base substance gets mixed in during the process of making metals, and the product is weakened. Some dirt gets in with the sand in making of

concrete, and the concrete will not hold it; it is weakened. Members of the church do not keep themselves pure, and we have a weakened church.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” (Ps. 24 : 3, 4.) Christ said: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5 : 8.) The pure in heart can and do enjoy God. If it were possible for the impure to go to heaven, it would not be happiness for them. They have not been schooled and prepared for such an environment. Heaven is prepared for those who prepare.

God is pure in all of his attribute and characteristic. His words are pure. “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” (Ps. 12 : 6.) The commandments of God are pure. “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” (Ps. 19 : 8.) Men may and do give impure commands, but not so with god. God’s wisdom is pure. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” (James 3 : 17.) Thus you can associate purity with God and all of his attributes.

We are going into God’s presence at the judgment. We want to be with him and the Lord Jesus Christ throughout eternity. Then we must be pure. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every

man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (1 John 3 : 2, 3.) Peter wrote: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your minds by way of remembrance.” (2 Pet. 3 : 1.) Paul wrote these words to the church of God: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor. 7 : 1.)

How can we and how must we be pure? First, we must think pure thoughts. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4 : 23.) “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” (Prov. 23 : 7.) We are pretty largely what we think. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil. 4 : 8.) When we think along these lines, we are thinking pure thoughts.

We must use pure words. Our speech must be pure. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” (Eph. 4 : 29.) Our speech has much to do either with saving or damning our souls. Christians are pure in speech.

We must be pure in our actions towards others. “Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.” (1 Tim. 5 : 1, 2.) This will regulate our conduct towards others.

We must live pure lives. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4 : 12.)

Christians must adorn themselves in pure dress. No verses are put in the Bible as "fillers." Listen: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." (1 Tim. 2 : 9, 10.) Woman, do you profess godliness? If you do, and do not dress and act the way these verses instruct, your profession of godliness is vain. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price." (1 Pet. 3 : 3, 4.) May God help Christian women to adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit. These are the ornaments that you can take with you to the judgment. The others will have to be left in the grave or on this side of it.

Finally, we must be pure in religion. There is so much impurity in the religious world. Even many members of the true church do not have pure religion. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1 : 27.) How sadly orphans and widows are neglected today! And entirely too many members of the church are spotted by the world. There are many things that worldly people do that Christians cannot do. There are many places that

wordly people go that Christians cannot and must not go. There are many organizations to which worldly people belong that Christians must not. No, God intends for us to keep out of these worldly things. We are in the world, but we dare not allow the world to get in us. While the ship is in the water, all goes well; but when the water gets in the ship, disaster is ahead. So it is with us all. Lord, help us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

30

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (Rom. 8 :9.)

What kind of Spirit did Christ have? Do we have this same Spirit? We are either in the flesh or in the Spirit. This verse tells us that we are not in the flesh if the Spirit of God dwells in us. The Spirit of God was in his Son. This same Spirit must be in us. This indwelling Spirit will cause us to be what God wants us to be.

This Spirit caused Christ to be always obedient. “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2 : 8.) How humble and obedient he was! Again, we read this in Heb. 5 : 8, 9: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” If we have the same Spirit that Christ had, we will be obedient. Christ said of himself: “I do always those things that

please him.” (John 8 : 29.) To have the Spirit of Christ we must obey him. If we do not thus obey, we are none of his. This is indeed a serious thing with all serious people.

The Spirit that Christ had caused him to be humble. The same Spirit will cause us to be humble. Paul was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, gospel preachers of all time. The Spirit of Christ which was in him caused him to write this: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.” (Eph. 3 : 8.) Thus he speaks of himself as “less than the least of all saints.” No doubt the Spirit of Christ would cause all of us to be this humble. If all were this humble, I am sure that many things which have troubled, and are troubling, the church of God would vanish. Many of our heart-aches are caused by a lack of genuine humility. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

The Spirit of Christ caused him to be prayerful. He spent much time in prayer. He spent nights in sweet communion with his Father. He taught his disciples to pray. “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” (Luke 18 : 1.) We ought to pray more. We ought to pray always. We ought not to do anything without prayer. “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thess. 5 : 17.) We ought to work in harmony with our own prayers. In other words, we should do all that lies within us to answer our own prayers. God will do what we cannot. “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” It will do no good to pray one way and live another. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” (Prov. 28 : 9.) “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” (Ps. 66 : 18.)

The Spirit of Christ was courageous. A more courageous soul never walked among men. He was not "soft" when it came to dealing with sin and hypocrisy. Read Matt. 23 and hear his scathing denunciations of the religious hypocrites of his day. Here is a fair sample: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation." He had much more to say to them in this same manner. It took courage of the highest order to thus expose the religious leaders of his day. If we have the Spirit of Christ, we will have the courage of Christ. This courage will cause us to denounce sin in high and low places. There are many in our day who do not have the courage to be a disciple of Christ.

The Spirit of Christ was a spirit of compassion. He did not wink at sin, but he forgave sin. In John 8 we read about a woman who taken in adultery being brought to Jesus. Her accusers said: "Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" They were tempting him. They were wanting something whereby they might accuse him. Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*. He was equal to the occasion. They continued asking him. He lifted up himself and said unto them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." He went on with his writing. While he stooped down writing, those hypocrites went one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last. They realized they were in a very unhealthy place for hypocrites. "When Jesus had lifted up

himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." He had so much compassion on this poor, sinful soul. He started her out on a new and different life. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!"

The Spirit of Christ was a spirit of liberality. He gave all, even to his life. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. 8 : 9.) We talk and write much about Christians giving, but if we have the Spirit of Christ, the giving will take care of itself. The penurious and parsimonious soul is the most unlike Christ of any.

The Spirit of Christ was a joyful spirit. Some of us have enough religion to make us miserable, but not enough to make us happy. I have been told that the word "joy" is in the Bible about eight hundred times. Jesus came to give us life. What joy this ought to cuase! We are taught to be exceedingly glad.

The Spirit of Christ was the spirit of love. Why did God send Jesus into the world? Love prompted this sacrifice upon the part of the Father. Why did Jesus come, suffer, and die for us? Love was the motivating principle. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3 : 16.) "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved

God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” (1 John 4 : 9–11.)

31

DISCIPLINE

In my humble judgment, one of the crying needs of the church today is stricter discipline. A lack of discipline does not make for peace and harmony and advancement. God is a God of discipline. Sternly did he deal with Adam and Eve when they refused to be guided by him. And what shall we say of the discipline meted out to Cain? And when the whole world forgot God, the flood was sent upon it. This was divine discipline meted out by a merciful Father. Stern discipline is a distinctive mark of genuine love. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” (Prov. 13: 24.) “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” (Heb. 12 : 6.)

In Matt. 18 : 15–17 Jesus gave some great principles relative to discipline. Hear him: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

This will take care of personal differences between brethren. What is our duty when a brother trespasses against us? We should go to him, telling him of his fault. Of course this must be done in a meek and humble manner and for the express purpose of gaining the brother. We are not apt to gain him if we go to him in an offensive way. We should try with all the power that in us is to get him to see his fault. We are trying to save a soul from death. Very few times would we fail to gain our brother if we would go at this the way we should. And in the few times that we do fail, then we should take one or two good brethren with us to try to help us gain this erring brother. Much depends upon the kind of brethren we take with us. They should be real Christians in every sense of the word. They should have a burning desire to save souls. But if the erring and sinning brother will not hear them, then we must tell it to the church. We are still trying to save a brother. It may be that there will be some in the church that can exert enough influence for good upon the brother to save him. But if he will not hear the church, there is just one thing left to do. That erring brother must be disciplined. Jesus said' "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

We must keep uppermost in our minds that the true object of true discipline is the salvation of the one who is being disciplined. The inspired Paul put it this way: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. 5 : 5.) Here he was speaking of one of the bad members in the Corinthian congregation. Here was a brother who was guilty of fornication. The brethren did not seem to be taking this matter very seriously, but Paul did. They had not mourned over this condition,

but were rather puffed up. We have conditions today in almost every congregation that call for mourning upon the part of the faithful.

Paul wrote: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (1 Cor. 5 : 9-11.)

As Paul very aptly said, it would not be possible not to company with such characters in the world, but most assuredly we should be free from such in the church. Brethren, why do the very thing the Lord said not to do? He said that if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, covetous, an idolater, a railer, drunkard, or an extortioner, we are not to company with such. We are not to eat with such. How many congregations can you name that are free from such characters? Is it not a fact that we are eating with such? What can we hope to gain by doing the thing the Lord said not to do? Such characters cannot be saved until they repent of their sins; and if we carry them along in the church, many who otherwise would be saved are caused to remain out of the kingdom, and many of the weak ones in the church are caused to stumble. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." (1 Cor. 5 : 7.) "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5 : 6.)

We are now ready to read one of the plainest commands in the New Testament: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thess. 3 : 6.) There is no alternative. God explicitly commands us to withdraw from every disorderly walker. No partiality is to be shown. If we would do this, I am sure the church would grow by leaps and bounds. If a brother or sister will not walk orderly, they must be severely dealt with. This will keep the church in such condition that it will have the respect of all right-thinking men and women.

If the elders would do their duty, there would be fewer disorderly walkers. When Paul talked to the Ephesian elders he said to them: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20 : 28.) We have many "elders" who were not made such by the Holy Ghost. Perhaps if we had more scriptural elders we would have more scriptural members. The elders must take heed unto themselves and unto all the flock. They must feed the church.

What should be our attitude toward who have been disciplined? "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment had been severe. The brother had repented. "So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him." (2 Cor. 2 : 7, 8.) After an erring brother had repented. "So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest

perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him." (2 Cor. 2 : 7, 8.) After an erring brother had been the object of the New Testament discipline and had genuinely repented of his sin, he would need the comfort that only faithful members of the church could give. If this he did not receive, there would be danger indeed that he would be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. We certainly ought to confirm our love toward such. The past has been forgiven. The erring brother has been forgiven of God. While he stood withdrawn from and had refused to repent, the church was duty bound to have no company with him; but now that he has come to himself and repented of his sins, the faithful rejoice because the wanderer has returned to the fold. Another dear soul has been saved from death. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents.

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (2 Thess. 3 : 14, 15.)

32

TEMPTATION AND HOW TO BEAR IT

The subject of temptation is one in which all are interested. All are tempted. Who tempts us? "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." (Matt. 4 : 1.) Here we are told explicitly that the devil tempted Jesus. It is he that tempts us.

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempted he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” (James 1 : 12–15.) From this we learn that God tempts no man.

We sometimes get discouraged because we are tempted. There is no room here for discouragement. It is not a sign of sin or of weakness upon our part because we are tempted. If we were to take the untenable position that it is a sign of sin and of weakness to be tempted, then we are virtually saying that Jesus was weak and sinful. He was tempted in all points like as we are. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4 : 15.)

Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. In how many points are we tempted? We are tempted through the lusts of flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2 : 15–17.) These things that tempt us are not of the Father, but of the world. All of our temptations are through one of these avenues. So was it with Christ.

Is it possible for a child to whip the devil? Jesus did it. How did he do it? He whipped him with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Thus can we successfully overcome the devil with all of his manifold temptations. It is no wonder that we read in Ps. 119: 104: "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hath every false way." And again in Acts 20 : 32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." And still again in Col. 3 : 16 : "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Unless we have the word of Christ dwelling in us richly we shall be an easy prey for the devil and his cohorts.

The devil strikes us at our weak points. We are no stronger than we are at our weakest points. The devil knows these weak points. We should know them. When Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was exceedingly hungry. We cannot appreciate this ravenous hunger. To know how hungry Jesus was we would have to deny ourselves food over a long period of time. The appetite for food and drink is one of our strongest passions. And when in this condition the tempter came! He always comes in our weakest moments. To Jesus he said: "if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (Matt. 4 : 3.) Yes, Jesus could have turned stone into bread; but he did not. No doubt there were many reasons why he did not, but one chief one was that the devil told him to do it. There is something wrong with a thing when the devil suggests our doing it. Even if we cannot see any harm in it, there is sin lurking about. And Jesus and his apostles never performed miracles to make the going easier for them. That was not the purpose of miracles.

“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4 : 4 ; Deut. 8 : 3.) So many in our days, even members of the church, are trying to live by bread alone. Jesus said it cannot be done. We should feed our souls upon the word of God. The devil works upon us through the lusts of the flesh; but if our hearts are filled with God’s word, we, too, can say: “It is written.”

But the devil is persistent. He does not give up easily. He wants our souls. “Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Matt. 4 : 5, 6; Ps. 91 : 11, 12.) Here we have the temptation through the lust of the eye. How human it is to want to do something “great” in the eyes of the world! And the devil quoted Scripture! He will do it every time. He would not get far in deceiving the people if he did not. But, as he always does, he misapplied it. It had been said that God would give his angels charge concerning Jesus. God takes care of us. But to have God’s protection we must be in the line of duty. We may be killed while thus performing our duty, but the promise still holds good. But when we step outside the line of duty, we have gone beyond the limits of the promise. Well did the devil know this in his misuse and abuse of the sacred passage.

“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Matt. 4 : 7 ; Deut. 6 : 16.)

But still the devil persists. "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." (Matt. 4 : 8, 9.) This has been called the devil's masterpiece. Here we have a strong appeal to the pride of life. And let us not forget that the devil has a lot more power in the kingdoms of the world than we ordinarily give him credit for having; The Lord had come down from heaven to save the world. Now the devil proposes to compromise. He proposes that he and the Lord go into partnership! He is still making such ungodly propositions even as our Lord and Master treated them. Hear him: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. 4 : 10 ; Deut. 6 : 13.) The cause of truth is not served by any compromises with the devil. We ought to thrust the sword of the Spirit into him at every opportunity.

Yes, we can whip the devil. He does not have the power to overcome the most humble child of God if that child of God will remain true to his heavenly Father. The Father will not allow us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10 : 13.) "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1 : 2-4.)

GOOD SOLDIERS OF JESUS CHRIST

Paul lived in an age of soldiers. He came in frequent contact with Roman soldiers. From these soldiers and their soldiering he drew lessons of spiritual significance. To some of these lessons we want to direct attention in this article.

In becoming a soldier there are two things to think of: first, the very act of becoming a soldier; and, second, the work of the soldier. So it is in becoming a soldier in the army of the Lord. What are the conditions of entrance? What is expected of the soldier? We enlist in the army of the Lord by faith in Christ, repentance of our sins, a confession of our faith, and by being buried by baptism. These are the Lord's terms. In no other way can we get into the army. There are two classes of individuals in the world today who make sad mistakes. One class goes through this life without ever enlisting; the other class enlists, but never does the work of a soldier. Both classes will be lost in the great consummation of all things.

In becoming a soldier it is only natural that we should think about the cause in which we are to struggle. What are we to fight? We find the answer in Eph. 6 : 12 : "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Thanks be to God, the Christian is not fighting a flesh and blood war, but he is fighting sin in all of its heinousness. There is so much spiritual wickedness in high places. May God forbid that any Christian should

take up the weapons of carnal warfare. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)." (2 Cor. 10 : 3, 4.) Christians are in the flesh, but they do not war after the flesh. We do not use carnal weapons.

Who will lead the Christian in his warfare? "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Heb. 2 : 10.) We have a perfect Commander. He has never lost a battle. Neither shall we if we obey his commands. Not one soldier will be lost if he obeys the Captain of his salvation. He will lead every one to a happy and glorious victory. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1 : 10, 11.)

There is no such thing as being neutral relative to the Lord's cause. Jesus himself has said: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." (Matt. 12 : 30.) We are either actively for Jesus or passively against him.

There are no conscripts in the army of the Lord. They are all volunteers. They are all soldiers because they want to be. They have heard the gracious invitation and have accepted it: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and

lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11 : 28-30.) "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22 : 17.) "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." (Acts 2 ; 41.)

How long is the term of enlistment? We are in for the duration of the war! Our Leader puts it this way: "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9 : 62.) We must be faithful until mustered out of service, even if being faithful would bring us unto death. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2 : 10.) The first Christian soldier to lay down his life rather than to desert was Stephen. How did he die? "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7 : 59, 60.) Sleep! Peace! Rest! Heaven!

The good soldier must be well equipped. The Roman soldier was well armored. The Christian soldier is well armored if he will wear the armor. We read about this in Eph. 6 : 10-17. His loins must be girt about with truth. "Thy word is truth." Jesus said the truth would make us free. (John 8 : 32.) Our breast-plate must be righteousness. This breastplate will protect us from the fiery darts of the wicked. Nothing is more important than the footgear. Our feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. How badly we need the shield of faith above all! The helmet is the hope of salvation.

With what shall we fight? "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." We need to be drilled in the proper use of this armor and how to wield the sword most effectively.

It is expected of soldiers that they will be present at roll call. God expects no less of his children. When the church meets to worship, we should be there. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Heb. 10 : 25.)

We are now in the heat of the battle, but, thanks be to God, it will not be long until the battle will be over. What rejoicing for the faithful soldier when the battles all are fought and he can go home, sweet home! One of the most valiant soldiers ever enlisted under King Jesus was the apostle Paul. For thirty odd years he was in the thickest of the fight. Hear him when the war was over for him: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4 ; 6-8)

My beloved brethren, my fellow soldiers in the army of the Lord, it will be worth ten thousand worlds like this to us if we can so finish our fight. May God grant it. And to think of the grand reunions on the eternal plains!

“UNEQUALLY YOKED”

“Be ye not unequally together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor. 6 : 14–18.)

A Serious Thing

Any honest and humble reader can learn from the above quotation the seriousness of believers being unequally yoked with unbelievers. When oxen are yoked, one must go where the other goes. It would not be possible for one to go one way and the other to go another way. So it is with Christians. When we “yoke” up with unbelievers, we are almost bound to be unduly influenced by the unbeliever, and go places and do things and give an influence where we should not. In my humble judgment, I am sure that many otherwise good Christians have all but lost their good influence by being “unequally yoked.” Christians should stay clear of all “entangling alliances.” There are so many ways in this adulterous and wicked age in which we become “unequally yoked.” We want to kindly and positively point out a few of those ways in this article.

Marriage

I can think of no greater "yoke" than the one entered into by marriage. For one to be a Christian and the other not may be a very unequal yoke. Many a faithful Christian has been lost to the cause of Christ because of being yoked with a nonchristian. The tenor of the teaching of the Scripture is against this kind of yoke. "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." (1 Cor. 7 : 39.) You will note that the Christian widow is at liberty to marry out of the Lord. It does seem that if a widow must marry "only in the Lord," a younger woman had better not marry out of the Lord. Paul was not a married man, but in speaking of his "right" to marry he used this very significant language: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. 9 : 5). Paul would have us to learn that he had power to lead about a *sister*, a wife. We would not gather from this that he thought he had "power" to lead about a wife who was not a sister. A gospel preacher would be greatly hindered in his work if his wife were not a Christian.

Business

It is possible to be so connected with business associates that the Christian is "unequally yoked." There are many tactics used in business today that are far beneath the dignity of a Christian. Those who are not Christians may have the predominating influence and power relative to the method of carrying on the business. The Christian may thus find himself "yoked." If thus being associated with

others in business causes one to be a party to something to which no true Christian should be a party, it would be infinitely better to break up that business partnership. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16 : 26.)

Working Conditions

It is possible today for a hard-working laboring man to be "unequally yoked." There are conditions in the industrial world which confront the Christian workingman that would take a Solomon to tell what the Christian should do. If we find ourselves in positions in which it is all but impossible to live up to the principles taught in the New Testament, we had better sever out connections with such associations.

Clubs, Lodges, Etc.

A lot of Christians are almost "clubbed" to death. Their Christianity is just about "clubbed" out of them. Why should Christian people desire to form connections in which sinners of all types and stripes are the predominant leaders? One may be a Christian and belong to some of these things, but I am sure he would be, and could be, a better one if he were not thus "unequally yoked." Many things are carried on by these various organizations to which a humble disciple of the meek and lowly Nazarene cannot afford to lend his influence. You may not participate personally in these sinful practices, but the stubborn fact remains that you are counted a member, and your influence is thus on the wrong side. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye

separate." The active Christian can find an outlet for all of his talent, money, and influence right in God's institutions, the family and the church. Let us seriously consider this passage: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Col. 3 : 17.) All that we do is done in word or deed, and we must do all this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph. 3 : 21.)

Ministerial Associations

That any gospel preacher would link himself up with a bunch of alien sinners calling themselves "ministers of the gospel" is beyond my poor powers of comprehension. However, I have been "told" that once in a while such is the case. Why any preacher would thus want to compromise his position and influence as a gospel preacher I know not. Such preachers need some "eldering," and I believe with scriptural elders at the helm of the various congregations they will get it!

Conclusion

It is a very common thing today to say that what I have written I have written in "the spirit of Christ." So I want to say it. God knows I have no other desire than to help dear brethren to draw the line of demarcation between the church and the world wide and deep. I know that there are many good brethren who are "unequally yoked," and I know that they ought to throw off these

yokes. Brethren, may God help us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” May we have “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father,” and may we “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,” and for the sake of our poor souls keep ourselves “unspotted from the world.”

35

WATCH

Jesus said: “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” (Mark 13 : 35–37.)

There are many things we should watch. We cannot hope to call attention to many of these in one brief article, but we want to take each letter of the word “watch” and let that be the initial letter of some word telling us of something we should watch.

Words

We are too careless in our use of words. We have this admonition: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” (Eph. 4 : 29.) Our conversation should be of such a nature that it will build up those who hear it. The wise man,

Solomon, wrote after this fashion: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thins heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." (Eccles. 5 : 2.) Too many of us have a breaking out of the mouth! We are entirely too hasty in our utterances before God and man. It would be infinitely better for us if we would think twice before we speak, and sometimes think at least that many times and then keep our mouths closed. "Therefore let thy words be few."

Jesus said: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12 : 36, 37.) Words are powerful things. They should be handled carefully. They have the power of life and death in them.

In the closing verse of the beautiful Ps. 19 we have this beautiful and expressive language: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." God knows our thoughts and hears our words. May we be so careful of both that they will be acceptable to him. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." (Prov. 25 : 11.) "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (James 3 : 2.)

Actions

Our every act has an influence upon ourselves and upon others. We should set proper examples before others.

Paul wrote to Timothy, saying: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4 : 12.) In the beginning of the next chapter this old preacher wrote to the young preacher telling him how he ought to act toward others. Hear it: "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity."

Thoughts

Just about the hardest thing we have to watch is our thoughts. We must think right if we would live right. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. 4 : 8.) God would have us think on the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. When we are thus thinking, we are thinking the thoughts that are pleasing to God. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4 : 23.) "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23 : 7.)

Character

Too many are more interested in their reputation than in their character. Reputation is what men and women say about us. Character is what God and the angels know about us. Men and women may say some pretty hard things about you, but if they are not true, no harm is done to you. Many false and hard things were said about Christ.

The great apostle Paul was shamefully lied about and shamefully treated, but he kept his character above reproach. God knows. If you will take care of your character, your reputation will take care of itself.

The beloved John wrote to his friend, Gaius, whom he loved in the truth, after this manner: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 2.) Here was a man in such perfect soul health that John could think of nothing better to pray for than that he might prosper and be in physical health in proportion to his soul health. The hospitals would be running over indeed if many were in no better physical health than they are soul health! Gentle reader, how would you like for others to pray for you that you might prosper in the things of this world and be in health even as your soul prospers?

Hearts

Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse to anoint a king over Israel. Jesse had many sons. Eliab passed before Samuel. Samuel thought and said: "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me." In this he was mistaken. What had deceived him? He was looking on outside appearances. The Lord looks on the inside. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. 16 : 7.) How is your heart? The Lord is looking at it.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matt. 5 : 8.) The pure in heart are happy. The pure in heart enjoy God. If it were possible for the impure in heart

to go to heaven they would not be happy. Heaven is for the pure in heart. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6 : 21.)

The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4 : 12.) "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. 10 : 22.)

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." (James 4 : 8.) "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3 : 15.)

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"AND THE WORD OF GOD INCREASED"

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6 : 7.)

Does that not have a good ring? What brought about such gratifying results? It will be profitable to look into this.

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.” In our day it is a very common thing for murmuring to arise even when the number of the disciples has not multiplied much! In fact, this murmuring oftentimes is the cause of the lack of the number of the disciples multiplying. The church at Jerusalem was made up of Jews, foreign and home-born. The foreign born were called Grecians. In this church “as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4 : 34, 35.) This was not compulsory upon the part of the members. Under the circumstances it seemed to be practical.

These foreign-born Jews thought their widows were being neglected in the daily ministration. No doubt the Grecians were greatly in the minority. Here was a fine opportunity for a big church “fuss.” A present-day congregation would hardly allow such an “opportunity” to pass! The very integrity of the apostles was being questioned. How did they handle this situation? Hear it: “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

The apostles did not rely upon their dignity and prestige to take care of this ominous situation. They had

nothing to hide nor to keep under cover. Everything was open and aboveboard. They called the multitude of the disciples unto them. They told the brethren to look out seven men whom they would appoint over this business. Preachers will please note that the brethren were to look them out! The apostles did not look them out. And these apostles were Spirit-guided. We have preachers today who want to look them out and appoint them too! The apostles gave the qualifications that the ones "looked out" must have. I am sure that the apostles would have done no appointing if the brethren had ignored the qualifications laid down. Neither should preachers today do any appointing when the qualifications mentioned by the Holy Spirit have been ignored. The qualifications that should characterize elders and deacons have not been left to the whims and fancies of men or any set of men. The Holy Spirit has been very explicit in giving these qualifications.

But let us notice the qualifications that the apostles gave for these men who were to be "looked out." First, they were to be men of honest report. The spiritual or physical affairs of a congregation are in poor hands when they are in the hands of men who do not have a good report. They should have a good report, both of those on the inside and of those on the outside. Second, they were to be men full of the Holy Ghost. How often do we see men heading congregations who are devoid of the Holy Spirit—men who have the spirit of the world, the flesh, and the devil instead of the Holy Spirit! Third, they were to be men of wisdom. It takes wisdom to rule the house of God and to carry on congregational affairs.

The apostles thought it would not be reason for them to leave the word of God and serve tables. But some

preachers seem to think it is a light thing for them to leave the word of God to do many things that are even questioned by worldly folks. These inspired apostles said that they would give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." The cause of Christ would be more ably served if all of us preachers would give ourselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Preachers are prone to take too much unto themselves and serve where they have no business serving. We had better let the brethren look out men to do much of the work that preachers are doing, and then we shall have more time for prayer and the ministry of the word.

And these brethren were looking for a way out of their difficulty. They were big enough for the proposition laid down by the apostles. "And the saying pleased the whole multitude." And they chose seven men of good report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. And these seven were taken from the very group of the congregation that the murmuring came from. They all have Grecian names. What a magnanimous act! It takes big brethren to be able to take hold of a big proposition. A little, shriveled-up soul would take advantage. These seven men from among the Grecians would certainly know how to stop all murmuring. We do not know much about five of the men chosen, but we do know much about two of them— Stephen and Philip. They later became men of great power in preaching the word. The Holy Spirit says of Stephen that he was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." We would expect great things from a man who is full of faith and full of other things that a Christian should be full of.

In the light of this recorded incident in the life of the early church it is not hard to understand why "the word of

God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." When we take into consideration that this church started out with about three thousand members and then multiplied this number "greatly," it was indeed a large church. And even the Jewish priests could see the superiority of the gospel of Christ above that of the old Jewish economy, and many of the honest-hearted among them became obedient to the faith. I know that if we of the church today would imitate and emulate this inspired example, the number of the disciples would multiply much faster than at present, and the word of God would increase, and many would become obedient to the faith. "So mote it be." God's ways are the only ways that will bring eternal results. Failures today are not due to inspiration, but to human weaknesses.

37

"SUCH AS I HAVE GIVE I THEE"

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." (Acts 3 : 1-6.)

What a different world this would be if all would give such as we have! Many may be like Peter, unable to give silver and gold; but none are so poor that they cannot give something. Many times the thing we can give is infinitely more precious than silver and gold. Of course we cannot give the miraculous, such as Peter gave; but still we can give. In this little study we want to call your attention to a few things we can give. We are praying that we may couch our thoughts in such language that you will be caused to want to give what you can.

This poor beggar was a dependent man. He had to be carried. He was so helpless. His trouble was of long standing. Humanity lies at our very door today as a beggar. Every child of God should be a giver. We should do our giving "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." This is our channel of giving.

Time is one of the most valuable things we have. Jesus recognized the value of time when he said: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9 : 4). How quickly the night of death may overtake us! It is sinful to waste time. I believe it was Benjamin Franklin who said: "If time be of all things the most precious, then wasting time is the greatest prodigality." A greater than Franklin said: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Ps. 90 : 12.)

Few of us are so poor that we cannot give some money to the work of the church. It takes money to preach the gospel, care for the widow and orphan, and do other things that the church must do. God's ancient people

robbed him of what rightfully was his. (Mal. 3 : 8 .) God's modern people are doing the same thing. We spend many times more for foolish and trifling things than we give to preach the gospel to those who never heard. God will not hold us guiltless. It is scarcely necessary to tell a Christian that God expects him to give as he has been prospered. (1 Cor. 16 : 1,2.) "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (2 Cor. 8 : 12.) Do you have, my gentle reader, the willing mind? Do you give according to that you have?

We can give prayers, first in our own behalf, and then for others. How it cheers us to know that others are praying for us! The great inspired Paul asked his uninspired brethren to pray for him. Hear him: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." (Rom. 15 : 30.) May the dear Lord help us to strive together in our prayers one for the other.

We can give more time to a careful, honest study of the Bible. No day should find us too busy to have a season of study. Yes, and we ought to study with the objective in mind to learn more of our duty to God and to each other. Jesus commands us to search the scriptures. (John 5 : 39.) In writing of the Old Testament, Paul said that these things were written for our learning. (Rom. 15 : 4.) We learn the Bible by careful study. The young preacher Timothy, was commanded to study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that would not be ashamed. He had known the sacred writings from his youth, but still he must keep right on with his study.

The more we know of God's blessed word the more we will want to know.

We should give sincere worship to God. This he requires. There are two essential elements to acceptable worship, and one of these is sincerity. Christ said: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4 : 24.) When the beloved John was on old rocky Patmos in the sweet long ago, he said: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." (Rev. 1 : 10.) My brother, does the Lord's day find you in the Spirit? There are many things which may hinder sincere worship. Nothing should be done for show in worship. We need deeper lessons concerning deeper reverence.

The world needs more kindness. Our neighbors need kindness. Many a dear soul has been won to the bleeding side of the Lamb of Calvary by a kindly word and a friendly smile. These things cost so little and are worth so much. "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. 4 : 32.) One of the Christian virtues enumerated in 2 Pet. 1 is, brotherly kindness." Lord, help us to be kind to all, and doubly so to those who are of the household of faith.

We can live a godly life. There is no more powerful influence for good in the world today than the influence of a godly, consecrated life. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and wordly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Tit. 2 : 11-13.)

There are many other things we can give. Give what you have. You cannot give what you do not have, but all of us have many things to give. Let us so live that when we come to the journey's end we can have the satisfaction of knowing that we gave what we could. Then in return for our little giving, what will God give us? The answer is eternal life. Bless his holy name through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen!

38

ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6 : 10.)

The Lord wants strong Christians. Of course, strong Christians will make strong churches. What is a strong church? Too many are prone to measure strength by numbers. Numerical strength does not necessarily denote spiritual strength. We have this significant language in Deut. 7 : 7 : “The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.” God’s ancient people were the fewest of all people. Sometimes I think that real Christians are just about the fewest of any people today. “For many be called, but few chosen.” (Matt. 20 : 16.)

Not Riches

Others think that a wealthy membership makes for a strong church. Riches are dangerous. “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this

world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2 : 5.) "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6 : 9, 10.) I am sure that anything which will cause us to fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, and which drown men in destruction and perdition, is not necessary to strength. A thing that is the root of all kinds of evil is a dangerous thing. Let us not covet after such a dangerous thing.

Not Worldly Wise

And still others think that the strength of the church lies in the worldly wisdom of its membership. But such is far from the truth. Here is the truth regarding that matter: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." (1 Cor. 1 : 21-26.)

Not Society

Some think that the church should be some kind of social club! Modern society and New Testament Christianity are as far apart as the poles. One cannot move in the circle of modern society and with the saints of God at the same time.

Not a Fine House

And some others are foolish enough to think that a fine house is necessary to the strength of a church. Do not misunderstand me. We believe we should have good, commodious, comfortable, neat meeting-houses; but the place where the church worships is not the church. The groves were God's first temples. Many of the early Christians met in upper rooms, caves of the earth, etc. And the church was never stronger than when the brethren were being hounded from pillar to post. Some congregations of our day have burdened themselves with an excessive debt; and while they are striving to pay this, souls are going down to their graves unprepared to meet God.

Not the Preacher

The right kind of a preacher will lend strength to a congregation, but some of the strongest churches have no regular preacher. If we wait for the preachers to reach the masses, the rank and file will not be reached; but when every member goes everywhere preaching the word, we shall save more souls. We need every true gospel preacher, and they should be kept busy building up the walls of Zion. However, some preachers are so busy building up

a place for themselves that they do not have much time left to evangelize! This is no reflection on any true gospel preacher who is doing what a preacher of the gospel ought to be doing, but it is a stubborn fact that we have a few timeservers even among preachers.

A Converted Membership

We have used most of our space in telling what is not essential to strength, but now for a few things that are. When every member of the church is fully converted to the right ways of the Lord, we shall have strong churches. Too many of us are converted to our own ways rather than to the ways of the Lord. Christ said: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18 : 3.) May the dear Lord help us to turn and have the attributes and characteristics of a little child. May we be as a little child. May we be as teachable as children. May we have their forgiving spirit and their implicit faith and confidence in their superiors.

A Faithful Membership

Jesus describes a faithful soul in these significant words: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6 : 33.) Oh, for a membership that will put the kingdom of God ahead of everything and everybody! Members who put the church ahead of their business, their social affairs, their politics, etc! Jesus again said: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2 : 10.)

An Informed Membership

The church in many places is made weak by the woeful lack of Bible knowledge among its members. God expects us to study his word. (2 Tim. 2 : 15.) Too many are neglecting this study. Brother, do you have more knowledge of God's word than you had last year, or last month, or last week? Are you growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord? (2 Pet. 3 : 18.) God's ancient people were destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee." (Hos. 4 : 6.)

A Working Membership

We do many things in vain in this world, but not one thing that we do in the vineyard of the Master is in vain. We do not preach gospel sermons in vain; we do not teach people the way of the Lord in vain; we do not help worthy poor in vain; we do not worship the Lord in spirit and in truth in vain; we do not send the gospel to those who have never heard it in vain. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15 : 58.)

A Loving Membership

Our strength is made weakness without love. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have

not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. 13 : 1-3) "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3 : 14.)

A Praying Membership

There is power in prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5 : 16.) "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5 : 17.) "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke 18 : 1.)

39

"EXAMINE YOURSELVES"

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." (2 Cor. 13 : 5.)

From this we learn that it is possible by self-examination to determine whether we be in the faith. This is a good time of year to take stock. In fact, it is always good to do this. We are prone to examine others, but many times it more beneficial to examine self.

We should examine ourselves to see if we have done the things necessary to get into the church. These requisites are: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. We cannot become Christians without these things. Do we believe with all of our hearts that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16 : 16.)

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts 16 : 31.) Our self-examination will tell us whether we have thus believed. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17 : 30.) “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2 : 38.) Our self-examination will show whether we repented when we became Christians. In our examination we will learn that we must confess Christ. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 10 : 32, 33.) “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Rom. 10 : 9, 10.)

Our examination will show us that we are baptized into Jesus Christ. **“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3 : 26, 27.) Baptism is a burial. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism.” (Rom. 6 : 4.)**

When we examine ourselves in the light of God’s book, we find that we become Christians by faith in Christ, genuine repentance of our sins, confessing before men, and being buried with him in baptism. We further learn that this process saves us from our past sins, and thus do we become members of the church, the one body of Christ.

This is the church the Lord had in mind when he said: "I will build my church." (Matt. 16 : 18.) This is the church to which the Lord adds the saved. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2 : 47.) This is the church that the Lord purchased with his precious blood. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath with his own blood." (Acts 20 : 28.) This is the church for which the blessed Christ gave himself. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5 : 25.) This is the church of God. (1 Cor. 1 : 1, 2.) This church is the family of the Lord. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." (Eph. 3 : 14, 15.)

In our examination we will learn that we are to attend worship regularly. We must not forsake the assembly. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Heb. 10 : 25.) My dear reader, do you stand this test?

Our examination will reveal that we must study the Scriptures. So many are so neglectful of this great privilege. We should study to learn God's will concerning us. We must study to know how to handle the Bible the way we should, and to know how to rightly divide it. (2 Tim. 2 : 15.) We should allow the word of Christ to dwell in us richly. (Col. 3 : 16.) This happy condition is brought about by study.

What does our examination show relative to prayer? Jesus taught that men ought always to pray. (Luke 18 : 1.) Paul taught that we should pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5 : 17.) What does our self-examination show our standing to be in this great and important privilege?

When we examine ourselves, we will learn that we should visit the sick. This does not mean simply to go into the sickroom and make a social call, but it means to visit the cold with a load of coal and the hungry with a basket of food. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1 :27.)

The examination further shows that we should help the poor. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6 : 9,10.) We should refresh our memories often by the words of Jesus in Matt. 25 : 31—46, relative to our treatment of the poor. It is a fearful thing to neglect the poor.

Our examination perhaps will show that we are not doing all that we could do to spread the gospel to those who know it not. The sad conditions that now obtain in the world would not have been had the church been more diligent in spreading the good news of the kingdom of heaven. We are saved to save. When we have good news, we certainly want to tell it. The gospel is good news. When we are saved, we should tell others at every opportunity. Paul went to Philippi. There was no church there when he went, but there was one when he left.

These brethren were instrumental in helping to support the gospel in other fields. Some ten years after the establishment of the church at Phillippi we hear Paul writing to it after this manner: "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." (Phil. 4 : 15-17.)

Our examination will show us that we must be careful in the use of our words. What a powerful thing words are! "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." (James 1 : 19.) Too many of us are swift to speak. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12 : 36, 37.)

The examination will tell us how we are living and how we should live. "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." (2 Cor. 8 : 21.) We should live honestly and uprightly in the sight of men and in the sight of God. My gentle reader, how are you living? Have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism? If thus you have done, you have been added to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and were then made free from your old sins. Do you attend the services of the church regularly? If not, you are in danger in this world and in that one which is to come. Are you studious and prayerful? Does an honest examination thus show? Do

you visit the sick and care for the poor? Are you vitally concerned in having the gospel preached to all? Do you make this the burden of many a prayer? Are you really putting much money into this? Do the books of heaven show this? Are you exceedingly careful about your words? Do you measure each word before speaking it? Do folks who really know you know that you are living an honest and an upright life? Again I say: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."

40

JOB AND HIS RELIGION

The book of Job is one of the very oldest books of the Bible. Job was indeed a remarkable character. Christians can greatly benefit by learning more and more about him. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15 : 4.)

The very first verse of the book of Job says: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." This is God's estimate of the man. He was perfect. There are few perfect men and no sinless men. Here is God's definition of a perfect man: "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (James 3 : 2.) Job had control of his tongue. Job feared God. So many in our day have no wholesome fear of God in their hearts. "Let us hear

the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccles. 12 : 13.) And Job eschewed evil. That is a strong term. He shunned the very appearance of evil.

Job was a family man. He had seven sons and three daughters. He was interested in those children. He lived in the patriarchal dispensation. He worshipped for the family. When his sons would have a birthday feast, Job would rise up early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. He reasoned: "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." (Job 1 : 5.) One of the crying needs of the world today is more fathers and mothers who will rise up early and stay up late in behalf of their children.

Job was a rich man. He had seven thousand sheep, five hundred yoke of oxen, three thousand camels, and five hundred she asses. He had a very great household, so that this man was the greatest of all men of the East.

Satan works hard to get good men and women. He oftentimes gets them. He tried hard to get Job. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." So many times when the children of God come before the Lord, Satan comes also. He goes to meeting more regularly than some of the members of the church! Brother, be sure he does not go in you! "And the Lord said unto Satan, whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." And he is still at it. He is all around us.

“And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” The Lord was taking note of the way Job was living. He knew all about him. He knows all about you and me.

Satan did not think much of Job. “Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.” The devil was trying to make out that Job was serving God because of the material benefits derived therefrom.

The Lord knew the motives which prompted Job. He was serving God from a pure and honest heart. “And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.” The Lord was allowing Job to be tempted of the devil. The devil did his worst. One day when the oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them, the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away. And not only were the oxen and asses taken away, but the servants were slain with the sword. Just one servant escaped, and he ran with the bad news to Job. But while this servant was yet speaking, another came running to Job with still more bad news. The fire of God had fallen from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants. And while number two was yet speaking, a third came to tell Job that the Chaldeans had

made out three bands and fell upon the camels and carried them away, and the servants had been slain with the sword.

But the worst was yet to come! Here comes another servant running to Job. And what was the news that he brought? Listen: "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead."

In one fell swoop Job had lost his material possessions and all of his children. Certainly this would be enough to try the faith of any. However, trials, persecutions, and temptations drive the man of God even closer to him. Thus it was with Job. It will be profitable for us to watch Job undergoing this severe test. "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." We are more apt to forget God in prosperity than in adversity. I am sure that Job could not understand all of these things, but his faith in God did not waver. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." So many times we sin and charge God so foolishly.

But Satan did not give up. He thought he could get Job from another angle. If the devil cannot get you one way, he will try another. Again the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord. Satan came also among them. And again the Lord talked to Satan about his servant, Job, adding to the former statements this very significant

statement: "And still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." Well did Satan know that many a man he had caught with such tactics. But not Job! And thanks be to God for the multitude of men and women who cling tenaciously to God, come what may.

Satan smote poor old Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. He was in such terrible agony and misery that he took a potsherd to scrape himself. And he sat down among the ashes. What suffering! If a man ever needed the encouragement of a faithful wife, Job needed it at this time. But Mrs. Job did not have sufficient faith in God to stand the test. So many do not. She said unto Job: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." But listen to the suffering, patient man of God: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? And now carefully read: "In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

It is no wonder that we read further on in the book of Job this matchless statement: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23 : 10.) And thus it was with Job. And, Lord grant that thus it may be with us.

COMPROMISING WITH THE DEVIL

The devil is a great fellow to compromise. If he can get us to compromise the truth, he is well pleased. When Moses was getting ready to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage to the land of promise, the devil tried to compromise. We can learn much by studying these compromises offered to Moses. The same are being offered to God's people in this day and age. Many are overtaken by the wiles of the devil.

“And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.” (Ex. 8 : 25.) He was willing for them to worship if they would do it in Egypt. Do not go out of the country. In our day the devil has no objection to us worshipping, so we do not do it in the true church. He tries to get deluded people to think that it does not make any difference where nor how God is worshiped. God cannot be worshiped acceptably in modern denominations. Jesus said: “God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4 : 24.) It does make a difference how we worship. It must be done according to the commandments of God. To worship according to the commandments of men makes the worship vain. Hear the head of the church: “But in vain they do worship me, for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matt. 15 : 9.) It is no wonder the devil tries so hard to get persons to believe that all worship is right and that one “church” is as good as another. To have the faith that God will accept, it must come from hearing him. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10 : 17.)

How did Moses meet this proffered compromise? "And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God; lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us." (Ex. 8 : 26, 27.) We had better take heed lest we sacrifice the abomination of the sectarians to the Lord our God. Moses said they would sacrifice as the Lord would command. That is the way we must do. We must be guided by the commands of the Lord. He is the one to be worshiped and to be pleased with the worship. We would not know how to worship unless God has told us how in his word.

And so Moses and the Israelites were determined to go. In our day when persons learn the gospel they should be determined to leave the world and sectarianism and go into the true church. When Pharaoh saw that Moses was determined to go, he said: "I will let you go, that ye shall not go very far away." (Ex. 8 : 28.) How familiar that sounds! When we go into the church of the Lord, the devil does not want us to go very far. He would like for us to keep one foot at least in the world. If we must be in the church, the devil wants us to be worldly Christians. He wants us to believe there is no harm in a little innocent dance. We must have a social drink and play cards a little, etc., etc. Yes, if the devil can get us to compromise in this manner, well does he know he has us. Listen: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1 : 27.) And again: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses,

know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4 : 4.)

The Lord has a lot of enemies right in the church. They are friends of the world. A friend of the world is an enemy of the Lord. A Christian must keep himself out of these worldly entanglements and compromising positions. Just sever all connection with the world and worldly practices.

And again the devil offered a compromise to Moses. The men could go, but they were to leave their little ones. But Moses had said: "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go." (Ex. 10 : 9.) The devil does not want us to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He wants us to leave the little ones! They are too young to go to meeting, anyway! Do not take them to Bible school—just leave them at home to run the streets! The devil does not want us to teach the word to our children. If dad and mother must study the Bible, all right; but do not gather the children around and teach them. The Bible is too hard for them to understand. Just let them have the "funnies!" Lord, give us members of the church who will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds, with our farms and with our bank accounts—yea, with our all.

The children of today are the church of tomorrow. They must be brought up in the faith. We should teach them both by precept and example.

But one more compromise: "And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you." (Ex. 10 : 24.) If the devil can just get us to leave our "stuff," he has us. We can go to every service, including prayer meeting, but do not use our possessions to advance the kingdom of heaven. Pile up the money in the bank, buy more stocks and bonds; just do about anything in the world with our money, but do not put it to work for the salvation of souls. If the devil can get us to thinking this way, he has us just where he wants us.

How did Moses meet this compromise? "Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither." (Ex. 10 : 26.) That is the spirit that will take man to heaven. We must lay everything we have at the feet of the Master. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3 : 17.) "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Cor. 16 : 2.) "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (2 Cor. 8 : 12.)

Brethren, the only money we are really saving is what we are putting into the work of the Lord. Of course it takes money to buy food, clothing, and shelter; but after

these necessities are met, we should put every possible dollar into the salvation of souls. That is the best possible investment. it will not hurt us to wear the old coat a little longer so we can preach a little more.

42

JONAH AND THE WHALE

There are many good and practical lessons connected with the story of Jonah and the whale. In this study we want to call attention to a few of these. The Lord told Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach. The prophet did not want to go. He did not mind preaching, but this was one place where he did not want to go. Many times the Lord wants some preaching done where the preachers do not want to go. We ought not to be so choiceful about where we preach. The Lord would like to have the gospel preached to every creature. (Mark 16 : 15, 16.) Sometimes the financial remuneration may be pretty poor where the Lord wants us to preach, but we have the consolation of knowing we are doing what he wants us to do. Not long since I read a letter from a preacher. The brethren in that town wanted some preaching done. I am right sure the Lord wanted some done there too. The preacher said he would come and do this preaching, but he would have to be guaranteed a certain amount before he would come! Somehow that did not have just the right ring for a gospel preacher, so the brethren decided to get someone else to do that particular preaching. Of course preachers should be supported financially while they preach, but there is such a thing as making merchandise of the gospel of Christ.

The Lord told Jonah what he wanted preached. The Lord never sends a preacher out without telling him what to preach. The gospel preacher has his marching orders in the New Testament. We cannot forget what it is we are to preach. The Lord had it written down, and then told us to preach it. (2 Tim. 4 : 1, 2.) And if we do not preach what is written, the very curse of God is resting upon us. (Gal. 1 : 8-10) If we add anything to what the Lord has written, he will add unto us plagues. And it is just as dangerous to take from what he has written. (Rev. 22 : 18, 19.) We must speak as the oracles of God, and not go beyond what is written. (1 Pet. 4 : 11 ; 2 John 9.)

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh and preach what the Lord wanted preached, so he decided to run out on the Lord. He found a ship going in the opposite direction. It seems that the devil always has a ship ready to take us from the presence of the Lord. He is not particular which one of his ships we ride, just so we ride them. Any of them will take us away from the Lord and land us in hell. Some take the pleasure ship. They think more of pleasure than they do of duty. They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They may have a form of godliness. Many today are pleasure mad. Some "good" church members can stand in snow or rain at a football game and yell themselves hoarse for two hours; but if the preacher preaches beyond thirty minutes, they complain. Others can sit in a stuffy theater for two hours and enjoy every minute of it, but go to sleep hearing a gospel sermon. And still others can play some foolish, or even sinful, games by the hour, but do not have family worship. They are riding the devil's boats. The devil has a lot of harmless-looking boats, but their destination is hell. We had better not ride his boats.

Even though the boat were going in the wrong direction, Jonah had to pay the fare. The devil does not give excursion rates. My, but the fare is high! We poor Christians just cannot afford to pay it. "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6 : 23.) "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6 : 7, 8.) Do not get the idea that you can run away from the Lord without paying dearly for it. You will pay for it in broken hearts, broken bodies, broken homes, broken lives, and hell in eternal torment. Let me beg of you to stay with the Lord.

Jonah went down into the ship—in fact, he had been going "down" ever since he decided to disobey God. Any step away from the Lord is a step "down." To get back we must take just as many steps "up" as we have taken "down."

While Jonah was running away from the Lord and in the greatest danger, he went to sleep! How true that is today! So many of the Lord's people have strayed away from him and have gone to sleep right on enemy territory. It seems all but impossible to wake some. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Rom. 13 : 11.) "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. 5 : 14.) "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thess. 5 : 6.) Brother, if you are asleep, wake before it is eternally too late.

These fellows that insist upon running away from the Lord cause a lot of trouble. Jonah caused lots of trouble on that ship. There arose a mighty tempest. So it is today. Many fellows running away from the Lord cause a mighty "tempest." Sometimes they just about wreck the old ship of Zion. The men rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but they could not. You just cannot make much headway with that kind of fellows on the boat. Too often we try to go along with all kinds of hypocrites in the church. But, brethren, sooner or later those fellows will have to repent or be thrown overboard; but if they just will not behave, we have no other alternative. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thess. 3 : 6.) "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.... Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for them must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (1 Cor. 5 : 4-11.) Brethren, let us look over the list carefully and see if we have any such on board. If so, "therefore put

away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (1 Cor. 5 : 13.)

There was no rest on that ship until they had put away the cause of the trouble. We cannot expect to prosper until we get rid of the rottenness in the congregation. The Lord does not wink at sin. Neither should we.

But I do not want to leave Jonah in the wrong light. He is a good man, a true prophet, but he sinned; but he repented of sin, and then was perfectly willing to do what the Lord commanded him to do. Thus it must be with us. We must repent of our sins. Then we are ready to do the first works.

But I almost left the whale out! So many times we miss the really “big” things. Well, this was a “special” that the Lord ran for Jonah’s benefit! The Lord had prepared this great fish. The Lord kept Jonah alive in it for three days, and then he was vomitted up on dry land. It would be a little god indeed that could not keep a prophet alive three days in a whale. But the Lord did not change his commands to suit Jonah. Neither will he change them to suit us. The Lord commanded him the second time to go to Nineveh. He went right along and preached what the Lord told him to preach. Maybe some of us will be more willing to do the commands of the Lord after we have been “whaled.” And the preaching brought results! Trues preaching always does. May the good Lord help us to learn that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” (Rom. 15 : 4.)

LOCATED PREACHERS AND OTHERS

The truth is usually found between two extremes. I am sure there are two extreme positions taken by different brethren relative to located preachers. Some take the extreme position that it is wrong for a preacher to settle at one point for any length of time; and that we have situations that border on the sectarian "pastor system," no thinking person will deny. Both extremes are wrong.

Traveling from place to place does not make one an evangelist. Neither does stopping in one place for quite a while make one a "pastor." I suppose Paul was just as much an evangelist when he was "stationed" at Ephesus for three years as at any other time in his active life. But what was he doing while at Ephesus? Let him tell: "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20 : 18-21.)

We have hundreds of cities in the world today where an evangelist could spend his life, "serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations." We have thousands of cities where a preacher could spend a lifetime preaching "publickly, and from

house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Græks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." If "located preachers" will pattern more after this, it would be an unreasonable person indeed that would criticize such work.

Many good things are abused. I am sure this is so regarding the "located preacher." Too many are satisfied to settle down with a strong congregation, preach a couple of sermons on the Lord's day, visit a little among the "leading" members, try to humor some of the "she elders," and call all of this doing "the work of an evangelist!" Neither is doing the work of an elder doing the work of an evangelist. Elders are too prone to turn their work over to preachers. Preachers have a very distinctive work to do, and so have the elders. A lot of elders are mere "figureheads." They are not doing the work of a bishop, but have turned it over to the preachers; and some of the preachers like to have it so!

We ought to get away from this idea of "the minister." All Christians are ministers, or servants. It is a sorry condition when a big congregation has but one "minister." There is about as much Scripture for calling a man "the pastor" as there is for calling him "the minister." It is mighty hard to find a scriptural expression to describe an unscriptural work.

I am almost convinced that some brethren are against the "located preacher," so that they may "use the time." Well, if some lay member is going to "use the time" Lord's day after Lord's day, that would be doing the thing that he says he is against. Preaching the gospel is a great responsibility. I have no criticism to make of the man who works at some secular calling through the week and then

preaches on the Lord's day; but this has also been abused. If a man can work through the week and preach on the Lord's day, it does seem that after a few years of this "practice" he would be able to do the work of an evangelist. If he has a "burning" desire to tell the old story on Sunday, what becomes of that desire on the other six days of the week? If a man has a regular income from his secular work, and then goes out and preaches on the Lord's day, taking in from five to fifteen dollars for that preaching, when would his giving of his "prosperity" begin? Of course I am just asking this question. Of course there are many sacrifices to be made to do the work of an evangelist, but the preacher who is not willing to make the necessary sacrifice is not fit for the kingdom of God.

And too many "traveling evangelists" are riding the "circuit!" To just pick out the large congregations where the pay is big and passing up the weak places and the mission field is not doing the work of an evangelist. When a man gets too big to preach to a small audience, he is getting too big in his own eyes. Philip did not have a very big audience when he preached Christ to the eunuch, but that was a grand meeting. There is no particular virtue attached to traveling. It is just as scriptural to preach in the next township as it is in the next state. Both are right. " 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view." A man could be a "located evangelist" and hold meeting after meeting within a reasonable driving distance of his home.

Preachers are human. We all make mistakes. "To err is human; to forgive, divine." I have nothing but encouragement for every worthy preacher, be he a "located preacher," a parttime preacher, or a traveling evangelist.

What I am trying to get at is the abuse of our holy calling. I may bring down the wrath of some preachers on my head for some of these observations, but the criticism will not come from the "located preacher" who is doing the work a preacher ought to be doing. And I would like to put some emphasis on that word "work." The preacher who is busy, publicly or from house to house, and who is living right, deserves our encouragement. Neither will the criticism come from the traveling evangelist who is going everywhere "preaching the word." This I have been doing myself for upwards of twenty years. My hat is off to the preacher who will go into the highways and byways preaching the sweet story of the cross. The man who will sacrifice the endearments of home, put up with the many unpleasant things with which he has to put up, work in out-of-the-ways places where the remuneration is poor, and do it all for the glory of God, certainly deserves our every encouragements rather than criticism. The man who works at some honorable calling throughout the week and then preaches two or three times on the Lord's day to some weak struggling church, or at some mission point, all because of his love for the Lord and lost souls is worthy of all the encouragement we can give him. The man that is making merchandise of the gospel of Christ deserves, and should have, stern rebuke.

The church will be better off, and so will the preachers, when all of us preachers follow the advice of the inspired preacher, Paul, to preacher Timothy. Hear it: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when

they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Tim. 4 : 1-5.) This is the best thing I have ever read on "the work of an evangelist." "Preach the word." Someone has said that to "be instant in season," means to preach it when they like it and when they do not like it! And we must reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Too many are trying to make that read "exhort, exhort, exhort"; and then maybe others are trying to make it read "reprove, reprove, reprove," or "rebuke, rebuke, rebuke!" The Lord has it just right. And the itching ears! How they itch for almost everything but the truth! Lord, help thy humble preachers!

44

CRIPPLED PREACHERS

There are many things which will cripple the usefulness of a preacher. In this article we wish to call attention to a few of these things, hoping thereby to benefit some who may have been crippled and prevent others from being crippled.

To think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think is a great hindrance to us. The brethren get to speaking of "big" preachers, and advertising how highly educated the preacher is, how extensively he has traveled, how many debates he has held, *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*. No, no, I am not condemning education, nor travel, nor debates; but, after all, brethren, the gospel is still God's "power unto salvation." There is danger of our

putting the emphasis on the minor things and neglecting the weightier matters. And if a preacher does not have a great degree of good common sense, these things may cripple his usefulness. Paul was highly educated, he traveled rather extensively, and he was constantly engaged in debates; but, in spite of all this, he would say: "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2 : 2.) Let us put the emphasis upon the gospel of Christ.

If we must speak as "fools" in advertising the "bigness" of our preachers, I have sometimes been made to wonder if it would not add weight to the advertisement if we could ring in truthfully something like the following: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. . . . In journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." (2 Cor. 11 : 23-30.) Truly, Paul was a big preacher.

Unbecoming habits will cripple a preacher. We should have no habits that we could not recommend to the weakest member of the church. Preachers should set a good example to all others. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word,

in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4 : 12.) "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." (Tit. 2 : 7, 8.) This is a high standard for preachers and all other Christians, but not too high. Many a dear soul has been won to the truth by just such living. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" (Rom. 2 : 21.)

"Broad" jokes and "smutty" stories cripple the usefulness of some preachers. "A little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of men," but our conversation should not run too much to the lighter side. And stories, jokes, and conversation that border on the indecent should be far beneath the dignity of any gospel preacher. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Eph. 4 : 29.) Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes said something about conversing with some folks for half an hour would weaken one more than a week's fast!

Worldliness will cripple a preacher. Worldly people will go to worldly places of fun, amusement and frolic; but these same worldly people are shocked when they see preachers there, or others who are making a high profession of Christianity. There is just something about it that does not harmonize with the profession we make. There are plenty of avenues for pleasure and enjoyment without going to places that are questionable. We are going to have a salutary influence in leading people out of

sin and worldliness when we get down with them in the same things that they do. The line of demarkation between the church and the world is all too indistinct in the lives of many preachers and church members. Let us make that line wide and deep.

Dishonesty will cripple a preacher. Every preacher should pay every cent of every honest debt. I believe that I shall make that just strong enough to say that every gospel preacher worthy the name gospel preacher does pay every cent of every honest debt. Of course he may have reverses which will make it hard for him to pay on time, but the real preacher can make satisfactory arrangements with his creditors. Sometimes brethren will give a preacher starvation wages for this work, and thus make it doubly hard for him to meet his obligations; but this is no excuse for a dishonest preacher. We should contract no debts unless we can see our way out. The church has been made to suffer and souls have been lost because of unscrupulous preachers.

A preacher is badly crippled when he does not behave himself properly toward the opposite sex. Well did Paul sound this warning in 1 Tim. 5 : 2, when he said, telling how to treat women: "The elder women as mothers; the young as sisters, with all purity." In this respect we should so conduct ourselves that the vilest enemy of the church could not speak aught against our conduct. And real gospel preachers do! And the church sins against God when it will employ a preacher for a day or a week or a month who does not so conduct himself. We cannot be too careful along this line in this loose and ungodly age in which we are living. We should guard against the very appearance of evil. There are evil-minded persons watching you. Do not give them a chance to talk.

Egotism, braggadocia, and sarcasm in the pulpit greatly cripple a gospel preacher. Webster says that egotism means the "practice of too often using the word *I*; hence, self-exaltation, self-praise." A greater than Webster said: "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth."

45

MISPLACED LOVE

In this study we want to call attention to many things which people are prone to love that are really wrong. Some are desperately in love with money. The love of money is indeed a dangerous love. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6 : 9, 10.) The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. What men will not do for money! In 2 Kings 5 : 20-27 we have a striking example of this. Elisha, the prophet of God, had cured Naaman of his leprosy. For this he would take nothing. This was too much for the prophet's servant, Gehazi. He ran after Naaman, saying that some prophets had come to see Elisha and that he would now accept a talent of silver, and two changes of raiment. Of course, this was a lie. So Naaman gave the servant two talents of silver, and two changes of raiment. For this sin Gehazi was severely punished. "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as as white as snow."

Some are in love with self. We think too highly of ourselves. The inspired Paul said: "For men shall be lovers of their own selves." (2 Tim. 3 : 2.) Many of our heart-aches are brought upon us because of this love of self. Again the inspired record has this warning: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Rom. 12 : 3.) That was old Simon's trouble. He was a sorcerer. He gave out that he himself was "some great one." (Acts 8 : 9.) After he was baptized "he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." Si mon thought he saw a chance to make some "easy money." "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8 : 18, 19.) He had misplaced love.

The world is full of people who are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. (2 Tim 3 : 4.) Many of these are also in the church. In speaking of widows, the inspired writer said this: "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." (1 Tim. 5 : 6.) We have heard something about "millions now living shall never die." But, of course, no man knows this; but we do know that millions now living are already dead! The prodigal son tried the pleasure route. (Luke 15 : 11-32.) It brought him to sin and degradation. Thus it does always. This is another outstanding example of misplaced love.

Many troubles in Zion have been caused by a love of pre-eminence. Among the early disciples we learn of a man

who wanted the pre-eminence. The old apostle John wrote: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not." (3 John 9.) I do not know what Diotrephes had against the beloved John, but perhaps this old faithful preacher did not fit in with his plans. I have noticed in my short pilgrimage that when some one loves the pre-eminence among us, he has very little time or patience for those who do not readily submit to all of his plans. When we allow the spirit of Diotrephes to get into our lives we are on dangerous ground indeed.

A crying example of misplaced love is to be in love with the world. Here is a passage that should be in the heart and on the lips of all faithful Christians: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2 : 15-17.) In the last chapter Paul ever wrote, he tells about a man who forsook him. He says plainly: "For Demas hath forsaken me." (2 Tim. 4 : 10.) How could a brother forsake such a man as Paul? What would cause him to do it? Hear it: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." The love of this present world crowds out our love for God. It will do it every time.

Many love darkness rather than light. This is especially true of many religious teachers. The blessed Christ said: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because

their deeds were evil.” (John 3 : 19.) Every worker of evil deeds hates the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. In the next verse after the one just quoted, Jesus said: “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.” When people have dark things to do, they seek darkness in which to do them. When Judas betrayed Christ, he sought the cover of darkness. (John 13 : 29, 30.) “And it was night.” My dear reader, may God help us to so live and so do that it will not be necessary to seek darkness to cover up our deeds.

Another dangerous thing is love of praise. This love of praise oftentimes prevents men and women from doing their duty. In the days of Jesus many of the chief rulers believed on him, but they did not confess him. Why? “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” (John 12 : 42, 43.) The praise of men may be all right in its place, but if we are seeking the praise of men rather than the praise of God, we are not true Christians. The preacher who seeks to please men rather than God is not a true gospel preacher. We must preach the truth if the heavens fall. “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (Gal. 1 : 10.)

Closely connected with this love of praise of men is the love of places. “Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.” (Luke 11 : 43.) Some of the synagogue seats were more prominent than others. These religious hypocrites loved these seats. Their love was sadly misplaced. I am afraid too many of “us” love the “uppermost seats.” May the dear Lord help us all to be humble, useful, and faithful.

“THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT”

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4 : 1–3.)

Here the inspired Paul speaks of “the unity of the Spirit,” and that this is something that Christians are to keep. God wants no division among his people. Paul had heard upon reliable authority that there were contentions and divisions among the brethren at Corinth. To these brethren Paul wrote: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (1 Cor. 1 : 10.) The secret of unity among Christians is speaking the same things.

The night that the blessed Christ was betrayed into the hands of sinners he prayed for his apostles and all subsequent disciples. He prayed for unity among them. Hear him: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” (John 17 : 20, 21.) Please note carefully these words: “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” I am sure there is no more prolific source of disbelief and infidelity in the world than

the divided state of the so-called "religious world." It is indeed a calamitous thing for division to spring up among Christians. Of course, the very gospel itself will divide those who are Christians from those who are not; but when Christians divide among themselves, there is utterly a fault among them. "Lord, is it I?"

Christians should be as solidly united as God and Christ are. When we can imagine disunion and disfellowship between God and Christ, then, and then only, can we think about such a condition among brethren.

There are reasons as high as heaven and as holy as God why we should be one. First, unity among Christians is a command of God. We are commanded to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is human to magnify some commands and minimize others which are equally important. Thus some of us have done with the command. Some, even some preachers, are not making much of an "endeavor" to keep the unity of the Spirit. Anything that was important enough to engage the Son of God in prayer on that sad night of his betrayal is important enough for our serious and prayerful consideration.

Division is condemned in the severest terms in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In Prov. 6 : 16 we have this language from the world's wisest man: "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him." One of these seven things is, "he that soweth discord among brethren." We may throw our arms around such and talk about their sweet spirit, their powers of speech, *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*, but let us still remember that God hates them in spite of our "love."

The brethren at Corinth were divided over preachers. And in this case the preachers were not to blame. Hear this scathing denunciation from the inspired Paul: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" (1 Cor. 3 : 1-3) Where such conditions obtain, God says such folks are lacking in spirituality and are carnal. Webster says that "carnal" means worldly, fleshly, material. He says it is the opposite of spiritual. He gives as a further meaning: "flesh-devouring; bloodthirsty." Maybe some who cause division among us are not as "sweet" as some have been wont to believe.

Ps. 133 is very short, but very sweet. The first verse says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" There are many things in this old world of ours which are good, but not pleasant. On the other hand, there are many which are pleasant, but are not good; but unity among brethren is both good and pleasant. What a consummation!

The first congregation of disciples of Christ was solidly united. When the church in Jerusalem numbered as many as the church in Nashville does, we have this interesting bit of history concerning them: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (Acts 4 : 32.) The multitude were of one heart and one soul. I wonder how many "unity meetings" it took to

bring this condition? How did they do it? Here is the answer: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2 : 42.) Too many in our day are looking in the wrong direction for unity. It is not found in some humanly-devised plan nor in some Utopian condition of the future. We ought to be looking more towards the Jerusalem of old. Unity among disciples of Christ could and would be brought about overnight if all were to continue in "the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Division has never been brought about by following this teaching. Unity will never be brought about by forsaking it.

There are two great causes of division among disciples. Paul speaks of one of these in Acts 20 : 29, 30 : "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." What do these wolves care for the flock? Wolves have never been particularly interested in the welfare of sheep. The wolf comes to devour and destroy. The false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matt. 7 : 15.)

Another thing that destroys unity among disciples is the love of preeminence. John wrote about one of these fellows: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not." (3 John 9.) Poor old inspired John did not waste many words in making his "approach" to this situation! He had "approached" and gone before many of our moderns would have been to the introduction. What

did the inspired apostle have to say about this lover of preeminence among the brethren? Hear it: "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." And John called this fellow's name! What an utter lack of tact! And God thought enough of this to have it recorded in the Book divine for all subsequent generations of disciples to see. Lord, we thank thee for this direct approach to a nasty situation. If I am teaching things that are not plainly revealed and this teaching is causing strife and alienation, my name should be called and published to the four winds. Let us walk in the old paths.

47

OUR BODY AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

In Rom. 12, and again in 1 Cor. 12, the inspired Paul uses the physical body from which to draw lessons of a spiritual nature. Thus we want to do in this sermon.

The different members of the physical body are under the control and direction of the mind, the seat of intelligence. There must of necessity be a controlling factor. Thus it is in the body of Christ, which is the church of Christ. There must be a head. Authority must be centered. Christ is this head and has the authority. We hear him saying: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28 : 18.) Again, we have this explicit language: "Christ is the head of the church." (Eph. 5 : 23.) The same thought is expressed in Col. 1 : 18 in this

language: "And he is the head of the body, the church." Christ is the head of the church and head over all things to the church. (Eph. 1 : 22, 23.) Too many religious teachers ignore this authority which is vested in the great Head of the church. Thus we have councils, conferences, synods, etc.

The mind directs but one physical body. In other words, we have one body and one mind to control that one body. Just that certain there is one Christ, and he directs but one spiritual body. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Rom. 12 : 4 , 5.) Christians are one body in Christ. Christians are in the body, and this body is the church. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." (1 Cor. 12 : 12, 13.) When we are scripturally baptized, we are baptized into "one body."

In the physical body there are many members, and each member has its work and peculiar function. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? And now are they many members, yet but one body." (1 Cor. 12 : 18-20.) So it is in the church. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. 12 : 27.) One member of the physical body cannot do the work of another member. Neither can the different members of the church do the work of other members. Each has his work to do. Happy is the member of the church that does his work!

The physical body must be kept clean. What a disgrace to have a dirty body! And how much greater shame to have a dirty spiritual body! We learn from 2 Cor. 7 : 1 that we are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." When each Christian does this, we shall have a clean church indeed. Paul wrote to young Timothy, and among other things he said to him: "Keep thyself pure." (1 Tim. 5 : 22.) If all would do this, it would greatly simplify matters. But some will not keep themselves clean. What should be done with these "dirty" members of the body of Christ? Here is an inspired answer: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thess. 3 : 6.) Brethren, let us keep the commandments!

In the physical body we have complete unity of movements. There is no schism. Thus does God want unity among his people. "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." (1 Cor. 12 : 25.) This degree of unity was an outstanding characteristic of the first congregation of disciples of Christ. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." (Acts 4 : 32.) This was brought about by their continuing "stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2 : 42.) Thus, and thus only, can we have unity among us today. There is no other ground for unity. Walking human planks will not bring the desired results, but a wholehearted return to the teaching of the apostles will. Lord, hasten the day!

In the physical body when one member becomes afflicted we bestow much care upon it, trying to "nurse" sick members of the church. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Rom. 15 : 1) "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. 6 : 1.) "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." (Heb. 12 : 12, 13.)

The physical body must have good and nourishing food regularly. Without this food we would sicken and die. The spiritual man must have a good and wholesome diet. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Pet. 2 ; 1, 2.) This "milk of the word" will make us grow strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. We will not have to stay on this milk diet always. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." (Heb. 5 : 12.) It is no disgrace to be a baby, but it is a disgrace to remain one. Let us go on unto perfection.

The physical body craves exercise. The little baby is never still when awake. "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profit-

-able unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4 : 7, 8.) I tell you, my brethren, we are not exercising enough!

48

MOTHER, HOME, AND HEAVEN

Someone has said that the three sweetest words in the English tongue are "mother," "home," and "heaven." Of course others would make a different list, but all agree that these are indeed sweet. Our very lives are associated with these words.

With very few exceptions, back of every great man there is a great mother. Someone has said: "One good mother is worth a hundred schoolmasters." And this is no reflection on schoolmasters. They have their place, and a very important place it is; but there is none that can replace mother. Someone else has said: "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy." Napoleon said: "The great need of France today is more good mothers." I wonder what he would say of the modern France and the modern world! Our own great Lincoln said: "All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

Many women are interested in a "career." The possible career for a woman is that of Christian wife and mother. Read God's tribute to this kind of woman in Prov. 31. Listen: "Her price is far above rubies." "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time

to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

Samuel was one of the great prophets of God. What of his mother? She dedicated her son to the service of the Lord even before he was born. She prayed for a man child. How many women are thus praying in our day? In her prayer she said: "I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life." (1 Sam. 1 : 11.) After the birth of Samuel, she said: "I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me any petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." (1 Sam. 1 : 26-28.) Oh, for more mothers who would lend their sons to the Lord!

One of the very greatest of prophets was John the Baptist. No greater prophet ever arose among them. What of his parents? "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1 : 6.)

Timothy, Paul's son in the gospel, was a great preacher of the gospel. What of his mother? Paul wrote of her: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." (2 Tim. 1 : 5.) Someone has said that if we want the right kind of boy we should begin the training with his grand-

parents. Maybe if we had more grandparents with unfeigned faith, we would have more grandchildren who are sincere and genuinely religious.

One of the crying needs of the world today is Christian homes. We need to bring back the family altar. We are too busy. We are rushing around too much. It takes time to train a child. I can think of nothing sweeter than the old family hearth, with father, mother, and the children gathered around it, each with a Bible in his hand. Father takes the lead in the study of the Scriptures. Here are taught the great truths of God's book. Such homes are the bulwark of the world. The world is in a terrible condition today. We cannot hope for much improvement until men and women return unto God. Maybe you cannot exert a great influence outside of your home, but there father is king and mother is queen. You can rule that home. You can make that home a little bit of heaven let down to earth. You can bring up those children in the nurture and admonition of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can teach them to obey parents and God, and to have a wholesome fear of constituted authority.

Do not depend upon others to teach your children. Of course we should appreciate all the help we can get from Bible-school teachers, elders, preachers, public-school teachers, and others; but we cannot afford to turn the training of our children over to others. The responsibility is too great. Those minds are too plastic.

Yes, little ones trample on our toes; but unless they are well trained, after a while they will trample on our hearts. The nest will be empty some day. We are passing on.

The children of today will be the men and women of tomorrow. The future of the church lies with the children of today.

Our families here are scattered about. It seems such a little while until the ones have grown and flown. They have established homes of their own. But, thanks be to God, we are slowly traveling to that eternal home where we shall be together forever and forever. May I appeal to every parent who reads this to thank God for the opportunity of training children in the service of the King. The reward is rich.

*The dear little feet often wander
Perhaps from the pathway of right,
The dear little hands find new mischief
To try you from morning to night;
But think of the desolate mothers,
Who'd give all the world for your bliss,
And, as thanks for your infinite blessings,
Send the children to bed with a kiss.
For some day their noise will not vex you,
The silence will hurt you far more;
You will Long for their sweet, childish voices,
For a sweet, childish face at the door;
And to press a child's face to your bosom,
You'd give the world for just this.
For the comfort 'twill bring you in sorrow,
Send the children to bed with a kiss.*

THE DYING WORDS OF OUR LORD

We attach more or less significance to the dying words of our loved ones and friends. Those are sacred, sweet words. Some of the choice bits of literature are the dying words of famous and women. Of how much greater importance are the dying words of our Lord Jesus Christ! To those precious words we now invite careful attention. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23 : 34.) What depth of love and pathos is here reached! The angry mob is before him. God's Son has been nailed to the tree of the cross, but he is still pleading for sinning, rebellious men. He wants these poor deluded souls to have another chance at being saved. They do not know what they are doing. The Lord is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3 : 9.) This prayer was answered on the birthday of the church. The man with the keys of the Kingdom of heaven preached to these betrayers and murderers of the Son of God. He said unto them: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2 : 36.) What a biting, stinging accusation! What effect? Listen: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2 : 27.) "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2 : 38.)

Jesus died praying for his enemies. It is possible for man thus to die. The first Christian martyr thus died. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7 : 59, 60.) Paul had this same spirit. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." (2 Tim. 4 : 16.) We must have the same spirit. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5 : 44, 45.)

The dying thief said unto Jesus: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." How did Jesus answer: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23 : 43.) When the spirit leaves the body, it goes into the unseen world. The spirit of Jesus went to the unseen world, but it was not left there. Peter said: "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." (Acts 2 : 31.) He was quoting from David.

In his dying moments Jesus did not forget his mother. He made provision for her. He said to her: "Woman, behold thy son!" (John 19 : 26.) He was turning her over to the tender care of the "disciple . . . whom he loved." He said to this disciple: "Behold thy mother!" (John 19: 27.) What did John do? "And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." What an example! Homes for orphans and old folks are good and fine, but they are poor

substitutes for a real home with real Christians. Jesus took care of his mother. "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise." (Eph. 6 : 2.)

When Jesus was crucified there was darkness from noon until three o'clock. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." (Matt. 27 : 45.) Out of this midnight darkness in the middle of the day the suffering, bleeding, dying Lamb of God called out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matt. 27 : 46.) The sun refused to shine when God's Son was dying.

"I thirst." (John 19 : 28.) How sad! How human! How divine! How was this dying request answered? "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth." (John 19 : 29.) Back in Ps. 69 : 21 we read this sad prophecy: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

"It is finished." (John 19 : 30.) Glorious consummation! What was finished? Many things were then finished. The old law of Moses was nailed to the cross. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col. 2 : 14.) The sufferings of Christ were finished. His work on earth was ending.

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23 : 46.) That was the last thing the blessed Christ said. He then gave up the spirit. May we so live that when we come to the end of the way we can say: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

*I gave my life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
I gave, I gave my life for thee;
What hast thou given for me?*

*My Father's house of light,
My glory-circled throne,
I left for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone.
I left, I left it all for thee;
Hast thou left aught for me?*

*I suffered much for thee—
More than thy tongue can tell,
Of bitterest agony,
To rescue thee from hell.
I've borne, I've borne it all for thee;
What hast thou borne for me?*

*And I have brought to thee,
Down from my home above,
Salvation full and free,
My pardon and my love.
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee;
What hast thou brought to me?*

50

OUR LAST JOURNEY

Most normal beings are more or less interested in

travel. We like to go places and see things. People will spend much time and money in traveling to the more interesting places of this old world of ours. Some of these days we are all going on a long journey. This journey will take us out of this present world and take us into the world which is to come.

A Solemn Journey

All should be impressed with the solemnity of this last journey. Sometimes here we start on journeys and then turn back; or we go to the end of our journey and then we come back from whence we started. However, in this last journey there is no returning. There is no turning back. Job said: "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." (Job 16 : 22.) Well did this grand old patriarch know that it would not be long until he would go on that journey. We would be infinitely better off if we, too, appreciated that solemn fact. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and when vanisheth away." (James 4 : 14.) "The days of our years are threescore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (Ps. 90 : 10.)

David had to give up his little boy, even as many of us have been called upon to give our loved ones. After the boy's death, David uttered these sublime words: "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." (2 Sam. 12 : 23.) Thanks be to God for this blessed hope!

The joy of an earthly is enhanced by congenial companionships. When we take our last journey, we must make it without earthly friends. They cannot go with us. If permitted so to do, they will go with us to the river's edge, but we must cross without them. It is a farewell to earth and earthly things. What a solemn journey! And just about the most solemn thing connected with it is the fact that this journey leads us to the judgment bar of God. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9 : 27.)

A Safe Journey

How profoundly thankful we ought to be to have the assurance that we can make this journey safely! There are at least three essentials to the safety of the journeys.

First, we must take the Bible as our guide. We have never been over the road. We need a guide. In making our earthly journeys we spend much time with timetables, road maps, and suchlike. We want to know the way. We want all available information. Of how much greater importance to take the Bible as our guide in matters religious! "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. 119 : 105.) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1 : 16.) You can make this last journey safe without knowing the doctrines and commandments of men, but you cannot make it without knowing the doctrine of Christ. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8 : 32.)

Second, to make this last journey safely we must make adequate preparation. When we are going for a journey of a few days or weeks here on this earth, we spend much time in preparation. We get ready for the journey. So many are daily departing this life without having made any preparation. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." (Amos 4 : 12.) "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for it is the whole duty of man." (Eccles. 12 : 13.)

Third, to make this last journey safely we must secure the companionship of the Lord. Earthly friends cannot cross the river of death with us, but the Lord can. To have him with us in death we must have him with us in life. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Ps. 23 : 4.)

Of course we secure the companionship of the Lord by obeying him. Jesus said: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" We become Christians by doing what the Lord says. He said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16 : 16.) This is too plain to be misunderstood. Who shall be saved? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The devil would have us to believe that we can be saved without doing what Jesus says. We become Christians by obeying Jesus, and we remain Christians by obeying him. He said: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2 : 10.)

The End of the Journey

We are always interested in our destination. When we have been away on a journey, we long for home; and how

we do think of home and loved ones while we are away! Thus it is with the Christian. He is away from his eternal home. He thinks much of the journey's end; and the nearer he comes to it the sweeter becomes the anticipated joy. Death means rest for the child of the King. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14 : 13.)

Not all dead people are happy, but those who die in the Lord are. Of course we cannot die in the Lord unless we have been in him while we lived. We are not in him unless we have been baptized into him. There is no other way to get in. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6 : 3.) "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3 : 26, 27.)

May God help us all to do his commandments. "Blessed are they that do this commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22 : 14.)

T H E E N D