

RESTORING
NEW TESTAMENT
CHRISTIANITY
and other
Radio Sermons

by
S. C. Kinningham

Published by
WORLD LITERATURE PUBLICATIONS
131 Moulmein Road
Singapore 11

© Copyright 1978

First Singapore printing, 1978

INTRODUCTION

For many years the churches of Christ in Corinth, Mississippi, U.S.A., have presented the gospel of Christ to the people of that area by means of radio. At times there has been only a Sunday program. At other times there has been a daily program. Some of them have been for thirty minutes, others for fifteen, and still others for only five minutes. Because of the radio work done, all have had the opportunity to hear the gospel many times over and no doubt numerous of those who are members of the church today can point to radio preaching as being the means that brought them to the truth of God.

In recent years Bro. S.C. Kinningham has been one of the speakers. This volume of sermons by him was preached over radio station W.K.C.U. on Sunday mornings. Having heard him more than one time, I approached Bro. Kinningham about the possibility of us printing these sermons here in Asia. He gave his approval and this is the first volume in a series.

You will find in this book a variety of lessons from the Bible and they should be very helpful to you in your study of God's word. That is the purpose for which they are being printed.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
131 Moulmein Road
Singapore 11
January 20, 1978

CONTENTS

The Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ	1
Disobedience of Man and Obedience of Christ	7
Which Church did Jesus Build?	13
The Great Salvation.	20
Selling out to Satan.	26
A Surrendered Faith	32
To Obey is Better than Sacrifice	38
The Proper Attitude Toward the Bible	45
Becoming a Child of God	51
Is the Church Necessary to the Salvation of Man?	57
Some Things Not Given in Direct Answer to Prayer	63
Something Must be Done by All Who Would be Saved.	69
The Change of Heart Necessary to Becoming a Christian	76
What Must I do to be Saved?	82
Obedience to God is Salvation by Grace	87
The Non-Denominational Character of the Church	92
Why Be a Member of the Church of Christ?	98
Does Man Have a Choice in Religion?	103
Saved by Words.	110
A Way that Seems Right	115
Hearing the Word of God	128
The Truth Shall Make You Free	140

Restoring New Testament Christianity	152
What Shall the End Be?	165
The Bible.	177

THE HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST

The Apostle Paul said in Phil. 2:5-11, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 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."

Here is an inspired account of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. Jesus had said in his teaching, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," Luke 7:11. He had not exalted himself before men, but humbled himself. Then he was exalted of the Father. This humiliation and exaltation of Christ should be constantly before the minds of all believers in him, for it has to do with our salvation and eternal glory.

The humiliation of Christ becomes greater in our sight when we think of the Glory that he had in the beginning, before he came into the world. In Jn. 17:5

he spoke of the glory that he had with the Father before the world was. The scripture speaks of him as being in the creation. John said in Jn. 1:3 that "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." Then Heb. 1:2 says that God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

Jesus was not only spoken of in the scripture as being with God in the beginning, but is said also to have been equal with God. Paul said, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Or, "Who counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped." He was in the very form and nature of God, and was the source of life and light. John said, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men," Jn. 1:4. He was rich, in that he had all things at his command. Paul speaking of his riches in 2 Cor. 8:9 says, "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."

His becoming poor for our sakes, that we might be rich, was a part of his humiliation. He divested himself of all this ancient glory and came to this sin cursed world that we might gain the riches of heaven through him. He emptied himself. He poured out his life. In order to purchase our redemption, he took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. He became a servant. Heb. 10:5 says, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou pre-

pared me.” Man’s sins could not be taken away by all the sacrifices offered under the law of Moses; and thus, a body was given to Jesus that he might suffer in that body for us and make the sacrifice necessary to save us.

This condescension on his part was voluntary. He said, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,” Heb. 10:7-10. When Jesus spoke of this in Jn. 10:17-18 he said, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

Jesus coming into the world to dwell in a body of flesh was the incarnation of the Son of God. It was the word becoming flesh. John said, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth,” Jn. 1:14. It was in this way that he came to redeem mankind. He said in Luke 19:10 that “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.”

His coming into the world in this manner was a humiliation within itself. His birth was one of the most

lowly-born of humble parentage, and in a stable where the animals were kept. There was no doctor to attend his birth, and no priest, prophet, nor person of prominence to make a formal announcement of it. God had to send the angels from heaven to announce it, and people were startled when they heard of it. It was in the temple forty days later when the first prophetic utterances were given after his arrival.

He was subject to our limitations in the flesh, and possessed the same human weaknesses that we possess. He had the same human appetites and same passions of the flesh to overcome. The writer of the Hebrew epistle said, "It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," Heb. 2:17. His life on earth was full of poverty. He lived among the poor and moved in the lower social strata during his entire stay on earth. He had few rich friends. He lived in other people's homes, ate at other people's tables, preached from a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on another man's colt, and when he was crucified, was buried in a borrowed tomb. His body did not lie in state in a public place to be viewed and mourned by masses of people, and there was not even a funeral service held for him.

But the greatest humiliation of the Son of God was in the treatment that he received of the people whom he came to save. The scripture says in Jn. 1:11 that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And as if it were not enough to merely reject his teaching, the Jewish leaders stirred up all the opposition

they could to him. They tried to destroy him as a teacher by sending out their most skilled teachers to entrap him in his speech. Failing in this, they sought to find conflict between him and the law of Moses, and then between him and the law of land. They accused him of blasphemy. They accused him of being a Samaritan and possessed of a devil. They even accused him of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. When all their efforts to destroy his influence as a teacher failed, they set out to destroy his life. They succeeded in tempting one of his disciples to deliver him into their hands for money. Then they hired false witnesses against him and stirred up the people to demand his crucifixion.

The trials that he was put through were beneath the dignity of any civilized people. The death that they requested for him—yea, demanded, and got, was more cruel and humiliating than that to which they would subject the most detested animal among them. They stripped him of his clothes and nailed him to a crude cross before the eyes of the world to hang there until he died the most loathsome death that a human being could die. I say this was a deep humiliation—coming from the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, to dwell upon the earth in the form of a servant, and then to die this shameful death. But he went to the cross in obedience to the Father, and was then exalted to God's own right hand.

Paul said that God "exalted him, and gave him a name that is above every name; that every knee should bow to him, and that every tongue should confess that he is Lord to the Glory of God, the Father." Peter said

he "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God: angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him," 1 Pet. 3:22. Paul also said that God "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 fullness of him which filleth all in all," Eph. 1:21-23.

Though the cold, lifeless body of Jesus was wrapped in grave clothes and placed in a tomb hewn out of the solid rock, covered with a huge stone and sealed by the Roman government, and guarded by a band of Roman soldiers, at the appointed time, he came forth. He had told his disciples that after three days he would rise again. Even his enemies knew that he had made that promise; and that is the reason for their sealing the tomb and guarding it so closely. But all the powers of Rome and hell could not keep him in the grave. On the third day, he arose. God shook the earth by a mighty earthquake. Rocks were broken in two. The stone over the door of the sepulchre was rolled back. The Roman seal could not hold it. The Roman soldiers fell back as dead men before the Son of God as he came forth from the grave. The vail of the temple was torn from top to bottom, and the graves were opened. The bodies of saints that had slept through the silent centuries came forth and went into the holy city. This is the greatest demonstration of the great power of God over the combined powers of earth, hell, and the grave. Paul wrote later saying he "is declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," Rom. 1:4.

The glorious exaltation of the Lord is beautifully

described in these words by the psalmist, David. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of Glory will come in. Who is the King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of Glory," Ps. 24:7-10. He was escorted by the angels back to heaven, where "he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. 7:13-14. Being exalted to that position at the right hand of God, and having received of the Father a kingdom, that all peoples, and nations, and languages should serve him, it behooves us to bow to his authority and obey his commands that we might be citizens of that kingdom and enter into the eternal glories of it when our life here is over.

DISOBEDIENCE OF MAN AND OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

The apostle Paul said in Rom. 6:19 that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." In this passage the apostle spoke of the disobedience of man and the obedience of Christ. The one meant death, and the other life. The 12th verse of this same chapter tells us that death came upon all men because of Adam's transgression; and it is through the obedience

of Christ that all men have an opportunity to be saved. I say have an opportunity to be saved, because we are not saved simply and solely because of Christ's obedience.

Even though physical death came upon all men because of Adam's transgression, the individual will stand or fall before God because of his own obedience or disobedience to divine law. Listen to what the prophet of God said in Ezek. 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." So everyone shall answer to God for his own sins, and not for the sins of somebody else. This idea of man's being lost because of the sin of Adam is false theological dogma, and not scripture at all. In fact, it is contrary to scripture. The fact is, that Adam is not the only one who has sinned. The scripture tells us that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom. 3:23. This fact is also stated in the Old Testament. It is a fact in all ages, that all men have sinned against God and are lost because of it.

But the sad part of it is, that so many are sinning against God not realizing that the thing they are doing is sin. Some forms of sin, most people recognize as sin. Others, they do not. "Rebellion" is something that is so obvious that people everywhere know it is sin. When people stubbornly refuse to do what God says, they know they are sinning against him. If one believes in the existence of God at all, he knows that it, too, would be a sin to rebel against him.

Rebellion has always been common, even among those who claim to be the people of God—people who claim to be his servants. There are so many things that he requires of his people that they refuse to do. God said of Israel, “This people hath a revolting and rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us fear Jehovah our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in its season; that preserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good from you,” Jer. 5:24-25.

These people had so rebelled against God that they were unwilling to listen to their prophets who tried to tell them what God wanted them to do. God said in Isa. 30:9-11, “For it is a rebellious people, lying children, that will not hear the law of Jehovah. That say to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” And that, my friends, was not only the condition of the Israelites in the days of Isaiah, but people today have the same rebellious attitude towards the very God who gave his Son to die to save us. And here is what I mean: Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” but people rebel against it. Jesus sent his apostles to tell people who came to believe in him, 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 Spirit.” But many people rebel against it and say they will die and go to torment before they will do it. God sent a man to Saul

of Tarsus to tell him to “arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord,” Acts 22:16. But people rebel and say they will go to hell before they will obey that command. Israel never saw the day when they were more rebellious against the law of God than all the people in the world today who refuse to obey the commands of the gospel of the Son of God. And preachers are responsible for most of it, for they are preaching to people that they do not have to do what God said. They try to make it appear that this is “Church of Christ doctrine,” and then try to make the people believe that the church of Christ did not begin until less than two hundred years ago. How could the things commanded by the apostles be the doctrine of a church that did not begin until a few years ago? In the first place, a church that one can read about in the Bible cannot be a modern creation; and in the second place, the commands given by the Lord are not the doctrine of any church—they are the doctrine of Christ. When one refuses to be baptized for the remission of sins as the Lord commanded, he is not rejecting some church. He is rebelling against God.

Many people disobey God by substituting something of their own choosing for something that God has commanded. This is very frequently done in religion. People seem to think that one thing is just as good as another in religion as long as they are attempting to do something that God has said. It seems never to have occurred to many people that when God tells us how to do a thing, that is the only way it can be done without disobeying God. Two priests, who were also sons of Aaron, did this one day, and people have been doing it ever since. The scripture says in Lev.

10:1-2 that "Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah." God had told them where to get the fire-off of the brazen altar—fire that God himself had kindled. But they substituted fire that they kindled themselves (which was "strange fire") for the fire that God had told them to use. God showed his disapproval by killing the priests that offered it.

The same practice is going on among men today. God commanded baptism by a burial in water. The scripture says 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." But instead of burying people in baptism, many have adopted the practice of sprinkling or pouring of water on the head of people and calling it baptism. That is not baptism at all, but a cheap substitute for something that God said to do. Nowhere in all the Bible is either sprinkling or pouring mentioned in connection with baptism in any way; but God has told us in no uncertain terms how it is to be performed. It is either performed this way, or it is an act of disobedience to God.

Others disobey God by adding something to what he has commanded. God said in Deut. 4:2, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye many keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you." Thus, if they added to the word which he

commanded them, they were not keeping his commandments. They were doing what they wanted to do and not what he wanted them to do. A very forceful example of a very small addition to something that God commanded is seen in Num. 20:2-12. God told Moses to “speak to the rock that it may bring forth its water unto you,” and Moses lifted up his rod and smote the rock twice. Because of that simple addition, God refused him permission to enter into the promised land. And people today are still doing the same thing.

God has told his people today to “sing and make melody in your hearts to the Lord,” Eph. 5:19. Many are adding mechanical musical instruments to their singing, and then demanding that we show them where the Bible says not do it. But where did God tell Moses to not smite the rock? The fact that he told him to “speak to the rock” should have been sufficient for him to know that that was the thing that God wanted him to do. And the fact that God refused to let him enter the promised land should be sufficient for us to know that God will not tolerate any addition to his requirements in any age. When one adds mechanical musical instruments, he disobeys God and will be punished for it assuredly as any sin will be punished.

Another way that people disobey God is by leaving off something that he has required. God sent Saul, the king of Israel, to destroy the Amlekites completely and spare nothing. But Saul did not completely destroy them. He saved the king alive, and the best of the flocks and herds. Because of this disobedience, God took the kingdom from him and he died in disgrace. This, too, is a type of disobedience of which many are guilty in this age in which we live. God ordained that

Christians meet on the first day of the week to eat the Lord's supper, as we find in Matt. 28:20; Acts 20:7. Failure to do that at any time when possible to do so is an act of disobedience before God, and must be punished. It is not immoral, but it is disobedience nevertheless, and disobedience is sin which will cause the offender to be lost in the day of judgment.

But the apostle said, "through the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." It is through the obedience of Christ that many may be made righteous before God by our own personal obedience. That we may know this is true, listen to what the scripture says 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." He was obedient to God, but we must render personal obedience to be made free from our sins that we ourselves have committed.

The scripture says in 2 Thes. 2:8-8 that all who fail to obey the gospel of Christ will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his might; but Rev. 22: 14 says that those who keep his commands will have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Let me urge you today to obey the commands as they are given in the Bible that you may have eternal life.

WHICH CHURCH DID JESUS BUILD?

That there are several hundred religious bodies, each claiming to be the church of Christ, or a denomination

of the church of Christ, is a fact too plain to be denied. That these religious bodies disagree with each other in doctrine and practice is also plain to any one that wants to see. Did Christ establish all these bodies? If so, why do they disagree, seeing they all have the same Bible? Did he establish any of them? If so, which one? If more than one, how many? "It makes no difference which church you join," many people say. If this be true, does it make any difference how many churches one joins? Men join lodges—Masons, Odd Fellows, etc.—to get the benefit of all of them. If it makes no difference which church one joins, what valid reason could one give for not joining several and get the benefit of all of them? I had a college professor who told us that he held membership in three different churches and asked us not to tell either of the churches about his membership in the others. But he said each of these churches had something the others did not have, and neither one of them satisfied all his spiritual needs.

Are we to assume that Christ could not build a church that would meet all the needs of all the people in all the ages? Are we to assume that men can improve on the one Lord built and build another that will supply some of the needs of man that were not supplied in the one the Lord built? Somebody says, "It would not be right for one man to join several churches at the same time." Why not? If it is all right for several people to join several churches, why would it not be all right for one man to join all of them? You say it is all right for A to join a certain church, and it is all right for B to join another. And then it would still be all right for C and D to each join others—but it would not be right

for A to join the ones that B, C, and D joined all at the same time. There is no logical reason that can be given for the same individual not joining all of them if they are all alright, and it is proper for others to join them.

How does this line of reasoning sound in the light of what the Bible says? It so happens that both Christ and his apostles had something to say about the matter that we have just been discussing. In Jesus' prayer recorded in Jn. 17, he said, "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 all may be one in us that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Jn. 17:20-21. Then after the church of the Lord was established and was threatened with division, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and said, "Now I beseech you brethren in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement," 1 Cor. 1:10. If this instruction were carried out, differing churches would not, and could not, exist.

My friends, if it made no difference which church one joins, then it would be all right to join the Catholics, the Latter-day Saints, The Pentecost Assemblies, or, Holiness churches, or the Universalists —and even all at the same time. Think of what that would be!—the ritual of Catholicism, the emotionalism of the Holiness, the polygamy of the Latter-Day Saints, and the doctrine of the Universalists that nobody will be lost. If a person had this combination in religion he could do anything in religion that he likes and be

assured that all will be well in the end.

But suppose now that a man does not join any church. If one can stay out of one church and be saved, then all men could stay out of it and be saved. And if a man can stay out of one of these churches and be saved, then which one? Could he stay out of all of them and still be saved? Because most people are not willing to say that everybody has to be a member of the church that they belong to in order to be saved, they just say that one does not have to be a member of any of them to be saved. If that were true, it would mean that the church is useless, and that one can be as well off without it. That would mean that when Jesus died for the church, that was not necessary—that he died for it thinking men had to be in it to be saved. The scripture says in Eph. 5:25 that Christ “loved the church and gave himself for it.” But most people do not love it, and say it is not worth dying for—that one can be saved outside of it as well as in it. Now, My friends, I don’t believe that. I don’t happen to believe that Christ died for something that man could do without. Acts 20:28 says that he purchased it with his own blood. I just don’t believe that he shed his blood for something that is not important in the redemption of mankind. I know that Jesus did not die for the Catholic Church, the Lutheran, nor any of the Protestant denominations. They are not found in the Bible, and the apostles knew nothing at all about them. It would be perfectly all right to say that these churches are not necessary, and that one does not have to be a member of any of them to be saved; but don’t say the Lord’s church is not necessary, and that one can be saved outside of it.

Let us look for a moment and see further what it would mean for people to belong to different churches. Would it be right for four different people to teach and practice different things in religion? Could they do it and all be right? If they could, then could one man teach and practice all these things at the same time and be right? Here is what I mean: A preaches "once in grace, always in grace. That one cannot fall." B teaches that "man can fall from grace." C preaches that only immersion is baptism, and D preaches baptism "by sprinkling and pouring." Would it be all right for one man to preach all of these? If not, why not? If it is all right for four men to preach them, why would it not be all right for one to do it? If one man were to preach all these doctrines people would say he was mentally unbalanced, and would say that God would not be pleased with it. Then, my friends, would you tell me why it would be sane and sensible for four men to preach these doctrines, and why God would be pleased with it? It is no wonder there are so many infidels in the world.

If God accepts all denominations, with all the denominations disagreeing with each other, and teaching contradictory doctrines, then he would be as well pleased with error as with truth; and I don't believe you would be willing to accept that at all. Error will condemn man. All error is of the Devil, and Jesus came into the world to free men from error and superstition that we might know the truth and be saved by it. Jesus said in Jn. 8:44 that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. And when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father

of it." But in verse 32 he said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Now, how many churches did Jesus establish? What does the Bible say? He told the apostles in Matt. 18:18 that "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Now let us look at that they said about the church. Eph. 4:4 says, "There is one body." In 1 Cor. 12:20 the scripture says, "Now are they many members, yet but one body." Then Eph. 1:22-23 says that God hath put all things under Jesus' feet," and gave him to be the head over all things, to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." This all adds up to one thing—one church. Then here is one other thing in that connection: The church is his body, and 2 Tim. 2:10 says that is where salvation is. The apostle said, "I therefore endure all things for the elect's sake that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Since salvation is in Christ, and the church is his body, then it certainly does make a difference as to whether one is in the church. If he is not in the church, there is no salvation. That is where the Bible says it is.

But some say the denominations are all branches of the church of Christ; because Jesus said, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches." Now if Jesus had reference to religious denominations, where were the branches in the days of the apostles? The Protestant denominations did not exist until many centuries after they were dead. But people were "complete" in Christ in the days of the apostles, and before the Protestant denominations

were established; which means of course, that one can be a member of the church of Christ as the apostles were, and be complete in Christ, without being a member of a denomination. And since no denomination contains all the fullness of Christ, and the church of Christ is not made up of denominations, does it not stand to reason that they exist in opposition to the church that Jesus built?

Now if you are concerned about how you can know whether you are a member of the church that Jesus built, and just who compose it, let me suggest a few scriptures for your consideration. The scripture says in Acts 2:47 that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Which means, of course, that the church is made up of saved people. Then when we meet the conditions of salvation as given in the Bible, we will know that we are a member of the church that we read about in the Bible. Jesus told his apostles to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned," Mark 16:15-16. In the first sermon that they preached under that commission, they said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," Acts 2:38.

When we do this, we know we are brought into a state of salvation in Christ as the scripture says. The scripture says that baptism puts one into Christ where this salvation is promised. Gal. 3:27 says, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." My friends, don't wonder and guess about it when you can do what the Lord said and be certain.

THE GREAT SALVATION

In the Hebrew epistle the writer contrasts the new economy given through the Lord Jesus Christ with that old Mosiac system of religion and shows how much greater the one is that is given through Christ. It is a better covenant built upon better promises. It is a better hope. It is a better law, for it is the "law of the Spirit of life." It is a better system of worship, for it is a worship performed "in Spirit and in truth." It is a better way of life, for it is one that walks before others in love.

In the first three verses of chapter two, the writer said, "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 steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense 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 hear him?" Here the writer speaks of the "great salvation" and urges his readers to not neglect it. And it is to this "great salvation" that I want to direct your attention today.

The salvation provided for man through Christ is truly a great salvation for a number of reasons. It is great, first of all, because it was first spoken by him. He is the author of it. No other has ever offered to mankind anything so great. Other things have been offered to men by great leaders and men of achievement—but not salvation such as offered by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is great also because it is for every individual throughout the world. Nothing else is that broad in scope.

Others are quite limited in what they can do by way of helping others, but the Lord is both able and willing to save every man and woman on earth who is interested in being saved.

This salvation is great because it is for the soul of man. The bodies of men are saved from death in water, in fire, from storms, etc., but nothing that man has ever been able to do could save the soul of man that will live through eternal ages after the brief stay on earth is over. Jesus emphasized the value of the soul and the salvation of it when he said in Matt. 16:24, "What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" So anything that will save our soul from the ravages of sin and the eternal consequences of it to the joys of eternal bliss in a land of fadeless day is truly the greatest thing ever offered us.

I think, too, it is proper to say that the salvation offered in Christ is the greatest thing that man can think upon because it is to be given the first place in our life before everything else. The scripture says, "behold, now is the day of salvation. Behold, now is the accepted time," (2 Cor. 6:2). If there were anything else in the world as great as this, it would not be given first place ahead of everything that man might think upon. And if you are not making it the first consideration in your life, it is because you have never come to realize the value of your soul, or else you have refused to think of judgment and the eternal consequences of neglecting those things which may bring about your own salvation.

There are two aspects of this great salvation that we read about in the Testament of Christ. First, there is the present aspect of it—salvation from all past, or alien sins; and then the eternal aspect of it—heaven with all the glories of it when life here is over. When Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” he had reference to salvation from all sins ever committed in the past. In that sense, one is saved then and there. But many people think of salvation in one sense only, and think that if one is ever truly saved he can never be lost. People would not make that error if they would consider the scriptures given to Christians on striving to overcome and remain faithful to God that they might enter one day into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter speaks of our “being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time,” 1 Pet. 1:5. There definitely is a salvation to “be revealed in the last time.” That is the eternal aspect of it. The “power of God” to keep the Christian is overlooked. God’s power keeps the Christian as long as he is faithful; but we know many Christians become unfaithful. Many “depart from the faith” as the Holy Spirit said in 1 Tim. 4:1 that they would. Many have their faith “shipwrecked,” and many have their faith “overthrown.” When this happens, the channel through which God’s power to keep us is cut, and we are no longer kept by it. That one then fails to enter into the “salvation that is to be revealed at this last time.”

In 2 Pet. 1:5-11 the apostle tells Christians of the things in which they are to develop that they might enter the eternal kingdom of God, and says, “Where-

fore 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 Savior Jesus Christ." So the Christian's entrance into the everlasting kingdom depends on his diligence in the things the apostle mentioned, and thus making his "calling and election sure." It will not be made sure to those who fail to add the Christian graces to their life. It is truly a great thing to be freed from all past sins and have every stain removed from one's soul, but it is greater still when that one enters in through the gates into the city of God and the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior.

It should be noticed here that the passage that we read in the beginning says it "was first spoken to us by the Lord." This means of course, that it is not found in the words of Abraham, Moses, nor John the Baptist. These were all before the Lord Jesus Christ, and this great salvation was first spoken by him. Neither are we to take any stock in the things spoken by any latter day, pseudo-prophet such as Joseph Smith, Mrs. Ellen G. White, Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, and others of that type. When Jesus asked his apostles if they would also go away, as many others were doing, Peter said in Jn. 6:68, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." That was true then, and it is true today. He alone has the words of eternal life, and they are made known to us through his apostles. These words of salvation are all written in the Testament of Christ and must be strictly observed as they are found there. To trifle with the words of the New Testament in any way—to ignore any of them, to try to change them,

to fail to obey them, to try to explain them away, or to add anything to them, is to fail of that great salvation. There is no escape from the eternal punishment if we fail to give earnest heed to the conditions of salvation set forth in the testament of Christ and do not meet them.

There is no way that one can escape death who has been born into this world. Heb. 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto man once to die." The unfaithful dread it and the wicked fear it—but there is no escape. We must prepare for it. And neither is there any escape from judgment. The same passage says, "and after this the judgment." The apostle Paul also said in Acts 17:31 that "he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. He also said in 2 Cor. 5:10 that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad." And then the impenitent shall not be able to escape the wrath of God. Heb. 10:26-27 says, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Though we cannot escape death and judgment, we can escape the wrath of God in the day "of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" if we do not neglect this great salvation that has been set before us.

Many neglect this great salvation because they are deceived by sin. In Heb. 3:13 the writer said, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of

you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Sin is truly deceptive. It offers men pleasure, but it blinds one's eyes to the wages of it. One is deceived when he thinks he can go just a little way in sin and then quit; or, when he thinks he can continue in it just a little longer and then give it up some day as easy as he could now. And all the time, the heart is being hardened by the forces of evil and the word of God has less and less power upon him.

Many people neglect the salvation of their soul waiting for a "More convenient season." Felix had a wonderful opportunity one day to obey God and become a Christian. The apostle Paul stood before him in person and taught him the way of truth, and stood ready to help him in his obedience to it. But he put it off. He waited for a more convenient season and lost his own soul.

Others neglect the salvation of their soul feeling that there is plenty of time yet. But they do not realize how short time is—how uncertain life is and just how soon death may come. Every day people of all ages are dying—babies, little children, teenagers, young fathers and mothers, and older people. How well do we know that all people do not die of old age. James said, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away," Jas. 4:14. The only time to save your soul is now, and the only way to do it is by obeying the words of Christ and his apostles by whom this great salvation is spoken. People are required by them to confess with the mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, to repent of all sins committed and be baptized into him for the forgiveness

of sins; and then grow as a new born babe in Christ and be faithful to God in worship, in life, and in service to him. Through this obedience he has promised to save us with an eternal salvation in the end.

SELLING OUT TO SATAN

I want to talk to you today about selling out to Satan. It is hard to think of anyone who would actually do that; and yet, thousands of people are. There are those who are willing to sell themselves, their children, their homes, and all they have if the price is right. If it will bring them the pleasures they want NOW, they will sell themselves and others to have that pleasure. Judas was willing to sell the sinless Son of God for thirty pieces of silver. He said, "What will you give me, and I will deliver him to you." Actually, Judas was not selling the Lord, but himself. He sold himself to the forces of evil for the revenue it would bring him.

The people of this county are now being asked to vote to legalize the sale and consumption of liquor, and they say it is because they want the revenue. We are being asked to sell the safety of our community, the character and the virtue of many good people, and the lives of many good citizens by legalizing the sale and consumption of liquor for the revenue it will bring us. I say the legalization of liquor means the sale of community safety, the character and virtue of many good people, and the lives of many good citizens because of the great increase in crime that follows in its wake, and the number of people who will take up the drink habit who had never tasted it before.

I want to give you first a passage from the Bible on the fruits of drinking, and then give you facts and figures to show the increase in crime in the places around us where liquor has been legalized. God said in Isa. 5:11-14, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it." "Drink" was their main concern; and they regarded not the work of the Lord, neither the operation of his hands. "Drink" had destroyed their knowledge of the things of God and brought them into captivity. Their honorable men were famished and the multitude dried up with thirst—even while they followed after strong drink until they were enflamed by it. In the end, hell was enlarged, and opened her mouth without measure. These descended into it. This is not the voice of some preacher talking at random, but that which came from God himself. Why should we today think that we can mock God and escape the consequences of our evil?

The liquor industries are pressing for the legalization of liquor in our county and the people who want to drink it are pulling for it; and every deceptive method is being used to induce us to cast a vote to put it in the hands of everybody. Here is a quotation that appeared

in a full page ad in our local paper on Aug. 13 that explains what I mean. It says, "It would no doubt be good if the voters of Alcorn County could be offered a clear cut "Wet or Dry" proposition upon which to vote—but experience has proven that no such choice is actually available. So, the real question at the polls will be, "Whether we wish to place the liquor operation in the hands of legally licensed operators, controlled and taxed, or leave it, as it is." That ad says we do NOT have a choice between a "wet or dry" proposition. Certainly we do! When one casts his vote, he is not deciding between whether he wants legalized liquor or bootleggers. Many would have us believe that we have no other choice. We do! We are not voting for bootleggers at all when we vote against legalized liquor. We are voting against liquor altogether; and we are willing to get behind our law enforcement officers and give them the help they need to control the "dry" laws that we already have. Because we have violators of the laws that we already have does not mean that we should do away with them. Would you be willing to take our traffic laws off the books because they are being violated and turn the public loose? Would you be willing to see the laws of God abolished because they are violated every day by many people? When laws are enacted for the safety of the public and the betterment of society, why not help to enforce them instead seeking to abolish them?

I saw legalized liquor come to Oklahoma and saw the fruits of it in the state. After nearly four years of legalized liquor, the OKLAHOMA CITY TIMES said on Aug. 22, 1963 that "Moonshiners were not crippled by Repeal."—"Almost four years of legal liquor in

Oklahoma have failed to put much of a dent in the moonshine business," a federal officer said. There are fewer stills in Oklahoma hills since repeal, says James T. Rogers, but the stills are bigger these days." No, the legalization of liquor does not stop bootlegging and does not lessen any evil whatsoever. On the other hand crime skyrockets when liquor is legalized.

Let me give you some figures on the increase of crime in places where liquor is legalized. The first year it was legalized in Oklahoma the crime increase in that state was 28%, while the average increase for the nation was 14%. Liquor was legalized in Dennison, Texas, the county just across the line from Oklahoma. Figures released from there show that drunken driving had increased by 210% in one year over another; murder had increased 400%; disturbing the peace had increased 206% and drunkenness increased 360%. Five years after Oklahoma voted for the legalization of liquor, Oklahoma City reported an increase in murders by 30%; rape by 44%; thefts 103%; robbery 247%; and increase in assault by 700%. You see how these people sold out to the forces of evil. They said they wanted the revenue. Kingsport, Tennessee voted to outlaw the sale of beer in their city, and according to figures compiled by a former city judge of Kingsport, here is the drop they had in crime: Murder decreased 85%, manslaughter 100%, Rape 67%, Robbery 60%, Burglary 20%, Sex offenses 55%, Possessing liquor 30%, Drunkenness 45%, Drunk driving 35%, and larceny 25%. So when one votes for the legalization of liquor, he is voting for crime increase.

I went into a business establishment the other day

and asked that they help keep liquor out of our county. One of the men promptly said, "We want the revenue." I am wondering whether those who make that claim are really concerned about the revenue. I wonder if they are really concerned about our schools and the welfare of the community in general. If you are really concerned about the revenue to be derived from the sale of liquor, let me give you a few facts on that phase of it.

A special commission appointed in Massachusetts to study this matter reported that in 1943 the cost of taking care of the damage caused by liquor (including the cost of arrests, care, and prosecution of criminals, and care of the insane and those made dependent through liquor) was \$61,000,000.00. Revenue derived from liquor that year was \$13,139,926.79. Commenting upon this report, Judge Joseph T. Zottoli said: "For every dollar collected in taxes from liquor, the state expends at least five times as much to salvage the breakage caused to the social fabric." Think of it! For every dollar collected by the state as revenue from liquor it has to spend five more on the damage it does. Yale Alcohol Studies in Mass. reveals that for every dollar received as revenue it takes \$4.82 to take care of known liquor-caused court cases, jail costs, hospitalization, welfare, etc. And they still tell us they want the revenue. No, my friends, that is not what they want. They want the liquor and the freedom to drink it. And men already planning how they will make money out of it themselves. It is not the public that the liquor industries are interested in, nor those who are pulling for the legalization of it. It is selfish gain on the part of some and the freedom to drink it on the part of others.

One man phoned me to come to see him. He wanted me to help him get his wife back. He had spent what he made on liquor, was letting her do without the necessities of life, and their house was rotting down. She left him because he had ruined his life and was trying to ruin hers. That was here in town; such men as he are working feverishly for the legalization of liquor, and saying, "We want the revenue."

Another robust young man here in town has wept and talked with me time and again about his miseries. He said his wife had sued him for divorce because he drank so much and he was losing her and his five year old son. He said he was dying within and his life was ruined. Yet, they want us to vote for liquor so many others will join their ranks. We are told that the revenue from the sale of liquor will help our schools. Do you think people are interested in the schools who would destroy the pupils who attend them? Do you think people are interested in the schools who would destroy the homes from which the students come? If legalized liquor will cause one home to be destroyed, it is not worth it—that is, if it is your home. Does your home mean anything to you? What would you take for it and see it destroyed before your very eyes? For what amount of revenue would you see the body of your son mangled in an automobile? Or, for what amount of revenue would you see the virtue of your daughter destroyed, or the character of any member of your family? There is no amount of revenue that is worth a home, if it is my home; or the life of a son, if it is my son; or the character of any boy or girl if they are a part of my family. "Be not deceived; for whatsoever a man soweth,

that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall the Spirit reap eternal life." Let us make straight paths for others, and not put a stumbling block in the way of any that would cause them to fail to receive eternal life in the end. Use all the influence you have to defeat the forces of liquor. Vote against it.

A SURRENDERED FAITH

Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to talk to you today about a surrendered faith—a surrender without reservation. Would you forget about all human prejudices as best you can, and for the sake of truth, study this question with me today?

What does it mean to surrender to Christ? It is my firm conviction that most people have not truly and completely surrendered their will to the Lord, but have surrendered to him with reservations. That is the reason why millions will not darken the door of a church building of any kind. O, of this number, there may be some who have made a partial surrender to Christ—a surrender with reservations; but not entirely. Not completely and fully from the heart. They try to find some way out of obeying his commands. They try to find some excuse for not keeping his ordinances, and meeting those appointments that God has given his people to meet.

The one who is fully surrendered to the will of God will not try to find some way out of obeying his commands. They will make no excuses. They will do according to the instructions found in 1 Sam. 3:8-10,

which says, "And it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak Lord; for thy servant heareth," and v. 10 says, "And the Lord came, and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth." The next morning Eli came to Samuel and asked him, "What is the thing the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me." "And Samuel told him every whit."

There were no reservations, either with Eli or with Samuel, to whom the Lord had spoken. God punished the house of Eli because he had not directed his sons; but Eli did not hold back and try to find some way around what God had spoken concerning him. Listen as I read vs. 12-13. "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile (the marginal reading says, "blasphemed God") and he restrained them not."

Are you wondering now what Eli said? In v. 18 the record simply says Eli replied, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." There was no resentment in his heart. God's will was his will. God's commands were his charge. To them he would humbly surrender without reservation, for he knew that God knew best.

Another great story in the Bible showing what it means to completely surrender to the Lord without reservation is found in Lev. 10:1-7. I shall not read all of it at this time, but trust that you will. It begins by saying, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron,

took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them and they died before the Lord." Now listen to the instruction of Moses, the brother of Aaron as he says, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And AARON HELD HIS PEACE." We speak of a surrendered faith before the Lord—that was it! Had it been your sons who died before the Lord for doing something that God had not commanded, would you have held your peace?!

Moses said further to Aaron, Eleazer, and Ithamar, the father and two brothers, "Uncover your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people; but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled." If you really want to know what a surrendered faith is, just go back and read and think on this example.

Let us look now at one more example of a surrendered faith found in the Old Testament. In Gen. 22 is the story of Abraham offering his son as a burnt offering. We are told that "it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, "Behold, here am I. And he said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Now, would you have done what God told Abraham to do?

You talk about a surrendered faith—most of us don't seem to know at all what it means. But Abraham had no reservations as he made preparation to offer his son as a burnt offering before the Lord.

When Abraham prepared the altar, laid the wood in order, and bound his son and laid him upon the altar, I would say that was a surrendered faith—a surrender without reservation. He stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son, when his hand was staid by the Lord, who said, "Abraham, now I know that thou lovest me, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son." And Abraham is called, "The father of the faithful." His was a surrendered faith—a surrender without reservation.

Now I should like to raise some questions today for your consideration. When Jesus said in Matt. 28:18-20, "All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"; and when he said in Mark 16:15-16, "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"; suppose the apostles had refused to obey that command, saying they did not believe that baptism is essential to salvation; and they refused to command people to be baptized that they might be saved? Would you say that this would have been a complete surrender to the Lord?—a surrender without reservation? Or, would you say that this would have

been rebellion against Christ?

Now let me ask another question—this one to include you and me. Suppose those to whom the apostles brought this great commission had said, “We don’t believe baptism is essential to salvation, and we refuse to be baptized as the Lord commanded?” Would you say that this would be a full and complete surrender to the Lord?—a surrender without reservation? Remember, the Lord commanded it and the command was to be carried to every creature in every nation in all the world, and that gets you and me. Now honestly, have you surrendered without reservation to the Lord in obeying that command? Or, are you demanding of the Lord that he forget his command, and save you any way?

When we go out and preach the gospel today, as it was preached by the apostles in the beginning, if we should fail to give the command of Jesus to the people as they did, would we be preaching the gospel without reservation? Are we saying as his servants of old, “Speak Lord; thy servant heareth”? Then are you saying to those of us who preach the gospel as it was preached in the beginning, “We believe we will be saved by faith, but will not obey the command to be baptized”? Shall it be as was said in Isa. 30:9-11, “This is a rebellious people, a lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us”? They were not willing to hear the word of the Lord. They

would not obey his commands. They asked the preachers of their day to cease to preach to them the truth, the commands of God, but instead, they said, "speak unto us SMOOTH THINGS." I am afraid this is largely the condition of the world today. It is saying to those of us who preach the gospel, "Speak unto us smooth things. Do not tell us that we have to be baptized to be saved. Tell us that we can be saved by our faith alone. We are not willing to obey his commands." Many are saying, "Do not tell us that we have to be members of the church bought with the blood of Calvary. Tell us that it doesn't make any difference about the church—that we can be saved outside of the church as well as in it. Tell us that one church is as good as another—that we can be saved in our own church, and that it is just as good as the Lord's.

Many are saying, "Tell us that we can live right and go to heaven outside of the church. Tell us that we do not have to attend the services of the Lord on the first day of the week—that we can be saved without it. Tell us that we can worship in our own home without having to assemble with the saints on the first day of the week to break bread, and to give of our means." Yes, many are saying, "Don't bind Heb. 10:25 on us," which says, "Forsaking not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." Tell us that we do not have to give liberally and willingly of our means on the first day of the week according as the Lord has prospered us." Ah, my friends! I am afraid there are not really too many who have made a full and complete surrender of their will to the Lord—a surrender of faith without reser-

vation.

In Acts 9 and 22 we have the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was ready to surrender to him without reservation. Christ sent Ananias to him, who commanded him to "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." There was not a word of protest. He arose immediately and was baptized. Why? Simply because he made a surrender of his faith to the Lord without reservation. How is it with you, my friends? Are you willing to obey every command the Lord has given; or, are you arguing about some of them? Have you done all that the apostles commanded in the name of Christ; or, are you holding back, and resisting the will of God? Remember, friends, if you are saved, it will be by the will of God, and not your own. I beg of you today to make a complete surrender of your will to the will of God, and obey him without reservation that your soul may be saved in the day of judgment.

TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

A great many people have a very loose conception of the matter of salvation and what the individual must do in order to be saved. The vast majority seem to feel that anything in religion will be acceptable to God as long as the worshipper is sincere and feels right within himself about what he is doing. It seems never to have occurred to people generally that God requires strict obedience to him by everybody, and that his requirements to all men are the same.

In 1 Sam. 15:22-23, a prophet of God said, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." God had sent Saul, the king of Israel on a special mission with specific instructions as to what he wanted him to do. God said, "Utterly destroy the Amlekites—man and woman, infant and suckling, camel and ass, ox and sheep. Utterly destroy them." Though Saul won a decisive victory so far as Israel was concerned, the record says he saved Agag the king, and the best of the flocks and herds to sacrifice unto Jehovah. But Agag was an Amlekite, and Saul failed to "utterly destroy him." His purpose regarding the flocks and herds was not particularly a selfish one, for he was going to sacrifice them all unto God. However, this is not the thing that God ordered. He ordered their complete destruction, and Saul failed to do it.

God appeared to Samuel and told him that Saul had turned back from following him and had not kept his commands. He had sinned against Jehovah. God said he had rejected Saul from being king. When Samuel went to Saul he found Saul in a jubilant mood; and Saul said, "Blessed be thou of Jehovah: I have performed the commandment of Jehovah." Samuel said, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" If he had done what God said, there would not have been any such sound among them. Saul answered that he had saved them to sacrifice to Jehovah. Like many thousands of people today, he felt that God would accept his sacrifice whether it was in keeping with God's requirements or not. It took a lot of effort on Samuel's part to convince Saul that he had sinned, and many today refuse to accept the fact that they are

sinning when they fail to meet God's requirements in worship. They say, "As long as one is honest and sincere in what he is doing, I think he will be all right." But here is a case in the Bible to show us that men are not all right in their worship if they fail to obey a single commandment of the Lord, or to meet one requirement that he makes of us. There must be *obedience* above all things else.

In Heb. 11:7 we are told that "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." In Gen. 6 we are told that God gave Noah instruction for building an ark in which he might be saved. The subsequent record shows his labors in the thing that God required of him; and all the work that went into it. The apostle Peter then speaks in 1 Pet. 3:20 of "the long suffering of God that waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." I am sure it would be difficult for us to fully realize the extent of Noah's faith, but we can know for a certainty that his faith without works would have been worthless. He was saved IN the ark, but he believed for a long time before the ark was completed and he was saved in it. The ark was truly a work of faith; and his salvation by grace through faith was a result of his works.

In Heb. 11: 8 the scripture says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he

went.” No one doubts that Abraham was a man of great faith, but many seem to overlook everything else in connection with the blessing he received from God. Abraham believed while yet in the land of his nativity. He received the blessings a long time later and many hundreds of miles away. Between the point of his faith and his entering into the blessings promised, was a life of obedience and years of work. As James comments on the value of works in the life those who would be blessed of God, he said of Abraham, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (Jas. 2:21-22). Then he said in v. 24, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” My friends, that is an inspired statement! Would you still go on in the face of such clear-cut statements in the Bible against salvation by faith only, and contend for it? Would you still subscribe to a doctrine that so flatly contradicts the Bible, or be a member of a church that teaches such? Why would you still support a religion that is in direct violation of God’s law, and so clearly and forcefully denies what the Bible says?

Faith alone would have left Israel in the clutches of Pharaoh and would have prevented their deliverance from bondage. It was not until they got up and moved in obedience to God’s command that they were saved from the Egyptians and finally permitted to come into the promised land. To obey is better than to sacrifice—and all the sacrifices that one might offer will not take the place of obedience. Faith only will leave man without justification; for James says we are justified by works, and not by faith only. Faith only will

leave man today without salvation, for Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" and we are told in Heb. 5:9 that he is the "author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." Yes, to obey is better than sacrifice.

Faith alone will leave man outside of Christ, outside of the family of God, and without all the blessings that God gives through Christ. Paul said, "We are all the children of God by faith; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ," Gal. 3:27. The scripture says again in Rom 6:3 that people are baptized INTO Jesus Christ. Infidels are not, but believers are. If the believer were already IN Christ, then he could not be baptized into him. But faith alone does not put one into him. After coming to believe IN Christ, or believe ON Christ, he is then baptized INTO Christ.

Faith alone will leave man in his sins. Paul said, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that has been delivered to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. 6:18. It is when one "obeys" that he is made free from sin—not when he believes. To obey is better than having faith alone.

To obey is better than to merely PRAY. If one just merely believes and prays, he has no promise of forgiveness with God; but if he believes and obeys, he will be made free from his sins. One may have a firm belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and pray to God fervently; but until he obeys the law of God his prayer will not be heard. Solomon said in Prov. 28:9, "He that turneth

away his ear from hearing the law even his prayer shall be abomination." And Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" In Matt. 7:21 he said, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." One cannot worship God enough, nor offer enough sacrifices to him to gain his favor and obtain his blessings without obedience to his law. To obey is better than sacrifice. When the apostles said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," one cannot offer enough sacrifices to God to obtain the remission of his sins without repenting and being baptized for the remission of them. When the scripture says, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord," all the sacrifices in the world that he might make will not take the place of this. God commanded this, and to obey is better than sacrifice.

Many people have come to realize that they must obey God to be saved, who put it off and say they are going to some day. Those promises salve the conscience, but harden them in their sins. In Heb. 3:7 we read that "the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Then in vs. 12-13 the writer said, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Those good intentions are not enough; and all the promises in the world

will not take the place of actual obedience. We must obey now, or we will one day become so hardened that we will never yield to the power of the gospel of the Son of God.

Sometimes people become sympathetic with others in their needs and wish them well; but that will not take the place of doing something about it. James said, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone," (Jas. 2:15-17). The scripture said, "If thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." To obey is better than to sympathize, or to wish one well.

In the 5th chapter of 2 Kings is the record of a man who wanted to substitute something he liked better for obedience than to obey a command of God. God's servant said, "Go dip in Jordan seven times, and be clean." He was angry, and said if he had to dip in water, why couldn't it be in the river Abana or Pharpa? The scripture says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and people come along and want to substitute something else that they like better. But the Bible still says, "To obey is better than sacrifice," and there is nothing that will take the place of our obedience to God.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BIBLE

I want to talk to you today about the proper attitude that every man should have toward the Bible. The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word "Biblos" and simply means "book." Originally, it was applied to *any* book—to all books. Then later it came to be applied to the Book of God only. It came to be known as the Book of books—the book before which all others will bow, and the book that will continue when all others are gone. When the Son of man came into the world, he said, "Lo, I come (in the volume of this book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God," (Heb. 10:7). Thus, the Saviour himself referred to that which came from the hand of God, and by the pen of inspiration, as "the book."

The Bible is a revelation of the mind of God. It alone tells what man is, where he came from, and where he is going. It alone tells of the origin of the things with which we have to do—of this earth and all the things in it, of heaven and all the host of it, of life and where it came from, and the soul of man and its eternal destiny. It not only contains the mind of God, but is the compass by which man may safely chart his course through time, and the star to guide us safely across life's trackless sea to the shore of eternal bliss. It contains the law of our Maker and assures us that we shall be brought before the great Judge in the last day to be examined by it. It is light from heaven to shine upon our path as we walk through a world darkened by sin. It contains food for our soul to give us spiritual life, strength for our weakness, and comfort in our

sorrow. It gives us hope in time of distress, and assures us of lasting peace when we keep its precepts and obey its laws. What is the proper attitude that man should have toward it?

It should be upon the heart of man forever—in his mouth and upon his tongue. When God first wrote his law down for man to have in permanent form, he said, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest in the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes," (Deut. 6:6-8). This is the place it is to occupy in every human heart and every home. Man should speak of it everywhere he goes as long as he lives on the earth.

Man should study the Bible until he knows it better than any other book that he might ever be introduced to. We are told to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," (2 Tim. 2:15). The last thing that ever came from the pen of the apostle Peter was the admonition to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever," (2 Pet. 3:18). This can only mean that man must dwell upon the Bible in his daily thoughts and ever strive for a fuller knowledge and better understanding of it. We are to continue to grow in that knowledge, and thus, in the favor of God.

Ignorance of the Bible leads to alienation from God. Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus and said in Eph. 4:17-18, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of the heart." He said the "nations" were alienated from God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. It was not because they *could* not know about God that they were in ignorance, but they had closed their hearts and *would* not hear.

This is the reason the Son of God was crucified. Paul said, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," (1 Cor. 2:7-8). That same ignorance that led them to crucify the Lord of glory is the ignorance by which man is alienated from God. If we will open our heart to receive the things set forth in the Bible—if we will study it diligently with a desire to know the will of God, it will lead to union with him rather than the state of alienation that the nations of the world are in today.

Our attitude toward the Bible must be one of unquestioning faith in what it says. We must accept it for what it is—the word of God. The people of Thessalonica heard the truth of God preached by the apostle to the Gentile world. Some scoffed at the word and abused the men who proclaimed it. Others believed it to be

the word of God; and the apostle said to them, "For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe," (1 Thes. 2:13).

One cannot believe God without believing the Bible. When Paul sought to cheer the other men on the ship with him in a terrible storm on his voyage to Rome, he said, "Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me," (Acts 27: 25). How can we believe God unless we believe what He has told us? What he has told us is that which is written in the Bible. We have no other word for Him. He speaks to us in no other way. Jesus said in Jn. 12:48, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." No one can receive the Son of God and fail to receive his word. To reject his word, the Bible, is to reject him.

Our attitude toward the Bible should be one of love for it. Many accept what the Bible says as a mere sense of duty, and perform their religious acts through a mere sense of obligation, and a feeling that they will be lost if they do not. But unless the Bible is accepted because of a love for the truth, and our acts of obedience and observance of his ordinances all spring from a heart of love, they will profit us nothing. When the Lord was asked which was the greatest command, he quickly replied that it was a supreme love for God, and the second greatest, a genuine love for our fellow man. All of his commands rest upon this foundation, and must be per-

formed on this ground.

A lack of genuine love for the truth of God has kept many from obeying the law of God as set forth in the Bible. We are told in the Bible about the man of sin, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," (2 Thes. 2:9-10). The one who loves the truth will never question anything that is given in the Bible. But on the contrary, he will search the Bible diligently to know what God would have him do to be saved, and then accept it because it IS truth. People are not ashamed of that which they love. One is never ashamed of his mother if he has a true love for her, nor for his companion, for a brother or sister, or a son or a daughter. A true love for them will cause him to acknowledge them anywhere he goes, and before those who scoff and make fun.

This same thing is true regarding God and his word. If we love God, we will acknowledge his Son before the scoffers of the world; and if we love the truth of God we will never be ashamed of his gospel. Jesus said in Mark 8:38, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." I say the cure for shame is love. Love Christ and we will not be ashamed of him. Love the Bible and we will never be ashamed of what it says.

Our attitude toward the Bible must be one of

humble submission to the authority set forth in it, and a wholehearted compliance with what it says. A defiant and rebellious attitude will lead one to a rejection of the will of God altogether, to walk strictly in one's own ways. This leads to a rejection of man by Jehovah and cuts him off from all the promises of God. When Israel came to the border of the promised land and God told them to go in and take the land, Moses said, "Yet ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of Jehovah your God." And he said, "Jehovah heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see the good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it; and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed Jehovah," (Deut. 1: 26, 34-36).

In the Testament of Christ is the gospel which he has given for the salvation of the world. Our salvation depends on obedience to it. We are told in the Bible that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his almighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," (2 Thes. 1:8-9). One cannot obey God without obeying the gospel, and the one who fails to obey it, fails either through his ignorance of it, or through a defiant and rebellious attitude toward it. In the gospel, believers are told to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," (Acts 2:38).

Preachers for churches unknown to the Bible have created a defiant and rebellious attitude in many toward these commands of the gospel; but my friends, this is the Bible; and you cannot be obedient to God without doing what it says. Let me urge you to obey his commands that you may have a right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city of God.

BECOMING A CHILD OF GOD

I want to talk to you today about becoming a child of God. The Bible tells us that we become children of God by faith—not by faith alone, but by faith nevertheless. We read in the scripture of various ones who came to believe on Christ and still failed to become children of God. John said in Jn. 12:42, “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” They believed on the Lord as much as anyone does today, but they failed to confess him. They loved something else more than loved the praise of God. If it is God’s favor you are seeking, then you must do the things he says after you come to believe on him. A failure to do so will keep one out of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said in Matt. 7:21, “Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” These cowardly rulers believed on the Lord, but did not do what he said. They failed to use the power given to them to become children of God. Luke said in Luke 4:41, that “devils also came

out of many, crying out, and saying, "Thou art Christ the Son of God." They believed the same thing that the others mentioned believed. And James said in Jas. 2:19, that "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." So that is the company that one puts himself in when he seeks to be saved by faith only. He places himself right along with the cowardly rulers in Jn. 12, and with the devils mentioned in Luke 4, and with the devil mentioned by James.

When one contends that the devils were not human beings and, therefore, could not be saved, let us remember that they not only had the power to sin against God, and to suffer for their sins, but they also have the power to believe on the Lord and to confess him. If the fact that they could do this were absolutely meaningless, then why did both Luke and James mention it at all? It is quite obvious that James mentioned the devils' believing to show that man can no more be saved by merely believing on the Lord than they.

To become a child of God, one must be born into his family. This is not a natural birth, but a spiritual one. This is spoken of in the scripture as "being born again," and referred to by all students of the scripture as the "new birth." This new birth is for believers, and not for infidels. When one comes to believe in Christ, and meets all the conditions of pardon set forth in the scripture, he becomes a child of God. John said, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This is the way one is born when he comes into the world, but

not the way he is born when he enters into the kingdom of heaven. In the 3rd chapter of John, and verse 5, Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That was said to a man who was already a believer in Christ, but who yet needed to be born again. Even though Nicodemus said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God," the Lord let him know that he must be born again or he could not see the kingdom of God.

There is only one birth by which people enter the kingdom of God. An effort is made sometimes to make two births out of the one Jesus mentioned in his conversation with Nicodemus, but Jesus spoke of it as only one. He did not say, "except a man be born again, and again," but just simply, "Except a man be born again." That is one birth. One is not born of water, and of the Spirit, but simply "of water and the Spirit." There is a difference. To say, "born of water and of the Spirit" would be same as saying, "Born again and again." But to say, "Born of water and the Spirit" is to speak of only one birth.

There are two elements in every birth—a male and a female. The two elements in this birth are "water" and "Spirit." They both have a part in our entrance into the kingdom. There are also three phases of a birth. There must be a begetting, a development, and a bringing forth before one becomes a living being. In order to be born into the family of God, one must be begotten of Him. And James said in Jas. 1:18, "Of his own will beget he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." So the

word must be preached. And the "word" has in it the "Spirit" which is the germ, or the life giving element. Jesus said in Jn. 6:63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth (or giveth life); the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." When that life giving principle goes to work in the heart of one who receives it, it works a change in that one's life. There is a development within his heart. His will begins to bend and to conform with the will of God. The heart is filled with sorrow for the sins that have been committed, and he resolves to do something about it. That is called "repentance," and is followed by reformation of life. Paul said this is another step in the direction of salvation. Remember, one is never brought to repentance until first he becomes a believer. And Paul said in 2 Cor. 7:10, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." One is not saved until he repents, and one does not repent until he believes. Infidels do not repent. Only believers do that. And Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "I tell ye nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But this development, or change of life alone, does not make one a child of God. There must be a change of state. Though he has become inactive in the things of the world, he must be delivered from the world and brought forth in Christ a new creature. Though he has repented of his sins, he must be cleansed from them.

The scripture tells us in 2 Cor. 5:17 that one has to be in Christ to be a new creature. There the apostle said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And that is also the state in which we are cleansed from our sins, for there is no cleansing

outside of Christ. The entrance of the believer into Christ is spoken of in the scripture as a deliverance. The apostle said in Col. 1:13-14, that he "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Now if we can find in the scripture the act by which we enter into Christ, we can know when we are brought forth as a newborn child of God. We are fortunate in that we are told in the scripture the specific act that puts one into Christ. In Gal. 3:26-27, the Bible says, "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." So this passage explains how the believer, who receives the power to become a child of God, becomes one. He said the believer is "baptized into Christ," and "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." How could a thing be made plainer than that? But as if that were not enough, we have another passage which tells us that we are baptized into Christ and begin living a new life from that point. Listen while I read it from Rom. 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us 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." If one were a child of God before he is baptized, he would be a child of God outside of Christ; for according to the scripture, we are baptized "into Christ." But now that both repentance and baptism are necessary to getting into Christ where one becomes a new creature and begins to

walk in newness of life, it becomes apparent that this is all included in the power to become a child of God that is given to the one who believes on him.

To receive Christ is to receive his word, for Jesus said in Jn. 12:48, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my word, hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The one who rejects anything that Christ said, rejects Christ himself. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The one, therefore, who rejects any part of that rejects Christ. To receive him, one must receive every word given here. In order that the whole world might be able to receive him and believe on his name, that they might have the power to become the children of God, Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Being saved is the same as becoming a child of God, for one cannot be saved without it. When the gospel was preached in the city of Corinth, Luke said in Acts 19:8 that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." This was the means by which they became children of God. Listen to the apostle as he says to them in 1 Cor. 4:15, "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." He did this when he preached the gospel to them, and they were brought forth into Christ as new creatures when they were baptized into him for the remission of sins. They had exercised the right they had received to become children of God after believing in Christ. This same power is given to every true believer in him today.

Don't stop when you come to believe in Christ. Go ahead and exercise your right to become a child of God. Repent of your sins, confess your faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and be baptized into him that you may be a child of God—an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. And the hope of that eternal inheritance will comfort you then through every dark hour, and you can turn your face toward heaven and say, "My father who art in heaven."

IS THE CHURCH NECESSARY TO THE SALVATION OF MAN?

The Bible has much to say about the church, who built it, what it is, God's purpose through it, and the role it plays in God's arrangement of salvation. But, despite all the information the Lord has given about it, modern reasoning has demoted the church, undermined its purpose and ruled it as nonessential. If we are really interested in the divine pattern, then we must take all the Bible says about the church and be governed accordingly. Who are we to offset any arrangement that God has made? Why does man try to explain away some plain teaching of the Master? Aren't we content to let God guide us in His own good way?

Should we by some process of human reasoning think for a moment that we have a right to alter or set aside anything in God's plan that does not quite fit into our own thinking? "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," the prophet said in Jer. 10:23. Since "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," we must depend upon the mercy of God to save us. Who are we to try to dictate the terms of our own par-

don? It is God who has arranged for our salvation, and not we ourselves! If we would be saved, then we must willingly accept, and gladly embrace, and joyfully fit into heaven's system of salvation! We have everything to gain by doing this, and everything to lose if we do not. That being the case, let us see just how the church fits into God's order.

The church is a part of God's eternal purpose. It was conceived in the mind of God. It is not the product of human thinking. The church originated with God. It was not an afterthought on his part, as some have suggested, but that which was in his mind before times eternal. Here is the way Paul expressed it: "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; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Christ Jesus: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him," (Eph. 3:8-12).

Paul was making known to men the fellowship of the mystery, "which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." but "that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God," and this, he said, was "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The

church then is a part of God's eternal purpose. It must occupy a most important place in God's thinking. It is through the church that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known to the world. Who would dare say that it is not essential, or that we can disregard it, or relegate it to an insignificant or unimportant place in the scheme of things? Can we belittle the church and still have the utmost respect for God's eternal purpose? Certainly not. We must come to look upon the church as a vital part of God's system, and an integral part of God's plan.

The church was built by Christ and belongs to Him. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," (Matt. 16: 18). Since Jesus came today the will of God, as he said in Jn. 6:38, the establishment of the church was therefore a vital part of God's will which he came to do. God put all things under the feet of Christ, and "gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all," (Eph. 1:22-23). Christ is said to be "the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence", according to the passage in Col. 1:18. The next verse says, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." How could the church be "the fullness of him that filleth all in all," if it is not essential to salvation? Why did God will that Christ build the Church if it is not essential? Why did God put Christ as head over the church? If the church is not really necessary, then it was not really necessary for Christ to build the church. If the church was not really necessary, then Christ's position as head of the church

is likewise not really necessary. Since the church is by the will of God, could it be said that some part of God's will is not really necessary?

Furthermore, the Bible tells us that the church belongs to Christ. He said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). The church then belongs to Him. It is called his body—"to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:22-23).

Christ gave himself up for the church. Eph. 5:25-27 says, "Husbands, love you wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Jesus not only gave himself up for the church, but he also purchased it with his own blood. Notice what is said about that in Acts 20:28. "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers; to feed the church of the Lord which he hath purchased with his own blood." Was the shedding of Christ's blood necessary for our salvation? Surely it was, for the scripture says in Heb. 9:22, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." It is in Christ that we "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" we are told in Eph. 1:7. But if his blood purchased the church, should we not be in the church to reap the full benefit of his blood? Did Christ shed his blood for something that was not necessary? Did he give himself up for that which is not essential to man's salvation? Membership in the Lord's church certainly is

essential to salvation, for it is the *church* that he purchased with his own blood! It was *for* the church that he gave himself up.

Christ referred to the church as something that was glorious, in Eph. 5:27. It is glorious because Christ built it. It is glorious because it belongs to Christ. It is glorious because Christ is the head of it. It is glorious because Christ gave himself up for it, and purchased it with his blood. Can we today regard the church as something that is glorious and go on teaching that people do not have to be members of it to be saved? Beloved, let us in our thinking and preaching once again elevate the church to that glorious position that Christ intended it to have. The scripture says in Eph. 3:21, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." It is in and through the Lord's church that we can give glory to God by Christ Jesus, and this must be done throughout all ages, world without end. Let no man therefore degrade, demote, or disregard that grand and glorious institution for which Jesus died.

The saved are added to the church. After the apostle Peter had preached that memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, People were pricked in their hearts and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Heaven's answer was, "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," (Acts 2:38). Later in the same chapter we are told that "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." And the Bible says, "The Lord added

to the church daily such as should be saved," (Acts 2: 47). Did you notice that? Those who would be saved were added to the church. Does this mean that man must be in the church to be saved? If it does not mean that, then what does it mean? Does the Bible not say that Christ is the Saviour of the body? and that the body is the church? The question that we need to think on is, Has Christ ever promised to save anyone outside of the church?

People are often quick to say, "Now the church doesn't save anyone." My friends, that is exactly right! The church is not the Savior. Christ is the Savior, and the church is the saved. There are no saved outside of it; for the scripture says in Acts 2:47 that the Lord adds those who are being saved to it. But I would not conclude this lesson without saying a word about how we become members of the Lord's church in which he promises to save man.

2 Cor. 5:19 says that we reach God in Christ; then Heb. 11:6 says that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Then God requires man to confess that faith in Christ with his mouth before men. Rom. 10:9-10 says "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." He must then repent of his sins in order to obtain forgiveness of them for Acts 17:30 says that "now God commands all men everywhere to repent." When one does this, he is ready then to be "baptized

into Jesus Christ" as we are told in Gal. 3:27 where he is a part of the Lord's church, and a member of his body. He is entered then into a state of salvation where he has the hope of life eternal in the world to come. Let me urge that you do it today.

SOME THINGS NOT GIVEN IN DIRECT ANSWER TO PRAYER

One of the greatest privileges given to man upon this earth is the privilege of prayer. Christ encouraged men to pray, and Luke says in Luke 18:1 that "he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Jesus' life itself was a life of prayer, and the writings of the apostles are filled with prayers they offered—both on behalf of themselves, and others.

The privilege of prayer is not used by many, it is mis-used by some, and abused by others. We need to learn the place of prayer in one's life, as well as how to pray, and what to pray for. Many good people who believe in efficacy of prayer, believe that all they have to do is to ask God for what they want and he will give it to them, while they may completely ignore the conditions of acceptable prayer, and the grounds upon which God has promised to answer our requests.

There are not many things that come in direct answer to prayer. This does not mean that there are not many things for which one may pray. There are. But we are required to do more than just merely ask God for the things we want. When we ask God for something, we must be willing to meet the conditions on

which God promised that thing. When we pray for our daily bread, we believe that God has the power to supply it, but we do not quit work and wait for God to pedal it into our house, already prepared. We understand that we must work for our food and believe that God will bless our labors and make us productive in our efforts to acquire the things that are needful for us. God ordained that man should eat bread by the sweat of his face.

Even though we understand this in connection with our daily food, people often feel that in matters pertaining to the salvation of the soul they don't have to do anything—just merely ask God for it and he will give it. But before resting upon that conclusion and going through life on a mere assumption, we need to investigate the scripture and see what the Bible says about it. And whatever God requires of us to obtain the blessings of salvation, we must do. Let us take a look at some of those things for which people are taught to pray, and expect to receive in direct answer to prayer.

People often pray for light and understanding. It is proper that we should, but at the same time, God tells us what to do to obtain it. He has given his word to light our way, but we must do something about it to bring it into focus to shine upon our way. David said in Ps. 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path." But then he said in v. 130, "The entrance of thy word giveth light, and it giveth understanding to the simple." So, until we study that word and receive it into our heart, we will receive no light from it. Paul said in 2 Tim. 2:15, "Study to show thy-

self approved unto God; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The more we study the word of God, the better enlightened we become. The more light it will shed upon our way.

In writing to the Ephesians, he said in Eph. 3:2-6, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." This contradicts the idea expressed by many that we cannot understand the Bible. Paul says we can if we will read and study it; and the entrance of that word, David said, gives light to the individual.

The prophet Isaiah said in Isa. 34:16, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall be missing, and none shall want her mate; for my mouth, it hath commanded, and his Spirit, it hath gathered them." The person who will not take the time, and go to the trouble, to seek out of the Book of the Lord the things that pertain to the salvation of the soul will remain in darkness, regardless of how much he may pray to God for light. He has given us the light, but expects us to turn it on in our own heart. He expects us to fill our mind with a knowledge of his word, and will light our way as we do it. But he has no other way of enlightening us.

Sinners are often taught to pray for God to give them life—spiritual life; or, the new birth. But there again, we are taught in the Bible that we must do more than just merely pray to God for it. David said in 119th Psalm, v. 50, “This is my comfort in my affliction. Thy word hath quickened me.” The word “Quicken” means to make alive. So David is saying that he had received life through God’s word. But man cannot receive life through that word without receiving the word into his heart. He must study it, receive it, and obey it to be made alive by it.

Listen to what Jesus said about it in Jn. 6:63, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Jesus said, “It is the Spirit that gives life;” then told us how we receive life through the Spirit. He said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” So one may pray all he wants to for life, but he will not obtain that life until he receives the word of Christ into his heart and acts upon it. He must believe and obey it, or he will not see life. God said in Isa. 55:3, “Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” All these blessings are conditioned upon our willingness to hear the word of God. Jesus said in Mark 12:29, “The first commandment is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord thy God is one.” The commandment to “hear” the word of God comes ahead of everything else, and no amount of praying will bring us into a spiritual life without our obtaining a knowledge of God’s word.

Perhaps more people are taught to pray for God to

send a miraculous power directly into their heart to convert and save them than any other one thing. But this is clearly contradictory to everything the Bible says about it. Not one time in the Bible is an alien sinner told to pray for God to send such power into his heart to save him. There are examples in the Bible of alien sinners praying to God, but in each case they were told to get up and do something about it. Cornelius was praying, as we are told in the 10th chapter of Acts. While he was praying, God sent an angel to tell him what to do. He was told to send for a preacher who would tell him words whereby he and his house might be saved, we are told in Acts 11:14. When the preacher came, he said, "We are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." He not only prayed, but he was willing to obey all the commands of God. The scripture says Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord," (Acts 10:48). All of his prayers would have been spent in vain if he had not been willing to obey the commands of God. The baptism that Peter commanded was "for the remission of sins," he said in Acts 2:38. Why should one pray for salvation if he is not willing to meet the conditions upon which God promised forgiveness of sins?

In Acts 22:16 is the record of what another praying man was told to do that he might be saved. Saul of Tarsus was guilty of the blood of saints. He was trying to destroy the church of the Lord. Christ appeared to him in person and told him to go into Damascus and it would be told him what he must do. God sent Ananias to him, and said, "Behold, he prayeth." When Ananias came in, he said, "Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins calling on the name of

the Lord." He did not tell him to stop praying; but said, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Jesus had said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and all the prayers that one may pray will not save him until he does what Jesus said.

David said in Ps. 19:7, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Until that law is obeyed, it will not convert anybody. No writer of the scripture ever said, "The prayer of the sinner is perfect, converting the soul,"—but, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Our conversion comes through obeying the law of the Lord, and not in direct answer to prayer. A law is given to be obeyed; and God's law is no exception. All the prayers that one might pray cannot relieve him of that responsibility.

James said in Jas. 1:21, "Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." God does not have two ways of saving man's soul—but one. He does not save some through obedience to his word, and some, in answer to prayer. This inspired writer said, "the ingrafted—the implanted, word is able to save your souls." That word must be received in the heart, and obeyed from the heart, in order for one to be saved. Paul said in Rom. 6:18, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made from sins, ye became the servants of righteousness." This is not to say that one should not pray to God as he endeavors to obey him, but I AM suggesting that prayer will not save one without this obedience. It is entirely proper

for one to call on the Lord in his obedience, and God will hear his prayer as he renders willing obedience to God's commands. The gospel is declared to be the power of God unto salvation, but the scripture says Christ will come one day "with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," (2 Thes. 1:8-9). All the prayers that one may pray will not save him without this obedience to the gospel. Christ urges men to pray; and not only to pray, but to pray and obey.

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE BY ALL WHO WOULD BE SAVED

In Acts 4:11-12 the apostle Peter said, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Thus we are told that all who are saved must be saved through the name of Christ. This means by the authority of Christ—in obedience to his commands. To fail to obey his commands is to reject his authority.

In Matt. 17:5, God said when Jesus was transfigured before his apostles, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him." Unless we hear him, he will not hear us when we call to him in prayer. When he commands, we must obey. Heb. 5:9 says, "Being

made perfect through suffering, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." Then finally, in Rev. 22:14 the scripture says, "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." To be saved through his name, means to be saved by his authority as we obey his commandments.

In Luke 24:46-47 the scripture says, "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." Wherever the gospel is preached around the world, it must be preached in the name of Christ; and when man is saved by the gospel, he is saved through the name of Christ. This is the way that people come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the scripture says in Acts 10:43, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." There is no way that one can obtain the remission of sins except through the name of Christ.

When the people cried out on the day of Pentecost after being convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead and made both Lord and Christ, and said, "Men and brethren what must we do?" they were told to "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name through his name they had come to believe. Now as they repented and were baptized for the remission

of sins, they were submitting to his authority and, therefore, were saved through the name of Jesus.

For a few minutes now, I should like for us to take a look in the scripture at some of the things one must do to be saved through the name of Christ. In Acts 16:30 a man who apparently had never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ before he came into contact with two of his faithful disciples, said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Even this heathen jailor knew enough to know that man would have to do something if he wanted to be saved, and was willing to do it. He asked the right men to find out. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and had a full knowledge of the will of God and what he requires of all who would be saved.

He started out with the man where he was, and as he was—a non-believer. To one who knew nothing about Christ the Savior, he said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." A great number of preachers have been heard to say that the Jailor was saved then, and there—that this is all he was told to do. I deny that the man was saved then and there; and that this is all that he was told to do. If this man had been saved at that instant, then all we would have to do would be to get ONE man to believe, and all his family would be saved—whether they wanted to or not. They would be saved without any faith on their part, but simply because somebody *else* believed for them. I am sure you are not willing to subscribe to a doctrine like that; and yet, that is what preachers all over the country are telling us. They are

telling us that this man was saved at that moment—and if he was, so were all his house, who were even asleep at the time and did not know that the Lord Jesus Christ even existed. For Paul said, “And thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” So we know there was more to it than that.

The man did not even come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ when Paul and Silas made this statement to him. How do I know?—because the same man said in Rom. 10:17 that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In Jn 17:20 Jesus prayed for them that should believe on him “through their word.” That means that this man had to have the word preached to him before he could believe it. Not only that, but the rest of the house must hear also. One cannot come to believe on the Lord simply because somebody else hears the word—but because he hears for himself. So Luke continues by saying, “And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.”

The jailor and all his house heard the word of Christ together. In the word that these men preached on that occasion were the things that they were required to believe, and the things that they must do to be saved. And fortunately, the record does not stop there. It continues on to let us know what these did to be saved. Luke says, “He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.” I challenge anybody to show that this was not part of the instruction given this man and his house by

these faithful preachers of the Gospel of the Son of God. And I challenge anybody to show that they were saved before they did the things mentioned in this scripture. The one who is too lazy to plant a crop or make a garden, deserves to starve; and the one who is rebellious and refuses to do what Christ commands one to do to be saved does not deserve salvation.

Saul of Tarsus himself was one time a non-believer, and fought against Christ and his disciples with all of his might. He was one of the most religious men in Palestine, and zealous for the law of Moses; but he was the chief of sinners in the sight of God. When Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus and convinced him that he was Lord and Christ, he “trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” This is mandatory—that is, if he wanted to be saved. Jesus did not say, “That is all right Saul, you believe, and I will forgive you.” Neither did Saul say, “Lord, I believe, save me now.” But after he had come to believe on the Christ, he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” If Saul was saved at that time, he did not know it. If his sins had been forgiven he was not aware of it. He went into the city and fasted and prayed three days and nights. He did not sleep, but in the distress of his soul, he prayed to God.

Then God sent Ananias to tell him what “he must do.” In 22:16 the record says Ananias spoke to him saying, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be

baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Now will some preacher who preaches salvation by faith only tell us WHY God sent Ananias to tell Saul this if he was saved back yonder three days before that when he came to believe on Jesus Christ? Will someone tell us why he still needed to have his sins washed away if he was saved three days earlier? Will somebody tell us why neither he, nor this man that God sent, knew he was saved—if indeed he was saved? Will somebody tell us why he refused to eat until he got up and was baptized? I will tell you. He was not saved until he obeyed the command of Christ who said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And he did not rejoice in the forgiveness of his sins until they were washed away by the blood of Christ when he was baptized in obedience to Christ's command.

In conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said man must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God, or be saved. The new birth is brought about by means of water and the Spirit—not by water alone, nor by the Spirit alone, but by both of them together. God's word is spiritual. Jesus said in Jn. 6:63, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." This is the means by which one is begotten in order that he might be brought forth a new born child of God. James said in Jas. 1:18, "Of his own will beget he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures."

When one is taught the word of truth and begotten by it, he is still not a living child of God until brought

forth in Christ through obedience to God's will. According to the word, we are "baptized into Christ," and there; we are known as new creatures. We are children of God and live a new life. Peter refers to these in 1 Pet. 2:2 as "New born babes."

Having become a part of the great family of God, we "MUST worship him then in Spirit and in truth." In Jn 4:24 Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Jesus said in Jn. 17:17, "Thy word is truth;" which means, of course, that all of our worship must be in strict accord with God's word. It must be directly set forth IN his word, or else it is not in accord with it. We should carefully examine every act of worship that we engage in to see that it is contained in the Testament of Christ as a part of the worship to be engaged in as Christians. If it is not, we must leave it off; for our worship MUST be in truth.

Our lesson would not be complete if I failed to tell you that we MUST obey God today. God never promised to save any man tomorrow. The scripture says in 2 Cor. 6:2, that "He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Let me urge you, my friend, that you start today, if you have not started already, to do the things that God requires of all men who would be saved, and that you never fail to meet with the saints to worship God in Spirit and in truth. We invite you to come and worship with us today, and may the Lord bless you in all your efforts to serve him.

THE CHANGE OF HEART NECESSARY TO BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

In the 51st Psalm, David said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me," (verse 10). This was the desire of a great man to be right in the sight of God. To be right, one must be right within. His heart must be right with God, and he must have a proper spirit within him.

The heart of man has become evil and must be changed before he can be a Christian. The prophet said in Jer. 17:9-10, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt; who can know it? I, Jehovah, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." I believe that God will deal with all men according to the condition of their heart, for out of it are the issues of life. When the heart is corrupt, the whole life is evil; but when it is purified, the whole life will be clean in the sight of God and before men.

The expression, "heart-felt religion," is not found in the Bible; and yet, I would say that all religion to be acceptable with God must so effect the heart as to bring it into harmony with the mind and will of the Almighty. That changes must be made in the heart before one can serve God acceptably, no Bible student can deny. But we need to know what the heart is that is spoken of in the Bible, the changes that must be made in it, and how those changes are brought about.

A great many people have the mistaken idea that the heart spoken of in the Bible is the lobe of flesh in

the human chest that pumps the blood through the body. But this part of man is no more sensible to the preaching of the gospel than a hand or a foot. An emotion may cause this heart to heave, or to increase its beat and send the blood through our veins at a more rapid rate; but when the emotion is past it will slow again to its normal beat. This heart is changed only by medication or surgery, and not by some religious experience.

The only way that we can find out what the heart is that is spoken of in the Bible—the heart that must be brought in tune with the will of God, and brought to function in such way as to bring about a change in one's life, is to go to the scripture itself and see what is said about it. When we find in the Bible what the heart does that is spoken of there, we will know what the writers of the scripture are talking about when they speak of the heart of man.

The scripture tells us that man THINKS in his heart. Prov. 23:7 says, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." The muscle that thumps in our chest and pumps the blood through our body does not do our thinking. That is done in our mind, and the Bible calls that the heart. We think in our heart—we think in our mind. THINKING is necessary to *understanding*; and the Bible says this also is done in the heart. Jesus said, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should *understand* with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them," (Matt. 13:15). He said, "lest they should understand with their *heart*." All

the understanding we have is in our heart, and we know that the mind is the part of our make-up that enables us to understand. People with no mind have no understanding. So evidently, this is what the scripture refers to in speaking of the heart.

All of one's reasoning power is in his mind, and the one who has lost his mind is without the power of REASON. But Jesus said in Mark 2:8, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" Obviously, he was referring to their mental faculties. The one who has the power to think, to reason, and to understand, also has the power to decide on matters and to *believe* when proper evidence is presented to him. In Rom. 10:9 the scripture says, "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." The muscle that pumps our blood is no more capable of believing than the heel of our foot; but the belief is formed in our mind. And the Bible calls this the heart.

The things we have read in the Bible thus far about the heart are all summed up and referred to generally among us as the intellectual nature of man. The intellect is effected by the things we are taught, and it must be brought into complete harmony with the will of God in order for us to be accepted of him. Concerning the new covenant that God said he would make with men, He said, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts," Heb. 8:10. Then in 10:16 when the writer made reference again to the same thing, he said, "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." So in these two passages of

scripture the heart and mind are used interchangeably, and when one puts his hand on his breast and talks about what he feels in his heart it is because he is relying upon something else than an intelligent account of what the Bible says about it. Man's heart has not been properly changed until his intellect has been effected by the preaching of the gospel and brought into harmony with it. But the Bible also has more to say about it, and to get a full Bible picture of the heart we must find all it says about the heart.

In Rom. 10:1 Paul says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." In Matt. 22:37 Jesus said man should "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Then in Prov. 3:5 the scripture says, "Lean not upon thine own understanding, but trust in Jehovah with all thy heart." David said in Ps. 119:111, "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." These things are all referred to among us as the emotional nature of man. The religion that does not appeal to the emotion of man is not acceptable to God; for God requires us to love him with our heart, trust him with our heart, and rejoice in our heart over the blessings we receive. But the religion that effects ONLY the emotion of the individual is greatly lacking in other essential elements. The heart is only partially effected when the emotion only is appealed to. But again, our emotion is effected by the things we receive in our MIND. When the mind is gone, or when it is asleep, the emotion is unaroused.

The Bible does not stop here in the picture that it

gives us of the heart of man, but goes ahead to tell us other things that the heart does. In 2 Cor. 9:7, an apostle of the Lord said, "Every man according as he *purposeth* in his heart, so let him give." In 1 Cor. 7:37 we read about the *determination* of the heart. Paul said, "He that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well." Then in Rom. 6:17 we read that one must OBEY from the HEART. The apostle said, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." All these things are summed up to express one's will power. Regardless of what may be said about what one believes in his heart, and any emotion he may feel within, until the WILL is brought into harmony with God's will, the heart has not been properly changed.

When Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," he had reference to all that is said in the scripture about what the heart is—his intellectual nature, his emotional nature, and his will-power. All this must be pure. The gospel of the Son of God is the only thing that can bring about this necessary change and make the heart perfect before God.

The gospel is very definitely addressed to the *mind* of man. Jesus said in Jn. 6:45 "It is written in the prophets; they shall be all taught of God." Then after his resurrection from the dead, he said, "Go ye therefore and *teach* all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; *teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you," Matt. 28:18-19. This teaching challenges the thinking of man, brings him to reason on the things taught, are give so he can understand them, and he is led by that understanding of the scripture to BELIEVE with all of his heart.

As man reasons on the gospel of Christ as taught by the apostles, his heart is filled with *love* for God and the things of God, he *desires* the blessings of salvation promised in Christ, and *purposes* in his heart to do something about it. He *confesses* with his mouth the thing that he believes in his heart, and *obeys* the command of Christ given through the apostles to "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." When this is done from the heart, he is made free from sins and becomes the servant of righteousness. His soul is purified in this obedience, for Peter said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another from a *pure heart* fervently," 1 Pet. 1:22-23.

When these things are done, man rejoices in his heart over the promise of salvation. When the eunuch was baptized in obedience to the command of Christ, the scripture says when he was come up out of the water and the Spirit caught Philip that the eunuch saw him no more, that he went on his way rejoicing. There is no way that the heart of man can be changed to where he will rejoice in salvation without hearing the gospel of Christ and obeying it from the heart. This is the greatest source of joy that can come to the human being—the joy of knowing that we have obeyed from our heart the will of God and are forgiven of our sins. All the joys of heaven are based on these things.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Today I want to talk to you about one of the great questions found in the Bible. It is found in Acts 16:30 and was asked by a man who had come into contact with some preachers of the gospel of Christ. He said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

This is one of the greatest questions of all time. It concerns all humanity, and has to do with both time and eternity. It involves the destiny of the soul. And though it concerns the entire human family, the question is a very personal one. It is one that every individual must ask for himself—"What must I do to be saved?"

There is only one place to find the correct answer to this question, and that is, in the Bible itself. Though all the many religious groups may have their own answer to the question, we know that the only correct answer to it may be found in the Bible. Regardless of how any religious group may answer it, the salvation of our soul is going to depend on the answer that is given in the Bible. Therefore, let us turn to the Bible itself for the answer that was given to it by men who were sent of God. We might spend the entire time today discussing the various answers given to this question by great religious leaders, and religious groups, and then be left in utter confusion. But when we find the answer that is given in the Bible, we will find it clear and simple. Not only will we find it clear and simple, but it will be reliable. It will be the answer that God has sought to convey to all men.

This question was asked four times in the Bible, and each time under different circumstances. Therefore, in getting the answer that is given in the Bible on each occasion, we must keep in mind the circumstances under which the question was asked. For instance, in Matt. 19:16, the scripture says, "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" There are two things that we must remember in this case. First is, that this man was living under the law of Moses, and before the law of Christ was given; and second, that the conditions of salvation as stated in the new covenant that went into effect after the death of Christ had not been made known at that time.

Since this man was living under the law of Moses, Jesus said, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Salvation has always been conditioned upon one's obedience to God. It was disobedience to God that caused man to be lost in the first place. Then to be saved, man must obey the commandments that God has given us to keep. The commandments that God had given them to keep were those given for Israel at Mt. Sinai. The ones he has given for us to keep are those found in the testament of Christ that was given after the conversation with the man in Matt. 19.

If this man kept the commandments of that law under which he lived, then he would have entered into the covenant of Christ when it went into effect and been saved by the blood of the cross. The blood of the cross had not been shed at that time, but he would have been in position to benefit from it when it was shed if he had kept that law. But after the death of Jesus on

the cross, and the testament of Christ went into effect, no inspired man ever told one to keep the law of Moses. They were told then to meet the conditions of salvation in the gospel of the Son of God.

When the jailer at Philippi asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?", he was told to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The law of Moses had been done away at that time, and the law of Christ had been given. And that man had never been under the law of Moses in the first place. Nobody was ever under the law of Moses but the Jews; and now, even they were no longer under it. It had been abolished, and a new covenant had been given that was established upon better promises.

Though this man was told to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," he was not left to believe that he was saved then and there. In fact, he knew that he did not, and could not, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ at that instant. It is impossible to believe on one of whom we have not heard. As yet, he had not heard about Christ as to who he was, what he had done, and how he could obtain redemption through him. Another thing, even this heathen jailer knew that he could not believe for his family—that they would have to do their own believing. He knew that both he and they would have to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ if they were ever going to believe on him; so they had to be awakened from their sleep and brought to where they could hear about the Lord Jesus Christ for themselves.

The scripture says, "And they spake unto him the

word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straight-way. And when he had brought them into his house, he set near before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Thus, we see that both he and all that were in his house had to hear the word of the Lord for themselves before they could believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they were not saved until they believed. That makes us know that this jailer was not saved when Paul and Silas said to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Preaching was a part of God's plan to save men in this gospel age. The scripture says in 1 Cor. 1:21, "When 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."

Again, the mere fact that the word of the Lord was preached to them, that they heard it, and believed, still does not mean that they were saved. The scripture says in Heb. 5:9 that "He is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"—not just those who hear about him, and believe on him; but unto all them that obey him. Their obedience to the preaching that was done is indicated in the statement, that he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized both he and all his straight-way." Repentance and baptism are both commands of the gospel, and one is not saved by the gospel of Christ until he obeys both of these commands. Their repentance is indicated in the washing of the stripes that had been inflicted on these preachers. Their baptism is directly stated. The Lord had said, "He that believeth and

is baptized shall be saved," and they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, they were baptized and were saved. They rejoiced in that salvation after their baptism—not before.

On Pentecost, when Christ was preached for the first time after the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, the people who had come to believe on him said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Notice the circumstances. They had already heard the word of the Lord preached to them, and had come to believe on him. They were not told to believe. They were already believers—but still in sin. In that condition, 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 Spirit," Acts 2:38. They did the same things that the jailer and his house did. They all heard the word of the Lord preached to them, they all believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, repented of their sins, and were baptized.

In Acts 9:6, the question was asked by Saul of Tarsus himself before he became a Christian. He was a Jew persecuting the Lord in trying to destroy his church. The Lord appeared to him in person and spoke to him directly from heaven. Being convinced now that Jesus is the Christ, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord did not tell him to believe on him, for he had already come to believe on him now. The Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

The subsequent history shows him going into the city in obedience to the instruction given him by the

Lord and spending the time fasting and praying until God sent a man to tell him what he must do. This is strong evidence of his deep repentance. No man ever repented more sincerely than this man did. When Ananias came to him, having been sent by the Lord, He said, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord." This is no different from what all the others were told to do. And in these accounts, we find the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" One must hear the word of the Lord preached, believe on him as the Son of God, repent of his sins, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. The one who does this, the Lord says, shall be saved.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD IS SALVATION BY GRACE

I want to talk to you today about being saved by grace, or being saved by obedience to God. Obedience to God IS salvation by grace. "Obedience" is "compliance with a command or prohibition, or a known rule of action." "Grace" is simply favor, often referred to as "unmerited favor." It is truly a pity that so many religious leaders have placed obedience on one hand and grace on the other, making them contradictory one to the other. That man is saved by grace is so generally taught in the Bible that I need not stop here to offer proof for it. But as to how this favor is appropriated by sinful man is so misrepresented as to demand all our attention this morning.

Titus 2:11 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." If Paul spoke the

truth (and none will question the fact that he did), then God's grace by which men are saved has appeared to all. Yet, we know that all men are not going to be saved, for Jesus said in Matt. 7:13, "For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which enter in there at." So according to Jesus, many are going to be lost. And yet, God's saving grace has appeared to all men. Does this mean that the fault is with God's grace? Not at all. His grace is sufficient to save all, but all will not be saved by it, because all will not appropriate it to themselves. Therefore, something is needed in addition to grace to effect man's salvation.

Putting it another way, the grace of God must be accepted and used properly. And away goes the theory that man is saved by grace alone. Let me make it clear this morning, that man is saved by grace; but he who says that man is saved by grace apart from everything else either misunderstands the plain word of God or purposely misrepresents it. In the New Testament we find salvation attributed to not less than twenty things: It is attributed to God, God's love, mercy, grace, God's word, His commandments, to Christ, his death, his blood, the gospel, ourselves, hearing, obedience, calling on God, faith, repentance, baptism, hope, the Christian life, and faithfulness unto death. These twenty things God says we are saved by. And any man who will single out one of them and say we are saved by it alone does violence to the word of God. If this is done unknowingly, the one who does it is not a capable teacher. If it is done knowingly, the one who does it is not honest. In either case, it is inexcusable, and the one who does so has no authority from the God of heaven to preach or teach; and Jesus said, "If the blind lead the blind, both

shall fall into the ditch," Matt. 15:14.

It is easy for all who are not blinded by false theories to see that each of the things to which salvation is ascribed has a part in the saving of the soul, and not one to the exclusion of the others. Each one works harmoniously with all the others.

The opinion that salvation by grace removes all conditions on the part of man has become so thoroughly embedded in some that they seem unable to realize that it can be grace on the part of God and still contain law to be obeyed by man, as though God's law opposed his grace. I want to show today that obedience to God IS salvation by grace, and that nothing short of obedience will save the soul from the consequences of sin. One of the first lessons that soldiers have to learn is unquestioning obedience. Christ, the captian of our salvation, is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," we are told in Heb. 5:9. Our captian had already said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," Matt. 7:21. When the people on Pentecost asked the apostles, "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." These were the commandments of God, and all who gladly accepted God's word obeyed them. When the jailer at Philippi asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved," they did not say, "There is nothing you can do." They were preachers of the gospel of Christ and told them what to do in obedience to it that they might be saved by it, and the record shows their complying with

the conditions of it and being saved by the grace of God. Can anyone fail to get the import of John's statement in Rev. 22:14 when he said, "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"?

My friends, this obedience to God in no sense denies salvation by grace, but it emphatically denies salvation by grace alone. All through the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, the smile of God's grace was upon those who hastened to do his will. And disobedience always brought upon them his displeasure. Since the things in the Old Testament were written for our learning, let us roll back the pages of time this morning and survey some of those lines that were run in the very morning of time.

After the creation, man was placed in the garden of Eden. God's favor was upon them in that day and their happiness was complete. Their every want was supplied as long as they obeyed God. God instructed them not to eat of a certain tree in the garden, but when the devil presented the temptation, they disobeyed. This took them out of favor with God and his grace was no longer upon them. They were safe in his grace as long as they obeyed God, but fell from grace and were lost when they disobeyed him. In their disobedience, they became more and more evil, until God purposed to send a flood and destroy all the wickedness from the earth. But the Bible says in Gen. 6:8 that "Noah found grace in the eyes of Jehovah." The scripture says that "Noah was perfect and upright in his generations." He found grace in the sight of God because he was obedient. When God

directed him to build an ark, the scripture says, that "Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house," Heb. 11:7. We all know that he was saved in the ark. It was God's grace that prepared and presented the plan of salvation to him, and he was saved when he complied with it. By faith he accepted the plan, and by obedience he executed and appropriated it unto himself.

In the 21st chapter of Numbers is the record of the children of Israel murmuring against God and his sending fiery serpents among them so that many of them died by their venomous bite. When they repented and cried to God for deliverance, Moses was told to make a serpent of brass and erect it on a standard; and they were told that when they looked upon the serpent of brass they would live. This was an act of favor on God's part—an act of grace. But only those who complied with His requirements were healed. It was faith that caused them to comply, but it was obedience to this faith that saved them.

There is one more example in the Old Testament that I should like to call your attention to this morning. It is found in 2 Kings 5. Naaman was a captian in the Syrian army, but was a leper. When he went into the land of Israel to be healed by a prophet of Jehovah, he was told to "Go dip seven times in Jordan, and thy flesh shall come again to thee." Without going into the details of the story, when he dipped in the Jordan in obedience to the prophet of God, he was healed. This was not water salvation, but salvation through obedience to God. In fact, nobody ever thought of accusing anybody of believing in "water salvation" who stressed the necessity of obedience to God, until

men came along and devised a system leaving out the water that God put in. It is only the people who teach that one can be saved by faith alone, without obeying the commands of God, who cry "water salvation" when the baptism that God commanded is preached.

There are two sides of salvation—a divine and a human. God's side operates on the principle of grace, and man's side operates on the principle of faithful obedience. An apostle said, "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," Titus 2:11. His grace teaches us how to be saved and provides the means by which we might be. When we through faith obey the commands of the gospel that he has given for our salvation, we are saved by his grace. The scripture says that he "now commands all men everywhere to repent," Acts 17:30. He commands all men who would be saved to confess with their mouth their faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God," Rom. 10:9-10. Acts 10:48 says, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." It was never until God in his mercy sent his Son into the world, who by the grace of God tasted death for every man, that man had the privilege of obeying these commands and being saved through him. This obedience to God means salvation by his grace.

THE NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH

I want to talk to you today about the non-denominational character of the church. And when I say, the

non-denominational character of the church, of course I have in mind the one the Lord built—the one we read about in the Bible. That could not be said of any other church, for others are ALL denominational. But I am sure that every one knows, or should know, that the church the Lord built is not denominational.

He said, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The church here is in the singular. That he wanted it to remain that way is indicated most forcefully in the prayer that he prayed the night before his crucifixion, and recorded in Jn. 17, when he said, “And 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 thou hast sent me,” verses 20-21. We know too that the apostles understood that the church that Jesus built was to be ONE, for they said the church “is his body,” Eph. 1: 22-23; Col. 1:18; 1:24. They also said in Eph. 4:4 that there is “ONE” body, and in 1 Cor. 12:20 that there is “But one body.”

When the oneness of the church was threatened in the days of the apostles, Paul said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement,” 1 Cor. 1: 10. Then he said, Here is what I am talking about, “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?" If there had ever been a time when the disciples of the Lord would have been justified in following different religious leaders, and a time when the apostles would have given their endorsement of it, this could have been the time. With such great men as Paul, Apollos and Peter to head these different groups, why should they not have received apostolic endorsement if it had been all right for men to be divided religiously? But they themselves would not allow it, because Christ had died to "reconcile all men to God in ONE BODY by the cross," we are told in Eph. 2:16, and they wanted it to remain that way. We are also told in Eph. 3:6 that it was God's plan from the very beginning that "The Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

No denomination within itself is the body of Christ, because several hundred years before the first denomination was ever known, Paul said in 1 Cor. 12:27, "Now ye ARE the body of Christ, and members in particular." Therefore, we know that no denomination is the body of Christ. Then too, we know that the body of Christ is not made up of denominations, because several hundred years before denominations came into existence, Paul said in Col. 2:10, "Ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." If people could be "complete" in Christ before denominations existed, the same can be done today. Not only CAN the same be done, but it is the ONLY way it can be done.

But now that denominations have come into existence, and the world is filled with them, and confused by them, let us take a look at the non-denominational

character of the church the Lord built. When we come to understand this, we can better see the evils of denominationalism.

In the first place, let us see what it was called in the scripture. In Eph. 3:10 it is called, "the church." In 1 Cor. 1:2 it is called, "The church of God." In 1 Thes. 2:14, "The churches of God." In Acts 20:28, "the church of the Lord." In Rom. 16:16, "the churches of Christ." In 1 Cor. 12:27, "the body of Christ." In Eph. 2:19, "the household of God." In Heb. 12:23, "the church of the firstborn." These terms were all used in reference to the church that the Lord said, "I will build." Not one of them is denominational, and should not be used in a denominational sense. Every designation here given includes all of the Lord's people, and not one of them within itself would separate some of the followers of Christ from other disciples of his.

Men sometimes apologize for unscriptural names—names that are denominational and purely human, saying that it doesn't make any difference about the name—that there is nothing in a name anyway. Well, if it doesn't make any difference about the name, then why not give up those human names that divide professed followers of Christ and use a name that we can read about in the Bible, and one that all the Lord's people can wear? We are told in 1 Pet. 4:16 to "glorify God in this name," that is, the name "Christian." So why not give up all other names for it, as individual followers of Christ? And why not refer to the church itself as it is referred to in the scripture? Then again, we are told in Acts 4:12 that there is salvation in the name of Christ, and in no other. The apostle said, "Neither is

there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

The *creed* of the church that Jesus built is non-denominational. They simply believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and everything they did was done because of their faith in him as the Son of the living God, as the eunuch did in Acts 8:37, when he said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” His word was their guide in all things. Christ told the apostles in Jn. 16:13-15 that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth, and that he would not speak of himself, but would receive from Christ and declare it to them. So the things they spoke were the words of Christ; and when the things they taught were written down, they were called “scripture.”

This holy scripture was designed to make them complete in every respect. The apostles said in 2 Tim. 3:16-17 that “All scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, completely furnished unto every good work.” Since it is complete, and will make the man of God complete, it is not only something that ALL Christians can accept, but it is THE ONLY thing they can accept. It is not denominational, and cannot be made denominational without changing it. And men are forbidden to do that. Paul said in Gal. 1:6-8 that if any man preached anything different from what they preached, he would be accursed. John said in Rev. 22:18-19 that if anybody took away from the things they wrote, or added anything to it, they would be rejected of God.

The worship in which they engaged was non-denominational. There was not one thing they did in worship that ALL of God's people CANNOT, and SHOULD NOT do. Acts 2:42 says, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayer." None of this is denominational. The "breaking of bread," or the Lord's supper, was a regular thing with them, and on the first day of the week, as we are told in Acts 20:7. They were all taught to "give" on the first day of the week of their means as God had prospered them, 1 Cor. 16:2. This is not denominational. They prayed in all their meetings. This is not denominational. They taught the word of God, which again, is not denominational. They were told to "sing and make melody in your hearts to the Lord," Eph. 5:19. That, too, is something that all the Lord's people can engage in. It is not denominational. It is only when any of these things are changed that they become denominational and divide those who profess to believe in the Lord.

The conditions upon which they became members of the church that the Lord built are not denominational. Every condition given was one that everybody can, and must, meet. They were all taught to believe on Christ. Jesus said in Jn. 8:24 that "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." That is not denominational. They were all commanded to "repent, or perish," as the Lord said in Luke 13:3. That is not denominational. They were told in Rom. 10:9-10 to confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, as the eunuch did in Acts 8:37. That is not denominational. They were all told to "repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," Acts 2:

38. Neither is this denominational. In fact, the denominations do not even teach it. The Lord commanded it, but they do not teach it. To be a member of the church the Lord built, one must turn from every denominational name, doctrine, and practice; accept the Bible as the only guide book, do what it says, and be a Christian only.

WHY BE A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

I want to talk to you today about why I am a member of the church of Christ. I think everyone ought to be both able and willing to give a reason for being a member of the church to which he belongs; especially, since he is basing his hope of heaven on that affiliation. We are told in the scripture that we should be ready always to give a reason for the hope that is within us. Peter said 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."

We not only must have a reason for the hope that is within us, but we should be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks us for a reason for the hope that we possess. There is something wrong with one's hope if he does not have a reason for it, or if he is not willing to discuss it with others. When people are unwilling to discuss with others the grounds for their hope of eternal life, it is most generally because they do not have anything concrete to base it upon. If one is right, and knows that he is right, he will be glad to tell the world about it. When one knows that he does

not have any scripture to base his hope on, he just does not talk about it with anybody who questions it. Often times one knows there are several scriptures that he has to try to get around to occupy the position that he does religiously, and to maintain his present affiliation, and becomes angry when one questions his position. Instead of becoming angry, he ought to do something about it. He ought to do what he knows the Bible teaches and not try to get around any passage of scripture.

I have not always been a member of the church of Christ. I was brought up in something else. My parents and grandparents were something else, and my people on both sides of the house were something else. None of them were members of the church of Christ. Many people have wondered why I changed—why I did not continue in the religion of my mother, and other relatives. But I had a good reason for changing, and I am glad to tell the world why. I want to pass those reasons on to you today with the hope of getting you to study the Bible for yourself, and to examine your own position in the light of the scripture to see if you would still want to go on and face eternity with your present handling of the word of God.

First of all, I did not become a member of the church of Christ for social reasons. Christ, the head of it, was despised and rejected of men. The apostles said they were made the filth of the earth and the off scouring of all things. Members of the church have always been considered narrow minded, conceited, and intolerant of other religions. They have always been criticized and ostracized by many. They are often excluded from the company of those who are not willing to walk in the

ways of the Lord. No, I did not become a member of the church of Christ for social reasons.

I did not become a member of it because its way is easy. It is far from being easy. Christians must not "be conformed to this world" but are to "be transformed by the renewing of the mind" that they may prove what is the good and perfect will of God. Peter said "they will think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." 1 Pet. 3:4. He said in 1 Pet. 4:12 that there would be many fiery trials. Paul said in Acts 14:22 that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven." Then he said in 2 Tim. 3:12 that "all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." No, I am not a member of the church of Christ because its way is easy. One can do what he wants to do in most churches; but members of the church of Christ must "abstain from all appearance of evil."

I am not a member of the church of Christ because of the flexibility of its laws. The church did not make the laws in the first place, and it cannot make new ones today, nor change the ones that have been made. Denominations make their own laws, but not the church of Christ. It has only the law of Christ and cannot alter it. The denominations can change the laws they have made any time they desire, and they frequently do. But the church of Christ is governed by the law of Christ and it cannot be changed by man. Christ's law is called the gospel; and Paul said in Gal. 1:6-8, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is

not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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 have 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." We are forbidden the privilege of changing it to make it conform to a changing world. We must preach it as it is and try to get the changing world to conform to it. We are also forbidden in Rev. 22: 18-19 to add a word to it, or to take a word from it. It is not flexible, and we can no more change it without destroying ourselves than we could take a live wire in our hand and change the current in it to make it flow the opposite way.

But now here are the real reasons why I am a member of the church of Christ. First, I am a member of it because of its divine establishment. That could not be said of the church that I was a member of, nor of any other denomination. When Jesus said in Matt. 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my church," he was not talking about the denomination that I was a member of. In fact, he was not talking about ANY denomination. He was talking about HIS church—the one we can read about in the Bible. The church of Christ is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," we are told in Eph. 2:20. Denominations are built upon the doctrines and commandments of men, while the Lord's church alone is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. I am a member of it for that reason. Also, because the Lord adds the saved to it. Acts 2:47

says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." It would be the height of presumption for any modern, human denomination to say that this passage refers to it.

In the next place, I am a member of the church of Christ because of its divine creed. The churches that were built by men all have human creeds, but the one the Lord built has a divine creed. Christ himself is the creed of it. He said in Jn. 8:24, "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." In Jn. 17:20 Jesus prayed for all them that "shall believe on me through their word"—that is, the words of the apostles. We all know that in order to be a member of a Protestant denomination, one must believe the creed of that denomination regardless of the words of the apostles.

When John ended his account of the Life of Jesus, He said in Jn. 20:31, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." Before the eunuch from Ethiopia was baptized, he said in Acts 8:37, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Christ himself is the creed of his church. All that we do, we do because of our faith in him. That creed does not change. The New Testament itself is the only book in which this creed is written down; and Paul said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work," 2 Tim. 3:16-17. That is the only creed book we have and I am a member of the Church of Christ because of it.

I am a member of the church of Christ also because of its divine doctrine. From the very beginning, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayer," we are told in Acts 2:42. The church that I was a member of did not do that. Acts 16:4 tells us that as Paul and Silas went through the cities, "they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were in Jerusalem." They all spoke as the oracles of God. And Peter said in 1 Pet. 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." In the church of Christ, I can do that.

And here are some other reasons why I am a member of the church of Christ. Because of its divine name. It wears the name of Christ the founder, the head, and the Savior of it. I am a member of it because of its divine worship. It does nothing in worship that we cannot read on the pages of the Testament of Christ, and seeks to do ALL those things. That makes its worship divine. I am a member of it because of its plea for oneness. It believes that all men should be "one" in Christ, and works to that end—that all may believe the gospel of Christ, obey the gospel of Christ, be one in Christ, and wear the name of Christ. And last of all, I am a member of the church of Christ because of the salvation that God offers in it. The scripture says he adds the saved to it. I plead with you to consider these things and examine again the grounds of the hope that you possess.

DOES MAN HAVE A CHOICE IN RELIGION?

Today, I should like to study with you the ques-

tion, "Does man have a choice in religion?" By this, I mean, Does man have a right to decide for himself what is wrong in religion? or is he bound by a "thus saith the Lord"?

People are being taught to "join the church of your choice," and then the preachers who advocate that want to influence people every way they can in making that choice. People have often thanked God in their prayers for so many churches so that everyone may join the church of his choice. My question is, Does man have a choice? It shall be my purpose today to show that man DOES NOT have a choice in this matter, scripturally speaking. And if I am right in this, what shall be the fate of those who have been influenced to believe such a theory and, therefore, have made the wrong choice?

Using the Bible only to sustain my defense of the truth that, scripturally speaking, man does not have a choice of religions, of faiths, of baptisms, nor such a choice of churches, I beg of you to consider with me the following.

I recognize the fact that in everything man has this kind of choice—that is, to do, or not to do—to obey, or not obey. But this is not the kind of choice we are discussing today. In the Garden of Eden God gave Adam and Eve the choice to obey or not to obey when he said, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." If he desired to live, he could not eat. It was just that simple. In Josh. 24:14-15, Israel was given the choice to serve the true God or the gods of the fathers, But Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." Yes, they had the choice

between obeying God and not obeying him, with the consequences that should follow; but they did not have the privilege of deciding what kind of religion they would adopt in serving God.

For man to have a choice, there must be at least two or more objects from which to choose. If one were to go into a store to buy an article of clothing, and there was only one such article in the store, he would have no choice. It would be to either take this article or go without it. If one were to go to an automobile dealer to buy a car and he had only one, there would be no choice. He would either have to take it or leave it. We all know that where there is only one object, there is no choice. The same is true in religion. If God has given us only one way in religion, we have no choice but to accept, or reject it. We may take it or leave it. However, we must consider the consequences. In Jer. 32:29 God said, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them." Does that sound as though man has a choice?

Will you listen now as I read from Eph. 4:4-6? There the scripture says, "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 you all, and in you all." This correctly understood and respected, would stop all preaching that man has a right to the church of his choice, to the faith that he likes best, and to the kind of baptism that he wants. This passage is diametrically opposed to such preaching, and every Bible student knows it. Of each of these, the Bible says there

is ONE. When there is one, only one, there is no choice. Then how, in the face of this, can preachers get up and tell people to take their choice?

Does man have a choice of the Gods he will serve? Not if he expects to receive the blessings of Jehovah. In Ex. 20:3 God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; Thou shalt not bow to them nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God." It must be God, and God only. It could not be God and some image; or God and some likeness or something else. In Isa. 46:9 the scripture says, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." Would you not say that in this matter, man does not have a choice?

The apostles likewise declare there is one Lord, and that is Jesus Christ. In 1 Cor. 8:6 an apostle said, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." So when it comes to the question of which Lord we will serve, the Bible says there is ONE. Would you not say that in this man has no choice? It is either serve him, or refuse.

The same is true of the Spirit. The Bible says there is "one Spirit." The scripture says in 1 Cor. 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." That is, all Christians are—not all who claim to be Christians. There is a difference. It was by the one

Spirit that God revealed his will to man. The apostles were filled with the Spirit and spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. All the things we read in the scripture are brought to us by the Spirit. He speaks to us in no other way. All, therefore, who are baptized according to the teaching of the holy scripture are baptized into one body. Since the Holy Spirit is ONE, would you say that man has a choice in the Spirit that he will receive from God? In Acts 5:32 we are told that God gives the Holy Spirit to "them that obey him." The only choice that man has in the matter is to obey God and receive the Spirit, or refuse and be denied.

Now the same Bible says "there is one body." If man does not have a choice in the other things that we have read in the scripture, then why should one think that he will have a choice in this? The Bible not only says, "There is one body," but in 1 Cor. 12:20 the scripture says, "Now are they many members, yet BUT ONE body." Since there is only one, would you say that man has a choice?

Now with this before us, let us ascertain from the scripture what that "one body" is that we read about in the Bible. Without asking you to accept my interpretation of this, or without running to some doctor of divinity to settle the matter, shall we turn to the Bible for a definition of the "body", to find out what the "one body" is? Are you willing to accept the scripture as a court of final appeal, and abide by what it says? Listen now as I read to you what the scripture says this "one body" is.

Eph. 1:22-23 says, "And hath put all things under

his feet, (that is, Christ's 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." Language could not be plainer. It simply says, "the church, which is his body." What is the church? It is his body. What is the body? It is the church. That is what the scripture says. Listen again. "And he is the head of the body, the church," (Col. 1:18). Then in v. 24 he has this to say: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." What is that? "His body's sake, which is the church." Now since there is "one body," and "the body is the church," would you say that man has a choice? Would you say he is free to choose whatever body he desires to enter into and become a part of that? Would you say that man is free to join the church of his choice, when the Bible says there is only one?

In Matt. 16:18 Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." He built it, and all the apostels were members of it—of the same church, the one and only church. After they died, Martin Luther built a church. Then John Calvin built another, John Knox another, John Smyth another, and John Wesley another. Out of these churches have come many others, and the world today is filled with them. The Bible is not, but the world is. There is only one in the Bible, but there are many in the world. Then the preachers of these various churches stand up and say, "Join the church of your choice." God built ONE, and men have built many. Would you say that this gives man the right to choose for himself the church he likes best? No more than the fact that men have made Gods many and put them in

temples that they built for them would give man the right to choose his own God. Jehovah said, "Thou shalt have no other God before me. Thou shalt make no other, and thou shalt not bow down to others." Likewise, he has built one church and does not give men the right to build others, nor to become a part of others.

The same passage of scripture that we read in the beginning says, "There is one faith." Since there is ONE true faith, does that sound as though man has a choice? Not only have churches multiplied in the world, but every church has its own faith. Men are being told that it makes no difference what one believes—that he is the one to be pleased, not God. We are told that so long as a man is honest and sincere in what he believes, it makes no difference. But my friends, since the scripture says, "there is one faith," man does not have a choice. He must either accept it, or leave it.

Listen further to what the Bible says about that one faith. Jude said in the 3rd verse of his epistle, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." He said, "The faith"—"once for all delivered to the saints." God has given no other—not for the people of this age. We have no choice but to accept it, or leave it. To find what that "one faith" is, we necessarily must go to the apostles to find out. It was delivered to them, and they delivered it to us. It is not found in the creed books of today. They did not exist then. It is found outside of them. It is found *only* in the writing of the inspired writers of the scripture. That is called

the Bible. Then, my beloved, we can please God only by doing those things we read in the Testament of Christ, and the things that are written ONLY there. We have no choice but to obey God and be accepted of him, or disobey him and be lost.

SAVED BY WORDS

In the 10th and 11th chapters of the book of Acts is the account of the conversion of the first Gentiles who ever became a part of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The account of this conversion is given in enough detail in the scripture that there should be no doubt about the exact way it came about. Often times a single occurrence in the account given will be emphasized above everything else, and often the other things will be completely ignored. Let me suggest that you read the account given in chapter ten and then read Peter's explanation of it given in chapter eleven.

When Peter was come back to Jerusalem and called to task by the other Jews for going in to the Gentiles, Luke says in 11:4 that "Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them." If one is concerned about the truth of God in regard to the conversion of Cornelius, he should study carefully the orderly account Peter gave of it.

After explaining the vision that he received on the house top of Joppa, the visit of the men who had come from Cornelius, and the instruction he himself received from the Holy Spirit and their journey to Cesarea, he said "we entered into the man's house." With all the good things said about Cornelius in the first part of

chapter 10, with all of his religious activities, obviously he was not saved before Peter entered into his house. Let's let Peter explain what he found when he entered into this house.

He said, "He showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, 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," (11:13-14). From this we learn that Cornelius was not saved by his good life and religious deeds. For those things were done before the angel appeared to him. He was not saved by prayer, for that too, was before Peter entered into his house. He was not saved by the angel, for the angel told him to send for Peter and HE would tell him what to do to be saved. Then if Cornelius was not saved by any of those things, why should anyone today think that he can be saved because he lives a good life, is religious, and prays regularly?

The angel told Cornelius HOW he would be saved. He said with reference to Peter whom he was to send for, that "he shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." If we accept what the angel said as being true and accurate, then we must say that the power by which these people were saved was to be found in the "the words" spoken by Peter, and not in the visit of the angel nor a miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Peter said, "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning." Preachers often stop right here and contend that Cornelius was saved

when the Holy Spirit fell on them. We know this is not true for various reasons. In the first place, the angel said, "He shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." He did not say, "And God shall send the Holy Spirit by which thou and thy house shall be saved"—it was to be by the "WORDS" spoken by Peter. Peter had not spoken those words when the Holy Spirit fell on them. He said, "As I began to speak." The Holy Spirit falling on them was not a result of the words spoken by Peter, for He fell on them as Peter "BEGAN to speak." The words he spoke came after the Holy Spirit fell on them; therefore, we know they were not saved by the Holy Spirit.

In the second place, one is saved by his *obedience*, and not by something that he receives. It is by something that he DOES, and not something that he FEELS within himself. In Rom. 6:17-18 the scripture says one is made free from sin when he "obeys from the heart." In 1 Pet. 1:22 the scripture says man's soul is purified when he obeys the truth. In Heb. 5:9 the scripture says Christ is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." In Rev. 22:14 the scripture says that those who "do his commandments have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." In 2 Thes. 1:8-9 the scripture says that all who "obey not the gospel of Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." Cornelius and his house had not obeyed the gospel before Peter entered into this house, and when the Holy Spirit fell on them, for they had not heard it at that time. They had not obeyed the commands of Christ, for they did not know about Christ when the Holy Spirit fell on them. They

had to learn about him in the words that Peter spoke. These are sufficient reasons why we know Cornelius was not saved when the Holy Spirit fell on them.

As a third consideration in this matter, the Holy Spirit was never given to anybody to save them. The Holy Spirit was not given to the Apostles to save them, nor is any sinner anywhere ever taught to receive the Holy Spirit in order to be saved. On the contrary, one cannot be saved without becoming a child of God; and the scripture says in Gal. 4:6 that "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." God does not send the Holy Spirit to make people sons of God—but, "because YE ARE sons." One is not saved before he obeys God, and he does not receive the Holy Spirit until AFTER he obeys. The scripture says in Acts 5:32, "we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him." To whom does God give the Holy Spirit?—to them that obey him. Whom does God save?—them that obey him. Therefore, he gives the Holy Spirit to people AFTER they have obeyed God and been saved from past sins.

But Cornelius and his house HAD NOT obeyed God, not having learned of Christ and knowing nothing about the gospel, which is God's power to save. And since the power to save these people lay in the "Words" which Peter was to speak to them—the gospel of our salvation, what purpose did the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the house of Cornelius serve? It is definite that it was not to save them. Then what was the purpose of it? This can be determined with certainty when we see

the use that was made of it by the apostle himself. He was convinced by it that "God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," as the apostle himself stated. It was then that he proceeded to preach to them the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

When God poured out the Spirit upon Baalam's ass and he began to speak with other tongues—he spoke with the tongue of a man, it was not for the purpose of saving that animal, but for the purpose of convincing Baalam. When God poured out the Spirit upon the house of Cornelius, it was not for the purpose of saving them, but for the purpose of convincing Peter. He never hesitated to preach the gospel to them after that, and the power by which they were to be saved was in the things that Peter told them. After he preached Christ to them, no doubt covering his miraculous birth, his baptism, his public ministry, his crucifixion, his burial and his resurrection, and then the charge that he gave them to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," Luke says, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

There is no way that one can say Cornelius and his house were saved by the words of Peter without saying that they complied with this command. If they rejected the things that Peter spoke, they could not be saved by the Holy Spirit, nor by any other power; for God's power to save them lay in the words that Peter spoke—

which words included the command to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

We today are Gentiles, the same as Cornelius was. We, along with them, can be saved only by the words which were spoken by Peter. His message of salvation was the same to both Jews and Gentiles; and to find out what we must do to be saved and to receive the Holy Spirit, we must let him tell us. In his own words, or the words spoken by his tongue as the Holy Spirit gave him utterance, he said, "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 Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," (Acts 2:38-39). This is God's message of salvation for the entire world today. If we are ever saved, it must be in compliance with this.

A WAY THAT SEEMS RIGHT

Man has always wrestled with the problem of what is right or wrong in worship to God and in his dealing with his fellowman. There has never been a period of time in which there have not been conflicting views among men on this question. King Solomon was a man who is known by Bible students throughout the world to have been endowed with the highest degree of wisdom of all mortals of the earth. His great wisdom was known to have come from God. And even the queen of the south came from the ends of the earth,

the Lord said, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Yet, even Solomon, in all of his wisdom, knew that man in his own thinking is not capable of charting his course in life and mapping his way into the eternal realities of God. He said in Prov. 14:12, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." This was not just a passing thought of one who stood in bewilderment as he looked upon the conflicting views of men about him, but he was guided by the wisdom of God to make the statement; and then for emphasis, it was repeated in Prov. 16:25. The Lord was not only declaring a great truth in making this revelation, but was also sounding out a grave warning. The very fact that he states it twice in exactly the same way indicates to us just how important it is. Let us consider this great truth the Lord spoke, and let us heed the warning he gave.

Here is a warning against relying too much on outward appearance, or just following any course that seems plausible and right to us. When we stop to think about it, there is not a religious system on earth that does not seem right to those connected with it. One would be foolish, indeed, to give his life to something that he doubts is right and risk losing all hope of eternal peace beyond the grave by following a course that he does not believe could possibly lead him into such a state. Yet, the mere fact that a religious system looks good to its devotees does not mean that the Lord looks upon it with approval. The Lord is telling us that a thing might appear to be right, when in reality, it is not that way at all in His sight. The truth that the Lord is declaring here is that things are not always what they seem.

God's reasoning and Man's reasoning have not always been the same by any means. The passage we have read teaches us that God and man do not always see things alike. Isn't this what the Lord said? Listen as we read what he said through the prophet Isaiah, and recorded in the 55th chapter of his prophecy, verses 8 and 9. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Instead of depending on our own thinking and reasoning, we need to learn to think the thoughts of God. We must learn to lift our thoughts up to the high plane of his thinking. And instead of walking in our own ways, we need to learn of His ways, and walk therein. We will all walk together when we do that; and moreover, we will walk with God. To further impress upon man the difference in the way that God sees things from the way that we look upon them, God told Samuel that "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). If we had the insight into things that God has; if we could fathom the depths of the mysteries of God; if our sight could reveal to us the intricacies of tomorrow and of all ages yet to come; yes, if our sight could reveal to us all the mysteries of life, of death, and the grave—if it could give us a clear sweep of the unseen realms and all that lies beyond the judgment, our ways would be different upon the earth. But since it cannot do that, we should be guided by the thinking of God and endeavor to walk in His ways.

With all the wisdom that Solomon possessed, he

knew that man was inadequate within himself. And he was guided by the Spirit of the Lord to say in Prov. 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not upon thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths." We need that direction, for man is not capable of directing his own way. God said in Jer. 10:23, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Since God has an insight into things that you and I do not have, we must come to trust him and to look to him for the guidance we need. The advice given by one of Israel's kings would be good advice for all men to follow today. He said in 2 Chron. 18:4, "Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today." There is not better way to know what will please the Lord than to "Inquire at his word today." Solomon said again, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him," (Prov. 10:5).

How very unwise we are in our pretense to be wise! Paul said in 1 Cor. 3:18-20, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." Man turned away from God in the beginning by abandoning God's thoughts and following his own thinking. In the first chapter of the Roman letter where the apostasy of man is so graphically described, the apostle said that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish

heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Then he says, they "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." Then he says that since "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." That is the reason why the first false religion was ever started. That is the reason for every religion that has been introduced among men. And when men put God out of their mind and came to depend on their own thinking and their own reasoning, naturally the ways they introduced seem right to them. But the fact still remains, that "there is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

To some, it seems that God would have done many things differently. Man is often prone to question why God has done some things, or the way in which he has done them. There are those who actually think that many things could have been done better than the way God has done them. People are often heard to say what they would do if they were God; that if they were God would destroy all the evil in the world and make it a better place for man to live, that they would stop all disease and human affliction, that they would not allow human beings to suffer as men suffer in the world—and on, and on, men go on saying what they would do if they were God. Men seem to forget that God made this world free from sin and placed man in it without any defilement whatsoever, that man is responsible for all the sin in it, and not God. Men seem

to forget that man corrupted his way upon the earth and brought about the deplorable conditions that now exist; that we brought upon ourselves the pains, the heartaches, the suffering and the death that human beings experience. These things must continue in this world as long as it stands, and all the corruption that is in it will be destroyed when the earth itself is destroyed. We are told in the scripture that one day "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," (2 Pet. 3: 10). But the Lord has told us how we may be freed from the guilt of our sins and pass into the joys of a land that is free from all defilement when this earth is destroyed if we will only walk in his ways. And he has revealed to us all the things we need to know as we travel through this realm, and has chosen to withhold from us the things that do not concern us in this life. We are told in Deut. 29:29 that "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."

God always knows best. Why shouldn't he? He made the world and all things therein. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. He does not have to give man a reason for everything He does, nor is He under any obligation to give man an explanation for everything He has requested of us. When God commands a thing, he is not obligated to tell us why. We are to do it simply because He commanded it. We are to do it because of our faith in Him. An apostle of Christ said, "We walk by faith, not by sight," (2 Cor. 5:7). By faith we must accept the fact that God has given us all the information

we need as to how to please Him, and he has withheld from us many things that are not necessary to our salvation and well-being.

There is a limit to *our* knowledge, but there is no limit to the knowledge of God. The apostle Paul was so overwhelmed with the magnitude of God's greatness and the vastness of His knowledge that he was constrained to cry out, and say, "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?" (Rom. 11:33-34). Who is puny man that he should question anything God has done or said? Paul said, "Nay but, O man, Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?", (Rom. 9:20). Regardless of man's reasoning, remember that "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

To some, it seems that God should not allow the righteous to suffer, nor permit the wicked to prosper. That reasoning is not new at all. I suppose there have been people in all ages who have wondered the same thing. It seems that the writer of the 73rd psalm wrestled with the same problem. At first, he just could not understand why God would permit the wicked to prosper and let the righteous suffer. Listen as he reasons on it. He said, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps have well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men are; neither are

they plagued like other men. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.”

In great confusion, the Psalmist said, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” It just seemed to him that such things ought not so to be. To him the plausible thing would be for God to have stepped in and changed the whole picture. This was his reasoning at first, but before the psalm closes, we see his reasoning change. If you ask, “What caused his reasoning to change?”, I would suggest that the answer is found in vs. 17. He wondered about this, he said, “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” There were many things the Psalmist could understand, and when he tried to figure them out, he said they were too painful for him. But then he said, “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” It was there that he came to realize that their punishment would come in the end. After he had taken this thing to the Lord, and left it in God’s hands, he could then see and understand what he had not formerly been able to see and understand. He had been trying to figure this out by himself, but he needed to let God help him. He concluded that the way that seems right is not always right. After he had reached the conclusion that God knew best, he said, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before.”

Many today have the same problem that the Psalmist had. They just can’t understand why God would let

the wicked prosper, or permit the righteous to suffer, but they have not taken into account the fact that a reckoning day is coming. God does not settle all of His accounts at the end of the year. If the wicked could never prosper in this world, and the righteous would never be subjected to any suffering in this world, would people not be prone to become righteous only that they might escape suffering, or that they might prosper? This is not the proper motive for service to God. The reward that God has promised to Christians does not all come in this life by any means. And the fact that He allows the wicked to prosper in this world is no indication that God is pleased with their character. The scripture says that God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust", (Matt. 5:45). But God has a purpose in this. At first we may not understand it, and we may even question God's judgment in it, but when we leave it with the Lord and have the full assurance that God will handle all things properly, we eventually will see that God knew what he was doing.

Paul had a thorn in the flesh and prayed three times that it might be removed, but God did not remove it. Why? To many it would seem that God would surely remove that thorn from such a righteous man as Paul was, but this was not the case. Instead of that thorn being a stumbling stone to Paul, it became a stepping stone to him. The Lord simply told him that "my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Then the great apostle said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He simply came to realize that his real strength lay, not in his native

ability, his educational achievements, nor his position in life; but rather in the hand of the Lord that was upon me." He simply came to realize that his real strength lay, not in his native ability, his educational achievements, nor his position in life; but rather in the hand of the Lord that was upon him. And that strength was manifest in his own native weakness. So he said, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." His thorn in the flesh enabled him to rise to far greater heights in the power of the Lord. In like manner, the afflictions of David became stepping stones for him. He said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes", (Ps. 119:71).

We should not forget that a reckoning day is coming. Through the wicked might have enjoyed prosperity in this world, they will have to stand accountable for their wickedness; and will be forced to endure severe punishment in the world to come. Though the righteous might have suffered much in this world, they will be greatly rewarded in the world to come. Worldly prosperity is no indication of God's stamp of approval, nor are the sufferings of this world a sign of God's disapproval. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." That being the case, remember, "There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

To some, it seems that God would save everybody. Here again, many say that if they were God they would

never send anyone to hell to suffer for ever, and ever. But, remember, man has not always been in agreement with God. There are those who cannot conceive of God's letting man be lost eternally in hell. It just seems to them that God would take everybody to heaven, regardless. If he did that, heaven would not be a fit place for the righteous—to have to spend eternity with every thief, and liar, and murderer, and adulterer and drunkard that ever lived on earth. And heaven would be a miserable place for all of these if they had to dwell eternally with all the righteous. God's ways are best; and he is merciful in separating the righteous from the wicked in eternity so that neither will have to dwell with the other. Then think of it from another standpoint. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. The man who is not prepared for heaven has no promise of it. If he is not prepared for it he would be a misfit in heaven. The person who is not prepared for fellowship with God is not prepared for heaven. And fellowship with God is something that one must enter into in this life if he would be in fellowship with God when he dies. To have that fellowship with God, one must be in perfect agreement with God. We must bring our life to conform to His. The prophet said in Amos 3:3, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

Sin erects a barrier between God and man. Isa. 59: 2 says, "Your sins have separated between you and your God." Before one could enjoy the presence of God, that barrier of sin must be removed. God is pure and holy, and one can never enjoy company with Him until he, too, becomes pure and holy.

Mortal beings are not mere puppets, or mechanical

men; but God has endowed us with the faculty to think and reason. Man has been given the power to choose or to refuse. God will not save him against his will. Yet, God not only wants man to be saved, but has made provision for that salvation. He would have all men to be saved and come unto a knowledge of the truth, (1 Tim. 2:4). He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, (2 Pet. 3:9). But even though God wants man to be saved, he must come to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus said in Jn. 8:32 that it is the truth that makes man free. And though God wants man to be saved, and has offered salvation to all, many will not accept the salvation he has offered.

To some, it seems that God should not be so exacting in his requirements for salvation and that he should save man in any religion so long as he is sincere in what he does. It seems that any church, any doctrine, any worship should be all right if one is honest and sincere. Nevertheless, the scripture says there is "one body" and that the body "is the church," (Eph. 4:4 and 1:22-23). I would remind you again that the scripture says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Are you willing to follow a way that merely seems right, or do you want to be absolutely sure that you are right? It will be to your own ultimate destruction if you follow in a way that merely seems right to you. If a man would be in perfect agreement with God, he must come to believe that God is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, (Heb. 11:6). He must also believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said in Jn. 14:1, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." And then he said in 8:24, "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall

die in your sins.” He also requires the one who comes to believe in him to confess that faith before men. He said in Matt. 10:32, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” But since sin has erected a barrier between man and God, those sins must be repented of before that barrier can be removed. That repentance is brought about by a godly sorrow. 2 Cor. 7:19 says, “Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation.” When one comes to have a contrite spirit, and is broken hearted because he has sinned against God, he will gladly turn away from the sins committed and cast himself at the feet of the Lord, a poor, helpless sinner and implore His mercy and forgiveness.

But that one does not enter into fellowship with God, and his life is not in agreement with Him, until those sin stains are removed. This can be done only by the blood of the Lamb of God, and is done when one is brought under the power of that blood. His blood was shed in his death, and the scripture says in Eph. 1:7 that it is “in him that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.” We turn then to Rom. 6:3-4 and read where the apostle said, “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.” Saul, who spoke of himself as the chief of sinners, was told to “arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord,” (Acts 22:16). This is when one enters into fellowship with Christ and God,

is cleansed from all sins, and his life is in agreement with God. This is God's way, and the only one that is right. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death."

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

In the 13th chapter of Matthew there are a number of parables that Jesus spoke to the multitudes that gathered down by the Sea of Galilee. After hearing him speak in parables, Matthew says in verses 10-16, "The disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be give, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes for they see: and your ears, for they hear." And in verse 9 of that chapter, he said, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

From this passage of scripture it is quite obvious

that the Lord was greatly concerned about the way people hear the word of God. He said, some hearing would not hear, nor understand. He said the ears of some had become dull of hearing, lest they should hear and understand and be converted that he might heal them. But on the other hand, he pronounced a blessing on those whose ears were willing to hear.

To speak of "hearing the word of God," implies a responsibility. All men have a responsibility to hear what God says. From reading the Bible, we know that God made man and spoke to him, and taught him how to speak. God still speaks to man today. Not as he did in the beginning, but he speaks, nevertheless. When God first placed man on earth, he spoke to him direct. Now he speaks to us in the Word of life, His only Begotten Son; and that message is transmitted to us through the Bible. The book of Hebrews begins by saying, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these las days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

Thus, we understand that a message was prepared for man by his Creator, and that message was clearly spoken to us. Man is capable of hearing that message, for it was given to man according to his ability to understand. Man is not only capable of hearing, but is given the opportunity to hear, and is expected to do so. But at the same time, there is the possibility that one will not hear that message when it is spoken. The Lord said there were some whose hearts were waxed gross, and

whose ears were dull of hearing. But the fault was all their own. They had conditioned themselves against hearing the things spoken by Jehovah. One can pay no attention to a thing until he ceases to be effected by it at all. If one will pay attention to the alarm clock every time the alarm sounds he will always be awakened by it. But if he decides when the alarm sounds that he will sleep on just a little longer, it will not be long until he is not effected by it at all. The alarm will sound, but he will never hear it. It is the same way in dealing with the word of the Lord. If we will always pay attention to it, and heed what it says, we will always be effected by it. It will control our lives. But if we pay no attention to what it says, we will soon reach the point where it will have no effect at all on us. When we read, or hear, a thing in the Bible, we will say, "Yes, I know the Bible says that, but I believe it will be all right to do thus and so." Many will say with reference to things that God has spoken, "Yes, I know that is in the Bible, but I do not believe it is essential to salvation." How foolish can one get, any way?

Because of the great danger in the world today of conditioning oneself against hearing the gospel of Christ, I should like to call your attention to some words of warning and exhortation found in the Bible. In the very first chapter of Isaiah, the prophet said in verse 2, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken." And then as a good physician would diagnose the case of a sick man, this observation is made in verse 5: "Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." And so the inspired advice concerning men who refuse to hear the word of God is this: they

are sick in the head, and the heart is weak. Yes, there is something that is terribly wrong with that one who will not hear the word of God. That is not a very flattering compliment, I'll grant you; but you know it is true.

The head, the seat of the mind, is sick. It is weak. It is unbalanced, and not functioning properly. If you ask the reason, I would say they got that way by refusing to think with God on the great issues of life. They think, all right, but they think according to their own desires, and according to their own lusts; according to the god of this world. The only remedy for this tragic condition is to learn to think differently, to think the thoughts of God after him. in Isa. 55:8-9 the scripture says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." A lot of people say, "I think one can be saved outside of the church as well as in it." "I think one church is as good as another." "I don't think it makes any difference what one believes as long as he is honest." "I don't think baptism has anything to do with salvation." "I don't think one has to eat the Lord's Supper the first day of every week," etc. But God said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Without appearing to be unkind at all, let me say in all humility that it doesn't make any difference what anyone thinks, so far as making a thing right or wrong in the sight of God. The only thing that makes a difference is, What has God said about it? It is downright wicked for one to substitute that which is

spoken in God's word for what he thinks. That is the thing that brought about the downfall of man in the beginning and led him into the great apostasy. Paul said in Rom. 1:20-25 that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." So there we have it. They did what they "thought" was all right. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie. They did what *they* wanted to do instead of what God wanted. They worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. And that is what one does when he pays no attention to what *God* says, and does what he *thinks* is all right. So God said in Isa. 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." In other words, God is saying, "Give up the things that *you* think are right and return to that which is spoken by Jehovah.

When Naaman, the Syrian leper, went to the prophet of God to be healed of his leprosy, he was told to go dip seven times in the river Jordan. But he thought God ought to do it some other way. And he said, "Behold, I thought the prophet would strike his hands over the

place, and call on the name of his God, and recover the leper." But it was not until he abandoned his thoughts and returned to do what the prophet of God said that he was cured of his leprosy. So are many who are afflicted with sin today and are sinners before God. They are saying, "I think one will be saved if he just accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, and believes on him." But Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." So there we have what men *think* in contrast with what God *said*. It is not until one is willing to forsake his thoughts that hold him in rebellion against God and return to the Lord that he will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon.

Not only did Isaiah say that "the whole head is sick," but he said "the whole heart is faint." The heart is that which keeps the life current going. But many in this old world are in the last group, spiritually speaking. Jesus said on one occasion, as recorded in Matt. 15:19, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are things which defile a man." When Isaiah spoke of the illness of man as an illness of the mind and heart, he spoke the plain, hard truth. No one could ever accuse Isaiah of being a soft-soaper, and glossing over the whole rotten situation of the world by saying, "you are a fine people, and doing the things you think are all right." But he was sent by Jehovah to point out the prevailing disorder of man, and to tell them what had gotten them in the condition they were in. He said it was all brought about by their unwillingness to hear the word of God. Listen to the charge that God gave him, found in Isa. 30:8-9. "Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for

the time to come for ever and ever. For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah." That was the charge that God himself brought against the people. And why should we become so smug in our ways today and think we can any more please God in our refusal to be governed strictly by his law than they could? He said, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that deal corruptly!" The truth of the matter was that they had revolted against the government of God, and had become a law unto themselves, setting up their own government contrary to the government of their Creator. He said they had forsaken Jehovah. They forsook the true worship of God for the worship of idols. They discarded the word of God for that of false prophets. That charge is still true of a great many people in the world today. There are literally millions of people in the world who have turned away from the worship as it was in the days of the apostles, and who no longer depend on the things th Lord has spoken through them; who have written their own creeds and revise them from time to time, and who no longer claim to be members of the church to which the apostles belong. It is not hard at all to find people who will tell you that they know their church is not mentioned in the Bible, that the name of it cannot be found in all the pages of inspiration, but that it doesn't make any difference. It isn't hard to find people who will tell you that they know Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," but they do not believe it is essential to be baptized to be saved even though Jesus did say it. They have forsaken God and his word, and have turned to teachers who do not respect the law of Jehovah. It is not hard to find men who think nothing at all of

neglecting the worship of God. Though Christians are urged in Heb. 10:24-25 to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 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," many professed Christians fail to hear the admonition.

Why will man ever refuse to hear God? Evidently, it is because he maintains he is good enough without Christ and his church. He evidently feels that he can get along without the counsel of God's word. He is like Pharaoh of old who asked, "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken to his voice?" He is like the scoffers mentioned by Peter in 2 Pet. 3:3-4, when he said, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." He is like the despiser of Heb. 10:29, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, and unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

According to Isaiah, such a man has despised the Holy One of Israel, and has gone backwards. He has apostatized. Sin has its process and logical course, just as righteousness has. Men do not go by one great leap into perdition. Just as there is the force of gravity in the physical world, there is such a force in the spiritual.

First, people forsake God. Next, they despise him. And finally, they cut loose from Him and go backward instead of forward. That shameful situation is described most graphically in the first chapter of the Roman letter. Such action on the part of man prompted God to instruct Ezekiel to "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" So the divine command to hear God comes because of the importance of it to human life.

When God gives his law to man, he enjoins upon him first and foremost to "Hear." In Mark 12:29, when Jesus was asked which was the first commandment of all? "Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord." Why should God speak in the first place, if he did not intend for man to hear it? And Solomon warned in Ecc. 5:1, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they know not that they do evil." Unless one is going to listen and take heed to the things that God says in his word, he might as well forget about religion altogether and take his stand with those who say there is no God. But the one who is willing to do God's will should listen to what he says and heed scrupulously the things expressed in his word.

Not only did God command men to hear, but Jesus said in Luke 8:18, "Take heed therefore how you hear." That is a warning that is greatly needed. Why do you go

to church, any way? Why do you read the Bible? Is it because you are earnestly trying to find out what God wants you to do? Is it because you are concerned about what he says above all others. Or, do you go to church for entertainment and the social element? And are you searching for something to justify you in the thing that you want to do? Really, what is it you are looking for? When the word of God is proclaimed, do you listen with an open mind and a receptive heart, ready to do all that it says? Or, do you listen with a critical ear and a rebellious heart? Jesus said, "Take heed HOW you hear."

Another word of caution that Jesus gave in this same connection is found in Mark 4:24 where Jesus said, "Take heed *what* ye hear." We should want to know first of all that it is absolutely God's word that we are hearing and heeding. All the philosophical lectures in the world, all the moral and social talks to which men may listen, and all the intellectual and cultural addresses that may be delivered cannot take the place of the simple, plain facts of the gospel of Christ; which is spoken of as "the gospel of our salvation." In the 10th chapter of Acts we are told that an angel instructed Cornelius to send for Peter, who when he came, would tell him words whereby he and his house might be saved. Cornelius understood that Peter would speak to him the things that God sent him to speak. So when Peter came into his house, he found him assembled with his kinsmen and near friends. When Peter came in, they said, "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." That is all they were concerned about, just hearing "all things that are com-

manded of God.” That is the spirit of which Christians are born. When one is willing to hear all that God commands, and will cull none of it, that one will be brought into the fold of God through his obedience to him.

But there were some in the days of the apostles who would not endure sound doctrine, just as there were in Isaiah’s time who would not hear the law of Jehovah. Paul said in 2 Tim. 4:3, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” All religious people are willing to hear something, but WHAT? Do you demand a “Thus saith the Lord” in all that you hear? Or, are you just looking for the things that are in harmony with your church? As a proclaimer of the gospel of Christ, I have no right to be liberal with that which is not my own. It is Christ’s gospel, and I have no right to alter it by taking anything from it, or adding anything to it. Neither can I change anything that is found in it. And I am certainly not going to apologize for something my Lord said, nor try to explain it away. I must preach it as it is. Paul said, “Preach the word.” When one comes to the point where he is not willing to do that, he should be honest enough to relinquish his place to one who will. I believe there are still many honest and good people in the world who want to hear the word of truth as it is set forth in the Bible, and it is my aim to proclaim it as it is given, always.

As a final consideration, we must take *whom* we

hear. In Matt. 17:5, God said, "This is my beloved Son, In whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." In Acts 3:22, Peter quoting from Deuteronomy 18, said, "Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." He, of course, was speaking of Christ. As hearers of the word, we have a solemn responsibility to discriminate. We must learn to discriminate between what God has spoken through his Son and that which has originated with man and colored by excerpts from the scripture. Christ warned in Matt. 7:15 against false prophets who come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. And the apostle John said in 1 Jn. 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into world." So we have the solemn responsibility of testing by the word of God everything that is preached to us. Jesus told the people whom he taught to "search the scriptures." Paul also had people searching the scriptures to see whether the things he said were so. I ask you to do the same thing. If I cannot prove it by the scripture I have no right to preach it. If you cannot find the proof in the scripture, you have no right to accept it. Instead of listening to someone who preaches the doctrine of Luther, you should demand to know that the things taught are directly expressed in the scripture, and not merely based on the scripture. Instead of listening to one who comes to you with *any* denominational doctrine, you should demand that he have NO denominational doctrine, but simply stand in the doc-

trine of Christ. When one comes to you with any doctrine, you should demand to know from whom it came. Paul told Timothy to "continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them," (2 Tim. 3: 14). When someone tells you that one does not have to be a member of the Lord's church to be saved, you should demand to know from whom he learned that. When one tells you that it is not necessary for one to be baptized in order to be saved, you should demand to know from whom he learned that. He did not learn it from Christ. God said in Isa. 55:3, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live."

THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE

In the eighth chapter of the book of John, vs. 31-32, Jesus said to those Jews which believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This is truly one of the great utterances of all time. It has had a great impact upon the world, and has influenced the destiny of all who have given it their consideration. In this brief reading, the Master presents three outstanding thoughts that are worthy of our most earnest consideration. The first thought is **THE OPPORTUNITY FOR KNOWING THE TRUTH.**

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth." The truth cannot free one from sin unless one knows, understands, and believes it. Conversion to Christ is based upon knowledge, not upon ignorance and superstition. Many of the religions of the world for centuries and centuries

have been upon ignorance of divine truth, which has resulted in many superstitious practices. That is the reason why witchcraft has been so widespread in many lands and why so many have dealt in familiar spirits. That is the reason for the various forms of idolatry, the use of charms, amulets, and relics. That is the cause for all the human philosophies that have been introduced among men, only to fade with the passing of time. That is the underlying cause of every false system of religion on earth, that exists today, or that has ever existed. The religion of our Lord Jesus Christ is that which appeals to the intellect of man, as well as to the emotion and the will. All true religion—that, and only that, which has come from God, has always been based upon a knowledge of the divine will.

When Jesus Christ came into the world to save mankind, he came armed with eternal truth. He came clothed in truth, came with the words of truth, and came as a demonstration of truth. When the apostle John began to set forth the life of this great character, he said in Jno. 1:17 that “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” He realized that man could not be saved without it, and therefore, he came to reveal it to us. In Jno. 17:3, Jesus said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” This being true, it is imperative that we know the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. The Lord has made this possible. There is no one throughout all the land today who needs to remain in ignorance of that divine will of God. When Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the gospel, and a faithful preacher of it, he said in 1 Tim. 2:3-4, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God

our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." In 1 Tim. 4:3 we read of those who "believe and know the truth." In 1 Thes. 4:5 Paul speaks of the unsaved Gentiles as those "which know not God," and then says in 2 Thes. 1:7-9 that "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." How well do you know the Bible? How much knowledge do you have of that which is revealed to men through the holy apostles and prophets? If you have just read the Bible here and there along through your life, you don't KNOW it. If you have just merely read it through at some time or other during your lifetime, you are a long way from *knowing* the truth of God. Remember, that Christ is going to take vengeance on all them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are going to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. If you don't know the Bible, you had better leave off your television, all your newspapers, your novels, your books of science, and everything else, until you learn it. This is a serious matter, and you are in grave danger of losing your soul. There are thousands of people who can name the movie stars, the baseball players, the famous race horses, the boxing champions, and outstanding characters in other sports, who do not even know the names of the Lord's apostles, and cannot even name the books of the Bible. Why would you send your soul to eternal hell by filling your mind with

a knowledge of everything else except that which God has given for the salvation of your soul? Don't wait till tomorrow to concern yourself about the truth. Start now!

These passages that we have just cited, and many others, emphasize the importance of knowing the truth of God. After the death and resurrection of Christ, he gave a charge to his disciples, telling them to "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Then he said further, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The object of this teaching is to instruct men in the truth of God that they might be free from sin. One who has never heard the gospel of Christ cannot be saved in that untaught condition, for he does not know God; and Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they might know thee, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." There is not very much teaching in a lot of the preaching that is being done, but the object of Christ in sending out his disciples was that the world might be *taught*. Every sermon that is preached must be truth founded, truth bounded, and truth centered. Sermons that are calculated to arouse the emotion only, or to appeal to one's sense of humor, or to entertain, are not gospel sermons. They will not lead people out of sin and to the Lamb of God which taketh the sin of the world. Any preacher who does not address himself to the intellect of man with divine truth, as well as to his sensibility and his will, needs himself to be filled with the truth and then have the love for it to speak it at all times. The preacher who does not know the truth should learn it, and the one who knows it should speak it. And the one

who knows it should never allow himself to be kept by a love for popularity, by position, nor fame, nor by the fear of man, from preaching it in its fullness.

The first time the gospel of Christ was ever preached after his death and resurrection, Peter referred to the events foretold in the prophecy of Joel in connection with the coming of Christ, and said: "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," (Acts 2:21). But men have to be taught before they can do this. God did not intend that men should call upon him in ignorance, but that they should be well taught and call upon him in truth. In Rom. 10:13-17 reference is made again to this same thing. There, the scripture says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But then the apostle asks, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Infidels do not call upon the Lord for anything. It is only people who believe in him. Then the apostle continues by saying. It is only people who believe in him. Then the apostle continues by saying, "And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Never in the annals of history have people ever come to believe in one of whom they have never heard. Then the writer goes on to say, "And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring good tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This all adds up to the fact that one cannot call upon the Lord to the salva-

tion of his soul without knowing the truth.

When Philip was sent by the Lord to the eunuch from Ethopia, as recorded in Acts 8:26-40, he said, "Understandest thou what thou readeſt?" He realized that the Eunuch could not obey the will of God unless he understood the truth. The eunuch did not understand what he was reading, so he invited Philip to come up and sit with him and teach him the truth. The record says that Philip, "opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached to him Jesus." As Philip taught, the eunuch listened. He came to understand that which was revealed by God through these inspired men. Understanding the truth, he believed it. Believing it, he stopped immediately to obey it. He 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 is the way this man was made free from sin by coming to know the truth. A sinner cannot be made free from sin by the truth unless he knows enough to believe in Christ as his only Savior, repent of his sins, and he baptized for the remission of sins. This is also taught rather forcefully in Acts 2:38.

In John 6:44-45, Jesus teaches that God draws the

sinner to Christ, but shows that this drawing is done by the power of truth, and not by some miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit on the sinner's heart. He says, "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." Jesus distinctly says that the only ones who can come to him are those who have been taught the truth. This certainly disproves the theory that God will appear suddenly to the sinner by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit and "speak to his soul" when the sinner has never heard the truth and does not know it. Conversion is based on an understanding of what God has said, and until men learn the truth they can never be saved. In Eph. 5:17, Paul said, "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Men must put forth an effort to understand the will of the Lord, and He has made it possible for all men to know it. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Let us look now at the word "TRUTH" in this passage. It is "truth," not error, that frees one from sin. Pilate asked Jesus one day, "What is truth?" as recorded in Jn. 18:38. With a lot of people, Truth is simply what "we teach," or, "what we believe." All people like to think of themselves as having the truth, and all who differ with them as being in error. The "truth" that Jesus speaks of is not something that men have arrived at through a process of reasoning, nor what any one may "think" even though learned he may be. We must let the Bible tell us what the Lord meant by "truth." In Jn. 1:17 we are told that "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by

Jesus Christ." Therefore, we are left to conclude that the truth is the gospel of Christ as distinguished from the law of Moses. In Heb. 1:2 we are told that the scripture says that God "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds". It must come to us then from Christ in order to free us from our sins. He said in Jn. 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." We look then to him and his gospel rather than to Moses and the Law for freedom from sin. The truth is that whole system of Christianity that is revealed to us in the New Testament. Heb. 9:15 says that "he is the mediator of the new testament," and to it alone we must go for the truth on how to be saved and how to worship God. When I say that we must go to Christ for the truth, I do not mean that we have to take a red letter Testament and pick out only the words spoken by him in person in order to get the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He sent out his apostles as his ambassadors, and they said, "We pray you in Christ stead; be ye reconciled to God." He sent the Holy Spirit to them who was to "receive" from Christ and "show it unto them," we are told in Jn. 16:13-14. All that the apostles and prophets in the early church taught came from Christ, and therefore, is truth.

The whole system given by Christ is known as the "gospel," just as the system given by Moses was called the "law." In this alone, the truth is found that Jesus spoke of. In Gal. 2:5, Paul said, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Then in v. 14 he said, "When I say that they walked not uprightly

according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" The gospel, in both of these passages, is spoken of as "the truth."

In John 17:17 is a statement that Christ himself said about what truth is. He said, "Father, sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth." Often times one is heard to say with reference to some religious group, "They come nearer teaching the Bible than anybody I know of," or, "I believe they are nearer the truth than anybody else." That is not good enough for one to be "near" to teaching the Bible—IT MUST BE THE BIBLE. It is not good enough for one to be "near the truth." The thing that we teach must BE THE TRUTH. It is the truth only if found in the word of God; for Jesus said, "thy word is truth." When people say that their doctrine is "based on the Bible," that is an admission within itself that their doctrine is "based on the Bible," that is an admission within itself that their doctrine is NOT the Bible. It is merely *based* on the Bible. Anything taught in religion that is not set forth in the scripture itself is error.

God's word must be received into man's heart before he can become a child of God. James said in Jas. 1:18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." This is the same thing that Paul told the Corinthians, when he said in 1 Cor. 4:15, "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten

you through the gospel.” So when we preach the truth, we are preaching Christ, not Moses. We are preaching the gospel, not the law. We are preaching the word of God, not the doctrines and commandments of men. The word of God is found in the Book of God, while the doctrines and commandments of men are found in the Manuals, disciplines, and catechisms written by men growing out of the various religious assemblies. When we preach the gospel of Christ, the word of truth, we are preaching the only thing that will “beget” sinners so they may be born of water and the Spirit and enter into the kingdom of God. Human creeds will get men into churches of human origin, but the gospel of Christ alone will get one into the church of Christ, or kingdom of Christ. It is the only thing that will make one free from sin. Since this is true, why should one want to preach something other than the truth? Why should one wish to preach some human doctrine or tradition?

In Matt. 15:2 the Jews asked Jesus, “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.” Then Jesus said, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” Then in verse 9, he said, “But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” All their doctrines were supposed to be based on the scripture, but they WERE NOT SCRIPTURE. If adding a human element to the word of God will cause those who do it—those who teach it, and those who receive it, to be lost, why will one want to do it? Why would one’s ears ever itch for something else so that men will “turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables” as Paul said

in 2 Tim. 4:4? Why not be content with the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. This is sufficient. But unfortunately, people do not always have this proper attitude toward the truth. We are told in Rom. 1:18 of some "who hold the truth in unrighteousness," and in Rom. 1:25 of some "who changed the truth of God for a lie." That is what one does today when he accepts a human creed, enters a denomination of human origin, and worships according to human will instead of accepting the Bible only, being a member of the church that is in the Bible, and worshipping according to the will of God as expressed in His Book. These are the same as those who "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel," and are the same ones described in 2 Thes. 2:10-12 who "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." For all who do not receive this love of the truth, the apostle said, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." James said in Jas. 5:19 that there are some who "resist the truth;" and Paul said in 2 Tim. 3:8 that there are some who "shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." Then in Titus 1:14 we are told of some "that turn from the truth." This is not the fanciful thinking of warped and sectarian mind, but statements taken directly from the Bible itself. Realizing that God's wrath is upon those who thus reject his truth, we should be very careful lest we be among that number.

I appeal to every honest and sincere soul who had rather be saved in the end than to have all the praise of men in this world, to learn the truth, believe it, and

obey it. We are told in 2 Thes. 2:13 that "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." When we accept the truth of God, and believe it with all our heart, we can purify our hearts by obeying it. Peter said in 1 Pet. 1:22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." If we will believe and obey the truth; if we will love it, live by it, defend it when necessary and preach it to others, and die by its promises, we will have the assurance of heaven in the after awhile.

Now let us consider the FREEDOM FROM SIN through the truth. Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free." Freedom is what the sinner needs; for the scripture says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God", (Rom 3:23). The sinner is enslaved —bound—shackled—locked in, and need to be freed. Jesus said in Jn. 8:36, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Man cannot free himself, but the Son can. By his sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus has made this possible. No one was ever loosed from his sins until this was done, and no one will ever be released from his sins until he comes under the power of the blood of the cross. When John began his record of the Revelation, he said, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins in his own blood," (Rev. 1:4-5).

Man comes under the power of the blood of Christ only through obeying the truth. He must learn it, believe it, and obey it. If one does not accept the truth of the gospel he cannot be saved. We are taught in the word of truth that when one believes in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, as recorded in Mark 16:16 and Acts:38, he will be freed from all past sins. Listen to what the apostle Paul says further in Rom. 6:17-18, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sins, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." This verse forever settles the matter of when one is freed from sins. It is when one obeys from the heart the word of truth. That truth must be preached to the sinner. He must learn it, believe it, and obey it. Then by walking in the truth each day, being faithful in service to God, we have the exceeding great and precious promises of it to enjoy. Do you believe it? Have you obeyed it? Are you endeavoring to live by it? If not, I urge you to start today that when this short life is over you may enter into the realm of the saved.

RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is generally thought of as that system of religion given to us by Jesus Christ. That includes the church that he built, the doctrine he taught, the worship he ordained, and the principles of life and conduct set forth in his law. While it is true that the Lord intended for all this to remain unaltered from the time he gave it until he comes again, we know that men have

not always held these things as they were given in the beginning.

When Jesus said in Matt. 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," he was by no means saying that the church he built would never fall away, that men would never depart from his law, from the worship he ordained, and the principles of life and conduct he gave. He simply meant that even though he must die, and his spirit go into hades, it would not prevail to prevent his building the church. With other men, death and hades would prevent anything they undertook to do. But not so with the Lord. Even though he knew he was going to die, he said he would build his church anyway. In fact, it was necessary that he die in order to build it. His blood was to be the price of it. His blood was to be the cleansing power of it, and without the shedding of his blood there could have been no cleansing from sin in it. It was necessary for him to die and be raised again from the dead in order that he might become the living head of it. After his death and resurrection, he said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death," Rev. 1:18. No, hades did not prevail to prevent his building the church; and the apostle said in Eph. 1:20-23 that he was made the head of it when God raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places. He is a head over whom death has no power. Paul said in Rom. 6:9, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." But to say that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" means that all that what the Lord gave would remain unchanged among men

through all the ages, is a gross misapplication of the passage. We know that the church the Lord built *did* fall away after it was built, and I want to talk to you today about the restoration of it.

There are a number of passages in the Bible which suggest to us the need of restoring New Testament Christianity. Just as that which God gave to Israel in the past needed restoring, there is the same need for restoring that which the Lord gave through his holy apostles. God gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed as an everlasting possession. He gave them a law to govern them when they came into that land, and a system of worship in which they should serve him. In the process of time, they transgressed the law that God gave, and changed the worship he gave. They departed so far from what God gave that they were led away captive into Babylon. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the temple was destroyed. But that did not mean that all that God gave was forever gone. He said in Jer. 29:12-14, "Ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith Jehovah, and will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Jehovah; and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." He had already said in Jer. 27:22, "They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be, until the day that I visit them, saith Jehovah; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place." There *was* a need of restoration among them. That restoration was made when they were returned to their own land and built

again the walls of Jerusalem, and the temple, and restored the temple worship.

In the beginning of Christ's personal ministry on earth, he gave the sermon on the mount, recorded in Matt. 5, 6 and 7. In this, he laid down the principles upon which the kingdom that he came to establish was to rest. This is sometimes referred to as the constitution of the kingdom. But he did not conclude that sermon without a warning against false prophets who would lead men away from all that he gave. He said in Matt. 7 :15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Now, surely, the Lord would not have given such warning if there were no danger of their being led away.

After the church was established, the apostles warned repeatedly against departing from the faith that was once for all given to the saints, and predicted a falling away of the church. In 2 Thes. 2:1-10, Paul warned of such falling away before Christ comes again. He said, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Then he went ahead and told what the son of perdition would do, and just how far he would go in opposing all that God has given. He said, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." Then he said, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he

who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

From this, we learn, first of all, that there was to be a **FALLING AWAY**. Next, the man of sin was to be revealed. He was revealed **AS** the church fell away. Then, we are told how the man of sin would come among the disciples—"with power and signs and lying wonders." Then, last of all, we are told that his coming would be "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, who receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." This is a pretty ugly picture that is painted of what would happen to New Testament Christianity. Not only are we told in the scripture that there would be a falling away of the church; but Paul said in 1 Tim. 4:1-3 that "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." It does not take unusual powers of perception to see that these conditions have long since developed. There has been a general departure from the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints, and many faiths

of human origin have come in instead. "Forbidding to marry" among religious leaders has been a practice for centuries now. "Commanding to abstain from meats" on certain days has been a widespread practice for centuries, and our children in public schools have been denied meats on Friday for a long time in deference to this unholy and godless system of religion that has risen up to supplant the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jude spoke of this situation in the 4th verse of his short epistle in these words: "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle John said in 1 Jn. 4:1-3 that there were many false prophets gone out into the world with the spirit of antichrist. In 2 Cor. 11:13-15, the apostle spoke of "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." Then he said, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers be transformed as the the ministers of righteousness." From these passages of scripture, we know that all men who claim to be preachers of the truth, are not preaching the truth. Satan has his ministers who are transformed into ministers of righteousness.

Not only was there to be a falling away of the church, a departure from the faith once for all delivered to the saints, but it was to come through preachers who claimed to be preaching the Lord's gospel. The scripture says further that the falling away would come through the leadership of the church. Paul said to the elders at Ephesus, "I know this, that after my departing

shall greivous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them," (Acts. 20:29-30). Now, just as surely as these prophecies were given, just that surely must we look for the fulfillment of them. And when those prophecies are fulfilled, and the church is fallen away, there must of necessity be a restoration of New Testament Christianity if it is to ever exist again upon the earth as it was in the beginning. I believe those scriptures have been fulfilled, that the church of our Lord did fall away, that there has been a departure from the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, and that New Testament Christianity does need to be restored.

I want to give you now in brief the history of the apostasy of the church, the development of ecclesiasticism, and the rise of denominationalism, thus necessitating a restoration movement. Of all ecclesiastical histories to which I have had access, I consider Dr. John Lawrence Von Mosheim the most accurate, and fairest minded, of them all. He is recognized in all quaters as a scholar, and an authority in his field. In giving us a history of the Christian religion since the days of the apostles, he says, in Vol. 1, p. 16, of his euridite work, "The calamitous events which have befallen the church, arose either from the fault of Christians, or from the malace and stratagems of their adversaries. There is abundant evidence that Christians themselves, and especially those who presided in the church, have brought much evil upon the body by their negligence, their unholy lives, and their strifes and contentions. The enemies of Christ's kingdom were also either public or

private men. Public enemies, namely, kings and magistrates, by their laws and penalties, obstructed the progress of Christianity. Private men, the philosophers, the idol-worshippers, and the despisers of all religion, assailed the church with false accusation, stratagems, and hostile writings." He says, "The internal history of the Christian church, treats of the changes of which the church in every age has been exposed, in regard to its distinguishing characteristics as a religious society. It may not unsuitably be called the history of the Christian religion. The causes of these internal changes are found, for the most part, in the rulers of the church. These often explained the principles and precepts of Christianity to suit their own fancy or convenience. And as some acquiesced and were submissive, while others frequently resisted, divisions and contentions were the consequence."

Soon after the death of the apostles, drastic changes began to be made in the Christian religion. The changes were made to appeal to the religious world all around them. Dr Mosheim says, "The simplicity of the ancient worship of the church was a cause of hostility on the part of the Romans." He says, "Another cause of the Roman hostility to Christianity, was, that the Christian worship had none of the things that were common to all other religions. For the Christians offered no sacrifices, and had no temples, no statues, no oracles, no order of priesthood; and the inconsiderate multitude deemed those who were without these, to be destitute of all religion, or to be atheists; and by the Roman laws, atheists were regarded as the pests of human society." The Christians were not satisfied to maintain the simplicity of the system given by Christ and soon began to

add a number of things that Christ did not give at all. Paul had expressed a fear that something like this might happen, and said in 2 Cor. 11:3, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Now, the very thing that Paul feared was beginning to happen. They first changed the leadership. In the beginning, there was a plurality of elders in every church. There were the overseers of it. That was the system that God ordained. But little by little, they began to elevate one elder above the others, and call him the bishop, while the others were simply known as elders. The one designated as "bishop" assigned to the others their various tasks and sought their counsel on things. This was the step that finally led to the office of pope.

In commenting on the history of the church in the second century, Dr. Mosheim says, "The form of church government which began to exist in the preceding century, was in this century more industriously established and confirmed, in all its parts. One president, or bishop, presided over each church. He was created by the common suffrage of the whole people. With the presbyters for his council, whose number was not fixed, it was his business to watch over the interests of the whole church, and to assign to each presbyter his station," (Vol. 1: P. 116). The next step then was for the church to start having area wide meetings. And we are told that "in process of time, it became customary for all the Christian churches within the same province, to unite and form a sort of larger society of commonwealth; and in the manner of confederated republics, to hold their conventions at stated times, and there deliberate for

the common advantage of the whole confederation." When these councils, or synods, began to operate, laws were agreed upon, and they began to make the rules for the church. They were assuming the authority that Christ gave only to the apostles. With that failure to respect the authority of Christ and the apostles, human laws in religion began to multiply.

In the second century also came the origin of priests, and the introduction of rites and ceremonies in the Christian religion. To make it more glammorous, they conceived the idea of making the one whom they hand designated "bishop" comparable to the high priest in Judiasim, and those whom they referred to as "presbyters" comparable to the common priests under the law of Moses. With this came the clerical dress. Next, religious rites and ceremonies began to be added. Dr. Mosheim says, "It is certain that to religious worship, both public and private, many rites were added, without necessity and to the great offence of sober and good men." The Lord's Supper was changed into a sacrifice, and Easter was introduced as a substitute for the pass-over in the Jewish religion. The Lord's Supper was never intended as a sacrifice, nor something to be administered to another. And there is no such thing as an Easter observance in the system given by Christ and the apostles.

In the third century there was an approximation toward monarchy in the church. By this time there was one bishop in each province who had gained pre-eminence over the others in rank. This was necessary for maintaining that consociation of churches that had been

introduced. This drive for power among the bishops continued until there were finally three who claimed jurisdiction over the whole Christian world. They were the bishops of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. At this time, celibacy was introduced into the priesthood, and finally, marriage was forbidden among them altogether.

In the fourth century came the first general, or ecumenical, council. This was held in Nice, in Bythnia in 325 A.D., and it was here that the first thirteen canonical laws were written, and the so called "Apostles Creed" was formulated. It was here that the name Catholic was given. The foundation was now laid for the whole papal system, and for the human laws in religion, that has resulted in the great host of denominations and denominational creeds that exist today. By the year 606 A.D., one man had been elevated over the whole church throughout the world, and given the title of "Pope" and thought of as possessing the powers of God, and speaking with the voice of God. He was thought of as having power to forgive sins. The worship of images, relics, and statues was also introduced in this century. By this time, there was not a shadow of the ancient form of church government and worship found on the earth. The church had completely fallen away, and there had been a complete departure from the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. If there was ever a need for anything in the world, it was a need then for restoring to the world the church as it was in the days of the apostles. But since the Bible very definitely says that the falling away was the work of Satan, does it not stand to reason that his ministers would contend that Christianity does not need restoring?

Men had departed so far from all that God had given that the public was not allowed a copy of the holy Bible. It became an offense punishable by death for one to be found in possession of a Bible. The darkest age in human history resulted. But so great became the desire for men to know the truth again that men risked their lives to get the Bible back into the hands of the people. John Wicliff, who died in 1384, made fifty charges against the Romish church and was excommunicated. But before he died, he finished a translation of the Bible into the English language. William Tyndale, the great reformer of the 16th century, brought out his first addition of the New Testament; but it was purchased by the bishops of London and burnt. His second addition met the same fate. While preparing his second addition of the whole Bible after 1532, he was seized and burnt. Martin Luther in Germany opposed the corruptions in the church that had apostatized and was opposed vigorously by the Pope and other leaders of the church of Rome. In 1517 he nailed his ninety-five theses, protesting against errors in the established religion, to the door of the All-Saints Church, in Wittenburg Germany and a bull was issued against him by the Pope in 1520. A public confession of faith was written up by him and presented to the diet of Augsburg; and thus, in 1530 the Lutheran Church had its formal beginning. Following his lead, a number of other reformers started movements which resulted in a great host of denominational churches. Henry the 8th began the church of England in 1533, and John Calvin the Presbyterian Church in 1535. According to Mosheim's Ecclesiastical history, Vol. 3, p. 219, John Smyth is represented as the father of the sect known as the General Baptist. He died in 1610. Since that time, the sect originating with

him has divided into some eighteen different branches. Then in the 18th century, Charles and John Wesley became the founders of the Methodist Church, which began in 1721. It likewise, has divided into many branches, as is true also of the Presbyterian movement.

Finally, men in those various sects began to recognize the need of going back to the Bible as their sole guide in religion and restoring to the world the church as it was in the days of the apostles. They believed that all sects had gone out of the apostolic way, and were for that reason, hostile to each other; and more particularly to the Bible. They believed a complete return to the Bible to be the only safe thing for man to do. They believed that when they taught as conditions of salvation, just those things that were taught by the apostles, that they would stand where the apostles stood. They believed that when men obeyed the commands of God, as found in the Testament of Christ, they would be saved and be a part of the church that the Lord said he would build. They believed that if men would do in worship just those things directly stated in the N. T. that their worship would be pure. They believed that all people who obeyed the commands of God should be called "Christians" to the exclusion of all other religious names of human origin. They believed that when all this was done, the church would be restored again as it was in the days of the apostles. That is why the church of Christ exists again in the world today. It is not a new church that has sprung up within the past two centuries, but the church that was on earth when the apostles of our Lord were directing the affairs of it, that has now been restored. Our plea today is for all men who want to serve God in truth to return to the Bible and do

nothing, and be nothing, but what we can read in the Bible.

WHAT SHALL THE END BE?

As the apostle Peter thought upon the severe trials and struggles through which the Christian must pass, and the unconcern of the disobedient about doing the will of God, he was constrained to interpose a question regarding their final destiny. Perhaps for emphasis, the question is put from two different standpoints. In 1 Pet. 4:17-18 he said, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

This is a good question for all people to think upon. It will do anyone good to sit down and think seriously and soberly about what his end shall be. That is one of the things in the scripture that is calculated to break down the stubbornness of man's heart that holds him in rebellion against God. Christ frequently referred to the end of things when man would meet with God in judgment and receive the reward of his labors here on earth. Many of the parables that he spoke pointed to that great day and what the end of man would be. He also spoke directly of judgment and the eternal destiny of man. The apostles likewise made frequent reference to the destiny of man beyond judgment. They sought by this means to arrest the attention of their hearers and get them to consider the course they were pursuing.

When Paul addressed the free thinkers of the proud

city of Athens and told them about Jehovah God, he said that "He hath appointed a day, in 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." That was known as one of the world's greatest centers of learning. They liked to think of themselves as a center of culture. They spent their time either hearing or telling some new thing. But they were wholly given to idolatry. And the apostle wanted them to know that even with all their learning and philosophical speculation, with all their culture, and all the religious forms among them, they must stand before the God of all the earth one day in judgment to answer for the life they had lived; that he, and he alone, would have the power to assign them to their eternal destiny.

When Paul was a prisoner in the hands of Felix, a Roman governor, Felix had him brought in that he might hear him concerning the faith that is in Christ. Paul always kept his mission in mind as a Christian and a preacher of the gospel; and that is, to change the course of men and save them from the eternal consequences of sin. So he made a determined effort to change the life of this governor and save his soul. Luke said he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." He wanted Felix to know that when his life was over, he must stand before God in judgment. As Felix's mind ran hurriedly back over his sinful life, and was challenged with the thought of having to answer to God one day for all the things he had done, the scripture says he trembled. If he had not put the thought of judgment immediately out of his mind, his course of life might have been changed and his destiny secured.

The city of Corinth in southern Greece was a very licentious place. It was full of immorality and corruption. After the church of the Lord had been planted there and many had turned from this corruption to be cleansed in the blood of Christ, the apostle found it extremely difficult to keep immorality and the forces of corruption out of the church. As a warning to them, and to all Christians everywhere, Paul wrote and said, "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." It is truly a sobering thought when one is tempted to do evil, to remember that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in our body, whether good or bad. Many things would be left off and lives would be changed if one would think of the judgment every time he is tempted to do evil. The Hebrew Christians were told in Heb. 9:27 that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." And then in the last chapter of the Bible, we are given this solemn warning by Christ himself just before the Book is closed, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be," Rev. 22:12. God would not have given this warning so many times in the Bible if it were not for the tremendous effect it is calculated to have on men in shaping their lives and molding their destiny.

In the question asked by the apostle Peter, he wanted them to think upon the end to which their present course would lead. He wanted them to think about what would happen to those who fail to obey the gospel of God—what they could expect to receive

in the end. In the first place, he makes a distinction between those in "the house of God" and those "who obey not the gospel of God." They are two different groups of people. Those who obey not the gospel of God, according to the apostle, are not in the house of God. This is evident to all who read the scripture. There is no theory nor speculation about it. With far too many people, being a Christian simply means belonging to some church. But that is not the way it is in the Bible. According to the Bible one becomes a Christian when he obeys the gospel of Christ. That is when he enters the "house of God," or the church. If your idea of Christianity is that of just belonging to something, I would say that you have failed to grasp the true meaning of it. Any conception of Christianity other than that of a whole-hearted obedience to the gospel of God is too low a conception of it. The line is drawn clearly and distinctly by inspiration between those who obey not the gospel and those in the house of God.

In 1 Tim. 3:15, the "house of God" is called the church of the living God. Paul said "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Then since those who "obey not the gospel of God" are not in "the house of God," they are not in the church. The inevitable conclusion is, that one enters "the house of God," or the church, by obeying the gospel. And there is no other way. In Col. 1:24 we are told that the church is the body of Christ. Paul said, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." So, those who "obey not

the gospel of God" are not in Christ. They are, therefore, without the blessings of God in him. They are cut off from the benefits of the blood of the Son of God that was shed for the remission of sins, and by which man is redeemed in Christ. For the scripture tells us that it is IN him that we have this benefit. Listen to the reading of it in Eph. 1:7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." This is what one misses when he "obeys not the gospel of God." He is at enmity with God, separated from Him, and out of his favor. The same writer says in the 12th verse of the following chapter that he is without God and without hope in the world. This means eternally separated from him in the end. But this condition is all changed for the one who obeys the gospel of Christ and is brought into Christ by that obedience. It is then and there that he is reconciled to God and realsed from the guilt and penalty of sin. In 2 Cor. 5:19 it is stated like this: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Then in Paul's second letter to Timothy, he spoke of the necessity of being in Christ in order to be saved. He said in 2 Tim. 2:10, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Thus, again the necessity of obeying the gospel is set forth; or without it one cannot be in Christ, and without being in Christ there is no salvation. In 1 Jn. 5:11 it is approached yet from another standpoint; and that is, from the standpoint of being in Christ to have eternal life. There the apostle said, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in

his son." All in the world are spoken of in the scripture as "being dead in trespasses and sins." It is in Christ Jesus that one is made alive from the dead, and it is through obeying the gospel that one reaches this state. God has provided for us rich blessings through his Son, but according to Eph. 1:3, they cannot be obtained elsewhere. There is not one blessing for the soul of man that can be enjoyed until he enters that state. There the apostle said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." And as if that were not enough to induce man to obey the gospel of the Lord, where he can obtain all blessings of a spiritual nature, the matter is climaxed in 2 Cor. 1:20 where we are told that all the promises of God are in Christ. A knowledge of these things should cause every sober-minded person on earth to want to hasten to obey the gospel of God at the earliest possible moment.

The question of *how* one may become a member of the Lord's church, or how to be saved has bothered a great many people, for so many things are being taught by religious people on this question that the minds of many are confused. But the way to be saved, is the way to enter the church. Or, the way to get into the church, is the way to be saved. Since it is the Lord's church that we read about in the Bible, we would naturally expect Him to tell us in the Bible how to get into it. And since he is the one who has provided salvation for us, naturally we expect Him to tell us how we may obtain it. Since the scriptures that we have just read tell us that the blessings of salvation are in Christ, or the church; and since the scripture distinguishes between those who "obey not the gospel of God," and

those in "the house of God;" we are left to the inevitable conclusion that we become members of the Lord's church and are saved by obeying the gospel. It is the means by which we enter the church, and the means by which we are saved. If you have been led to believe that one can be saved by faith only, I am sure that you can see that it is wholly out of line with the scriptures that have been cited. I hope you will not be deceived longer by it, but that you will arise and obey the Lord today that all the promises he gives to the obedient may be yours to enjoy.

As we consider this matter from the second standpoint approached by the apostle Peter, we observe that those in "the house of God" are referred to as "the righteous" and those who "obey not the gospel" as "the ungodly and the sinner." If that were merely a designation of my own, you might think me to be dogmatic, narrow, and unkind. But since that is the way it is put by an inspired apostle, we cannot question the truth, nor the spirit of it. There are really not too many people in the world who think of themselves as being "ungodly" and "sinners" just simply because they are not members of the Lord's church, or because they have not obeyed the Lord's gospel. But when we look at the situation through the eyes of God, that is the way it appears. All that we might say about it to the contrary, and all that we might do to change it, will not change the picture one iota in the sight of God. And since only the righteous will go away from judgment into life eternal, according to the words of Christ himself found in Matt. 25:46, it behooves us to get right with God and become righteous in His sight that we may enter with him into the home of the blessed. Peter speaks in this

passage only of the salvation of the righteous.

The righteous person is the one who obeys the will of God—the one who obeys his commands. David said in his day, “My tongue will sing of thy word, for all thy commandments are righteousness,” (Ps. 119:172). So to be righteous, we must obey the commands of the Lord. That is the reason Jesus was baptized. Despite the fact that people tell us that he was just baptized as an example to us, the Bible speaks differently about it. Jesus tells us in his own words. When he came to John to be baptized of him, “John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” Listen now to what Jesus said about it. “Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness,” (Matt. 3:14-15). God had commanded it, and all His commandments are righteousness. Jesus fulfilled righteousness in obeying God. Why should one think today that he can be righteous before God without obeying the command to be baptized when it was necessary for Jesus to do it?

The gospel was preached the first time to Gentiles when Peter went into the house of Cornelius to tell him “words whereby he, and all his house might be saved.” When Peter went into his house, he said in Acts 10:34, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.” This was a way of telling him that men of all nations must obey the commandments of God to be accepted of Him. This, Cornelius had expressed a willingness to do, when he told Peter that, “Now are we all here present before

God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." In the 48th verse of that chapter, the scripture says Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." As Jesus was baptized to fulfill the righteousness of God, Cornelius is commanded to do the same thing. The apostle John also adds a word to this by saying in 1 Jn. 3:7, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." He is saying in effect, that everyone who obeys the commands of God is righteous in His sight. All this is but further evidence of the necessity of obeying the gospel.

Sinners are those who have transgressed God's law—those who are not obedient to Him. This may be done by trampling God's commands under one's feet and running over them to do things that are forbidden, or by simply sitting down and failing to do that which God enjoins. In 1 Jn. 3:4 the scripture says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." It makes no difference what the nature of the transgression is—whether negative, or positive, transgression is sin. And the one who sins is a sinner. There are things that God commands men to do, as well as things that he commands men not to do. To fail to do a thing that He commands is as wicked as doing a thing He commands one not to do. James said in Jas. 4: 17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." In either case, he has disrespected the authority of God. He has transgressed his law. He is a sinner. And he remains a sinner until his rebellion ceases and he obeys God from the heart and becomes a servant of righteousness. In Rom. 6:17-18, Paul said, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the

heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Then Peter said in 1 Pet. 1:22 that the soul is made pure in obeying the truth. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Perhaps there will be as many people lost for not doing what God said as for flagrantly running over God's commands to do things that He forbids. Millions will be lost simply for failing to obey the gospel. Other millions will be lost for failing to do the works of God after entering into His vineyard. In Matt. 25:41-46 Jesus said those on his left hand in judgment would be cast into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels because they failed to feed the hungry and clothe the naked; because they failed to take in strangers, to visit the sick, and those in prison. It makes no difference what the reasons may be that one might give for not doing this, the Lord said he would spend eternity in the lake of fire with the devil and his angels. Brethren sit around and argue about whether it is right to do it this way or that; they argue about whether to do it individually, or collectively. They may argue about whether we are obligated in this case, or that; and how far our responsibility goes; about whether we should help saints only, or the needy everywhere—and while the brethren are arguing about it, the hungry go unfed, the naked unclothed; the stranger are left in the cold. Many are refusing to help the "stranger" at all because they feel "obligated" to help the saints only. But the hell that is prepared for the devil and his angels will be occupied by those who fail in these things. Everyone

who has stopped caring for the needy, or has never started, but is spending his time arguing about the ways it can't be done, should stop and think *now* about what his fate will be for failing to do the works of God.

The ungodly are those who are ungodlike. After being made in the image and likeness of God, man has been changed by sin. When man became ungodlike by reason of his sin, he was driven out of Paradise and could no longer dwell in the presence of God. Before man can ever have the privilege of coming again into that divine presence and enjoying a blessed communion with him, he must be freed from sin and be made partaker of divine nature. Peter said in 2 Pet. 1:3-4, "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: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." This is achieved only through man's obedience. Jesus said again, in the close of the Bible, as recorded in Rev. 22:14, "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."

The gospel of the Son of God is the power by which one escapes the corruption that is in the world through lust, that is spoken of by Peter, and by which one is made righteous. In Rom. 1:16 the apostle said, "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." Then he said, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." It

is on this gospel that all of one's hope of heaven rests. In Col. 1:3-5, the apostle of the Lord said, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye have heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel."

From this, the answer to the apostle's question seems clear when he said, "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" But that we have made no mistake in the things presented, we shall see from a single passage found in 2 Thes. 1:7-9, and already referred to in this lesson, where the writer said, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his might angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." That is a terrible end for those who have not concerned themselves about obedience to the Lord's gospel. It is a matter too important to trifle with. Your soul and all eternity is at stake. You should make no delay at all in learning all about the gospel that you can obey from the heart. Keep it always in memory and stand in it at all times. Be faithful to God in all its requirements and the promise of it will sustain you in life, comfort you in death, and enrich your soul with the blessings of life eternal in a world that is fairer than this.

THE BIBLE

In Heb. 10:7 there is a statement concerning Jesus that I would like to read at this time. It says, "Lo, I come (in the volume of this book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." In this statement, Jesus doubtless referred to the Book of God, the Bible. Of course, it consisted at that time only of what we call today "The Old Testament." Since that time, the Testament of Christ has been written and is a part of great Book. It is truly the greatest of all books, and is regarded so throughout the world. When Sir Walter Scott, that great Scottish poet, was approaching death, he said, "Bring me the Book." Knowing that he had written many books, and had read many others, they enquired, "Which book, sir?" He replied, "The Book. There is but one Book." We may enjoy reading and studying books of history, science, and literature—fiction and poetry, when we are well and hearty; but when stricken by the hand of disease and we are faced by the grim monster of death, there is only one Book that will be of particular interest to us, and that is the Bible, the Book of books.

The Bible is sufficient in all matters of religion, and will make the man of God perfect. In it, we find all things that pertain to life and godliness. Listen to what the writers of it say along that line. In 2 Tim. 3:16-17 the apostle said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Another apostle said in 2 Pet. 1:3, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." These pass-

ages have reference to that which is in the Bible, and that alone. It has reference to things given in the days of these apostles, and necessarily invalidates every claim made for the inspiration of such modern prophets as Mrs Ellen G. White, Charles Russell, and Joseph Smith, Jr. The claims of Seventh Day adventism, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons are all in direct conflict with the statements made by these men whose inspiration has been definitely established. All these religions claim inspiration for their writings, yet they are all opposed to each other, and to the Bible. May I suggest to you that you take the Bible for what it claims to be—the Book of God, until its claims are proven to be false, and accept the finality of it as its writers suggested. Reject all others as fraud and base the salvation of your soul upon that which is known to be genuine.

When it comes to knowledge, let me suggest further that there is not one thing that any living being knows about heaven or hell, about the Holy Spirit, God, Christ, or angels, about the great beyond toward which all of us are rapidly passing but what he has learned either directly or indirectly from the Bible itself. I am sure that you accept this Book as divine; and that you recognize that the very foundation of our country and the civilization of which we are a part today, rests upon our faith, confidence, respect, and reverence for the word of the Living God.

Let us look for a moment at the antiquity of it. There are other books that claim to antedate it, but their claims have been weighed and found extremely doubtful. The Bible records events from creation down to about the end of first century of this dispensation in

which we live. Many things reported in it transpired long before the pyramids were ever built along the River Nile. The songs of David and Solomon had been sung and these men gone to their reward, before the poets of Greece gave the account of the Trojan War and the wanderings of Ulysses. Many books of the Bible were complete before the first public library was ever built in that old, historic city of Athens. The prophets from Isaiah to Malachi had given their vision of future events before the philosophies of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were ever given. Two thousand years have passed now since the pen of inspiration was forever laid down, and yet, the Bible is as applicable to us as it was to the people of the first century when it came fresh from the hand of God.

The character of the writings of the Bible is also of great interest because of the peculiar and unique features of them. The Bible is a library within itself. It is a collection of 66 books, penned by some forty different writers over a period of about 1600 years. These men were not surrounded by the advantages that characterize our modern times, with all of our equipment and facilities for learning, but they were descendants of a people who had been in bondage for hundreds of years, whose lives were burdened, and whose tasks were exceeding difficult. They came out of bondage by the hand of God under the leadership of Moses and wandered for forty years in the wilderness. Under the leadership of Joshua they crossed the Jordan, drove out the enemy, and took possession of the land that God had promised to their fathers as an everlasting possession. Untutored and untrained, not a literary people, and scattered over a period of 1600 years, writing about the same events,

they wove their productions together into one complete volume without a single contradiction or discrepancy. The Jews have never been known as a literary people, and outside of the history written by Josephus, there is scarcely a book that they have produced that occupies first rank in the literature of the world. As a nation, they have disintegrated and been scattered to the four quarters of the earth. Their very name has become a byword among many people; and yet, they have lived and given to the world a book that is found in every civilized land under the broad expanse of the heavens, that occupies the first place, and challenges the sincerest thought of the best of all the earth. There is only one way that this fact may be accounted for: They were the people of God and He guided them in writing the Book.

People sometimes ask about the Bible in connection with science. They wonder about its scientific value, whether it is reliable, and whether it will stand the test of scientific investigation. It was never intended as a treatise on science as such, but it can be said without fear of successful contradiction, that of all the books ever scanned by mortal man, it is the only one ever written of which every word is dependable and absolutely reliable. There is not a real scientific principle known that is in violation of or contradictory to the word of God. People through the ages have sought to find discrepancies, and endeavored to discount the Bible on the ground that it is contradicted by scientific research; but no proven fact has ever been found in violation of the statements of inspiration. Science is yet in its infancy, and the theories of yesterday are contradicted by those of today. Science changes with every

generation, and it is doubtful that a science book that is fifteen years old can be found on the shelves of any of the public schools. So why should one want to accept that instead of God's Book that has been tried by the keenest intellects of the earth and continues to pour forth from the press today at a more rapid rate than any other book that has ever been written? Pseudo-scientists will have one day run their course and reached their limits, and then real science and the Bible will set out on convergent lines and meet on the ground of accepted truth.

It is a historic fact that the civilization of every land has had to go back, despite the claims and progress of humanity, to the foundation laid by God in that wonderful document given by Moses, and upon which the governments of the earth rest as a foundation of adamant. In the special relationships of man to man, it should never be forgotten that we go back to the Sermon on the Mount to find the philosophy of life, and the centuries that have passed have failed to record an improvement upon those great principles. As for the chaotic condition that exists in the nations of the world today, there is this one star of hope. And that is, that when man in his boasted vanity has proven a failure; when the nations of the world have gone their limits; when men of every type come to themselves, and come to accept the golden rule laid down by the greatest of all teachers—set forth in the Bible, that we must do unto others as we would have them do unto us, then peace and tranquility, prosperity and happiness will reign.

The Bible, unlike all the books written by mere

men, does not become obsolete with the passing of the years. It, alone, remains unchanged. Due to the progress and learning of man, the text books used a few years ago are not found in the schoolrooms of today. How long has it been since you have seen the blue-back speller, or McGuffey's readers? Where are Smiley's arithmetics and Barnes' series of histories? The mutations of time have taken their toll, and our text-books today were unknown a generation ago. The textbooks on science in our schoolrooms today will give way tomorrow to those of different theories. The Bible knows no such change, and like a mountain spring from which our fathers drank, it is as pure and refreshing today as when it first went forth from the hand that penned it. It will continue to be such pure and comforting source of knowledge to the peoples yet unborn. Even though it treats of the most sublime problems known to man—of God and Christ, of heaven and hell, of salvation and redemption—it contains many things about the earth and the whole universe, and the passing centuries have never added a single thought to the statements found in it. Human progress cannot overtake it or get beyond it. When every generation arrives on the scene, it finds the Bible waiting for it with its vast storehouse of knowledge and wisdom touching everything that effects the welfare of mankind.

Another interesting characteristic of the Bible is, that unlike the books written by mere man, it can be translated into different languages and lose none of its beauty nor its power. Maybe this explains why the Greek and other classics of the past have remained in the language in which they were written. It has been demonstrated that a change to other tongues destroys

the strength and beauty of the writings and productions of man. But God's Book was intended for peoples of all languages, and it runs freely and smoothly into all of them. It has been translated into more than five hundred tongues and dialects, and yet it is so plain and clear in its declarations that when we read it we scarcely stop to think that we are reading a book penned in a language other than our own.

Here is another peculiar characteristic of the Bible. Of all the books that have ever been written, there has never been another that has incurred as much hatred from mortal man. Many books have been disliked, but they have only to be ignored and let alone for them to soon pass out of existence and be forgotten. But the Bible has had a persistent and murderous enemy on its trail from the beginning, trying to annihilate it and wipe it from the very face of the earth. Have you ever thought of the reason for such feeling toward the Bible? It has a supernatural enemy who has experienced its power, and ever since he was knocked out by Christ at the time of temptation with the forceful weapon, "It is written," the devil has marshaled all his forces to rid the world of that Sword of the Spirit.

Let us also notice this about the Bible. It draws an appalling picture of man. It does not picture his career as one of progress, and ever reaching toward holy realms; but it is the very reverse of that. It suggests his course as one of darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. It does not picture man as having come into adverse conditions of life by no fault of his own, nor does it represent him as using all the powers of his being in trying to overcome his situation. The Bible says in

Gen. 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The New Testament pictures man then after his departure from God as "being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful," (Rom. 1:29-31). It further describes him as having gone astray and walking according to the course of this world and according to the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. His wisdom is ridiculed and his deeds condemned. The Bible pictures him as without God and without hope. That is certainly not a very pretty picture of man, and the enemies of God have tried to destroy the book in which it is given.

The Bible is the only thing in all the world that claims to exercise absolute authority and dominion over man. That very claim is contrary to our disposition. We love to boast of our liberty, and our freedom; but God's word is the only thing that comes to us proposing to hold us accountable and amenable for our deeds and all our steps along the pathway of life. The Bible does not consult nor advise with us as to how we would like to have it; but it speaks with authority, and not on a plane or level with mankind. Its decrees are issued in the form of commandments and ordinances, and speaks in this language to kings and governors, to fathers and mothers, to masters and slaves, to the rich and the poor, to military men, educators, financiers, and all. The dis-

position of the world is to break these bonds and yield to its appetites and passions, its lusts and inclinations. If the enemies of the Bible could get rid of it, anarchy would reign and the freedoms as we know them today would be a thing of the past.

There has been a desire for world wide dominion on the part of various nations, and they have started out to subject the peoples of the earth. To accomplish this wicked design, they have first sought to destroy the Bible. The Germans, by legislative actions, drove the Bible out of their schoolrooms. They said, "We will train a generation of boys and girls, not under the influence of the God of the Bible, but under the influence of the god of war." And unless the Bible was driven out and eliminated from among them, the black crimes and atrocious deeds committed among them would never have been possible. The influence of their decrees reached this land of ours. German professors were sent out to every country on earth. Today the Bible and prayer are banned in our own schools and are not allowed in the public instruction of our youth. The Russian government, the Chinese, and every Communist regime on earth today has taken militant action against the Bible. These governments know that the only way they will be able to trample down the peoples of the earth, and carry out the atrocities connected with such quest, is to throw off all restraints imposed upon them by the holy scriptures, and they have sought the destruction of the Bible that these restraining powers may not be felt. I thank God today for the number of men that remain among us who are willing to uphold and defend the holy Bible, to educate people in its ways and press its claims, and offer to the hungry and be-

nighted peoples of the earth the exceeding great and precious promises found on its pages based upon acceptance of, and obedience to, it. As long as God's word stands and men respect it, no such outbreaks as we have mentioned are possible to a civilized people.

Not only has the devil and his cohorts sought to destroy the Bible by legislative enactment, but they have enlisted among their forces men of intellect and learning. Such men have said they would write it down. Voltaire boasted that, while it took twelve men to write it up, he would show the world that one man could write it down. He predicted that by the end of the century there would not be a copy of the Bible found. Then came Thomas Paine with his "Age of Reason." It spread like wildfire, and he boasted that within fifty years the Bible could be found only in museums of the earth. But these men passed way long ago and their works are forgotten; and the Bible shines forth in greater brilliance than in any age past. There is only one way this can be accounted for. The scripture says in Heb. 4: 12 that "The word of God is living and active." Christ said in Matt. 24:35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Again, the writers of the Bible say, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever", (1Pet. 1:24-25).

The grand object of the Bible is Jesus Christ. He had no special marks about him to distinguish and differentiate him from the rest of his fellows; but he him-

self, declared that he was LIFE. The greatest evidence of this was the fact that he was able to burst the bars of death and to rise triumphant over the powers of the grave and the Hadean world. The world sought to destroy him, but he arose over death, and said, "I am the living one; and was dead; and behold, I am alive evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death", (Rev. 1:18).

The Bible does not belong to any period, or to any age. It belongs to all classes of mankind and to every condition of life wherein humanity may dwell. It appeals to the common characteristics and impulses of every man and woman on earth. It comes to the humble, and those of contrite spirit, and to those of broken hearts and gives them hope. It comes to every one, whatever his station in life may be, and challenges the best thought of his being. In spite of the attacks of pagans, infidels, philosophers, and the pseudo-scientists, the Bible still stands against all such, and is more widely read and influenced more people than any other book in all the world.

Since the immortal truths of God's Book were penned, many changes have been wrought among the nations. The once lordly Egypt has been forced to pass under the dominion of the foreign power. The orators, the poets, the painters, the sculptors, and the architects of the once glorious Greece have long since passed away, and their works have also yielded to the mutations of time. Imperial Rome arose to great power, and from the city of seven hills extended her reign and influence over the nations of the earth. But she, too, has bowed her head and faded away. The great empire carved by the ambitious Napoleon has long since passed

into the realm of the forgotten. Empires have been overthrown, dynasties have fallen, the would-be reformers of the past ages are no longer known; while the Bible, a divine product, given from heaven to mortal man, woven into the texture of human thought and history by the gradual unfolding of the ages, still stands, bidding defiance to every wave of infidelity; giving comfort and hope to Christians, and pointing sinners to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. It is truly the Book of books, that book that outshines all other books in the literary firmament, as the sun outshines the splendid planets in their orbits as they revolve around him.

The Bible is the mariner's star. It is the compass of every Christian to guide his frail bark across the tempestuous sea of life and finally to that eternal shore where the redeemed of the earth will be forever blest for ever more. When studied and obeyed, it is truly a lamp to our feet and a light to shine upon our path. As the apostle said, "It lives and abides forever, and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. If you will believe and obey it, it offers exceeding and great promises to you. In it, God requires you to believe in Jesus Christ as His Son, we are told in Jn. 8:24. Then believing, we are asked to confess him unto salvation, Rom. 10:10. All who have done this are told to "repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), to "continue steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer" (Acts 2:42), and "be faithful unto death," and God said, "I will give you a crown of life." May this wonderful book guide you in all your obedience to God, and then into the eternal realities of heavenly bliss in the world beyond.