"AND JESUS TAUGHT THEM SAYING...!"

A Devotional Study of Jesus' *"Sermon on the Mount"*



And

Some of Jesus' Life Changing Parables!

By

Ron Christian

"THE BEATITUDES"

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As author of this book, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Shirley Ruiz, who dedicated her great skills, abounding energy, and many hours of her time in typing the entire manuscript of this book. I feel certain that her committed hands will bring great blessings to many persons.

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THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTIONARY!

OUTLINE

SUBJECT: **THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTIONARY**

TEXT: ***"Never man spake like this man."***

INTRODUCTION

Jesus often spoke difficult and puzzling sayings. Instead of being contradictory, they were statements that reflected two sides of the same truth.

PROPOSITION

Jesus was a conservative – His concepts and His message had their rootage in the Old Testament beginnings. Jesus, however, was also the greatest revolutionary that ever lived.

I. JESUS THE CONSERVATIVE

A. JESUS' CONSERVATION
B. CHRISTIAN CONSERVATION

II. JESUS THE REVOLUTIONARY

A. JESUS' LIBERALISM
B. CHRISTIAN LIBERALISM

CONCLUSION

Following the pattern of Jesus the Master, Christians today must seek to live a truly "balanced life" – that is, a life characterized by understanding the conservative truths of the Christian faith, and also a life that seeks to apply these Biblical truths in relevant and practical and contemporary and adaptable ways.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTIONARY!

INTRODUCTION

Jesus often spoke difficult and puzzling sayings. They were paradoxical in nature. That is, the things Jesus said often sounded contradictory. However, instead of being contradictory, they were statements they were statements that reflected two sides of the same truth. For instance, Jesus is called a "Prince" and also a "Pioneer." "Prince" denotes royal ancestry; "Pioneer" denotes new beginnings.

PROPOSITION

Jesus was a conservative – His concepts and His message had their rootage in the Old Testament beginnings. Jesus, however, was also the greatest revolutionary that ever lived.

I. JESUS THE CONSERVATIVE

A. JESUS' CONSERVATION

Jesus was a great conservative. As strange as it may sound, the Pharisees of Jesus' day, whom Jesus' attacked, were the religious liberals. They were liberals because they failed to teach and preach the simple message of love as recorded in the early Old Testament writings. What were the simple and original Old Testament principles? It is found in Deuteronomy 6:5 which reads: *"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."* The Ten Commandments of the Old Testament, which Jesus honored and obeyed, were all summarized in that simple, all-inclusive commandment. However, the scribes and Pharisees had complicated the original and simple teaching of the Scriptures by adding to the original their multiplied and complicated tedious rules and interpretations. The Pharisees, who thought that they were true conservatives, were in reality the liberals, for they were not teaching the original principles of love. Their professed interpretation of their original principles had so distorted the original and simple principle of love, that the original principle was virtually destroyed. Jesus said to the Pharisees, *"Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written. This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men? For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."* (Mark 7:6-9) Jesus was the conservative in that He cut away the

superfluous traditions and laws of men to get to the essential and original principle of love of God and love of man.

B. CHRISTIAN CONSERVATION

A true Christian must be a Conservationist. First, a Christian must recover the original and simple message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The original message which Christians must guard from pollution and dilution of the message of Jesus, which Jesus in His own day rediscovered from the Old Testament, *"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 22:37-10) The message of the early Church was love; *"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor" therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."* (Romans 13:10) We must guard against a water-down message like the Gnostics who were powerless and untransformed; also we must guard against a legalistic message. The True message is message of faith – issuing forth in transformation.

Second, a true Christian must cut away the superficialities that have destroyed the fellowship of the Church, and recover the original purpose of the church. What was the original purpose of the Church? The original purpose of the Church is well told in the Scriptures, *"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep...Be of the same mind one toward another."* (Romans 12:15,16a) Intimate sharing, deep love and mutual burden-bearing, the Christians of the early Church hid nothing from one another. They were completely open and honest with one another. The original Church must be a fellowship of mutual love and care, one for the other. Christianity is not to be lived in isolation; it is to be lived in community. The Church is to be a center of healing. The source of healing is God, but the context of healing is to be in the fellowship of the Church. *"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults (sins) one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* (James 5:15, 16)

"So saving faith, the attitude of brokenness, is a two-way activity, towards God and man, as are righteousness and love and indeed all the relationships of Christian living. Indeed, we can put it this way. We can liken a man to a house. It has a roof and walls. So also man in his fallen state has a roof on top of his sins between him and God; and he also has walls up, between him and his neighbor. But at salvation, when broken at the Cross, not only does the roof come off through faith in

Christ, but the walls fall down flat, and the man's true condition as a sinner saved by grace is confessed before all men.

"But the trouble soon begins again after conversion, and here lies the basic hindrance to continued revival. Continued revival is continued brokenness, but brokenness is two-way, and that means walls kept down as well as roof off. But man's most deep rotted and subtle problem is the subtle sin of pride, self-esteem and self-respect. Through hardly realizing it, while we are careful to keep the roof off between ourselves and God through repentance and faith, we soon let those walls of respectability creep up again between ourselves and our brethren. We can't mind our brethren knowing about successes in our Christian living; they can know if we win a soul, if we lead a class, if we get a prayer answered, if we get good things from the Scriptures, because we too get a little reflected credit out of those things. But where we fail, in those many, many areas of our daily lives – that is a different question! If God has to deal with us over our impatience or temper in the home, over dishonesty in our business, over coldness or other sins, by no means do we easily bear testimony to our brethren of God's faithful and gracious dealings in such areas of failure. Why not? Just because of pride, self-esteem, although we would often more conveniently call it reserve! The fact is we love the praise of men as well as of God, and that is exactly what the Scriptures say stops the flow of confession before men . *"Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God."* (John 12:42, 43)

"Note also that hiding the truth about ourselves before men, pretending to be better than we really are, is the supreme sin which Jesus drove home to the Pharisees, the sin of hypocrisy, and was the direct cause of their crucifying Him." (Continuous Revival, by Norman Grubb; pgs. 15-17)

If the Church is to be what it was intended to be we must recover and practice the warm and open fellowship of confession, sharing, and mutual dependence. The masks must come off and honest confiding be practiced among Christians within the atmosphere of love. In the same sense the true Christian is a Conservative. He seeks to recover the dynamics of the fellowship, as practiced in the New Testament Church.

II. JESUS THE REVOLUTIONARY

A. JESUS LIBERALISM

Jesus was both a conservative and a liberal. Jesus was conservative in that He recovered the original principle of love which the Old Testament taught must govern all of life. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* (Deuteronomy 6:5) However, Jesus was a revolutionary in that He showed how radically love must be applied. Every religious Jewish man thanked God he was not "a woman, a gentile female, barbarian slave. "Love your enemies", said Jesus. That includes men of all colors, creeds, philosophies – the moral and the immoral, the loving and the hateful, the young and the old. Love is not exclusive; it is all-inclusive. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus defined who is a neighbor to a Christian. A Christian has a responsibility to every person whom he confronts.

Secondly, Jesus was a revolutionary, in that He spiritualized the laws of Judaism. Under the Jewish system of laws and traditions it was possible to live an outwardly respectable life, and yet inwardly be filled with wickedness. Jesus' piercing eyes searched the heart and motive, and discerned more than the outward appearance *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence, "Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. [7] "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which looks beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."* (Matthew 23:25-28)

The Sermon on the Mount is a description of Christianity lived in depth – Christianity that issues from pure hearts and loving motives. Jesus was radical in His day, for He introduced a new, internalized standard for righteousness. "The will of God for the New Israel as interpreted by Jesus the Messiah calls for truth in the inward parts, demands a morality in the blood and bone."

> **"The old law said, No murder, I say, No angry passion.**
> **The old law said, No adultery. I say, No lustful thought.**
> **The old law said, Divorce on condition...I say, No divorce.**
> **The old law said, No false swearing. I say, No swearing at all.**
> **The old law said, Eye for eye. I say, No retaliation.**
> **The old law said, Love your neighbor. I say, Love your enemy."**
> **(Introduction, New Testament Theology, Hunter, pg. 38)**

Another way which Jesus spiritualized the Jewish concepts was to take the materialistic ideas of Jewish Messiahship and showed that He,

as Messiah, came to create a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. Jesus showed that the Kingdom would come by personal regeneration, not military revolution.

Regeneration leads to radically inspired men – men who are inspired to a new level of creative endeavor. Jesus was a revolutionary because He revolutionized men. The tempestuous became tender, the complacent became zealous, the timid became bold, the self-centered became self-giving, the barren became productive, the frustrated became free, the fearful became confident, the doubters became believers, and the weak became strong. The revolutionary power of Christ has shocked and shaped the world of men and nations. Jesus was the greatest of all revolutionaries because He was a man of love – radical in scope and radical in depth.

B. CHRISTIAN LIBERALISM

There is a certain liberalism which Christians can accept and cultivate. Life and times are constantly changing, necessitating a change in methods, procedures, and practices. Jesus did not change the original message of love of the Old Testament. Rather, He recovered that message and radically applied the message in a new way. Thus, the application may be changed but not the message itself. Methods may, and indeed, must be changed, but the original message of love must never be changed or obscured.

We must recognize that we live in a changing and an expanding universe. Understanding this, the church must be willing to use new methods, new techniques, new terminology, and new molds. Fosdick asks, "How would medicine fare if doctors were restricted to drugs and methods and techniques three hundred years old?" (Barclay's Luke, pg. 65) And yet we continue to resort to old methods and patterns in the church. We use outworn Elizabethan English in reading, praying, and preaching, and ancient Church buildings not adapted to the needs of a modern generation. Millions are spent in business and scientific research to develop new methods and techniques while the church seems to be satisfied with the outworn patterns and methods of the past. Should not as much creative energy be spent developing new approaches in the Church as is spent in creating new approaches in business and industry?

Comments Barclay, "That a thing has always been done may well be the best reason for stopping doing it. That a thing has never been done may very well be the best reason for trying it. No business could exist on outworn methods – and yet the Church tries to. Any business which

had lost as many customers as the Church has would have tried new ways long ago – but the Church resents all that is new." (Barclay's Luke, pgs. 65, 66)

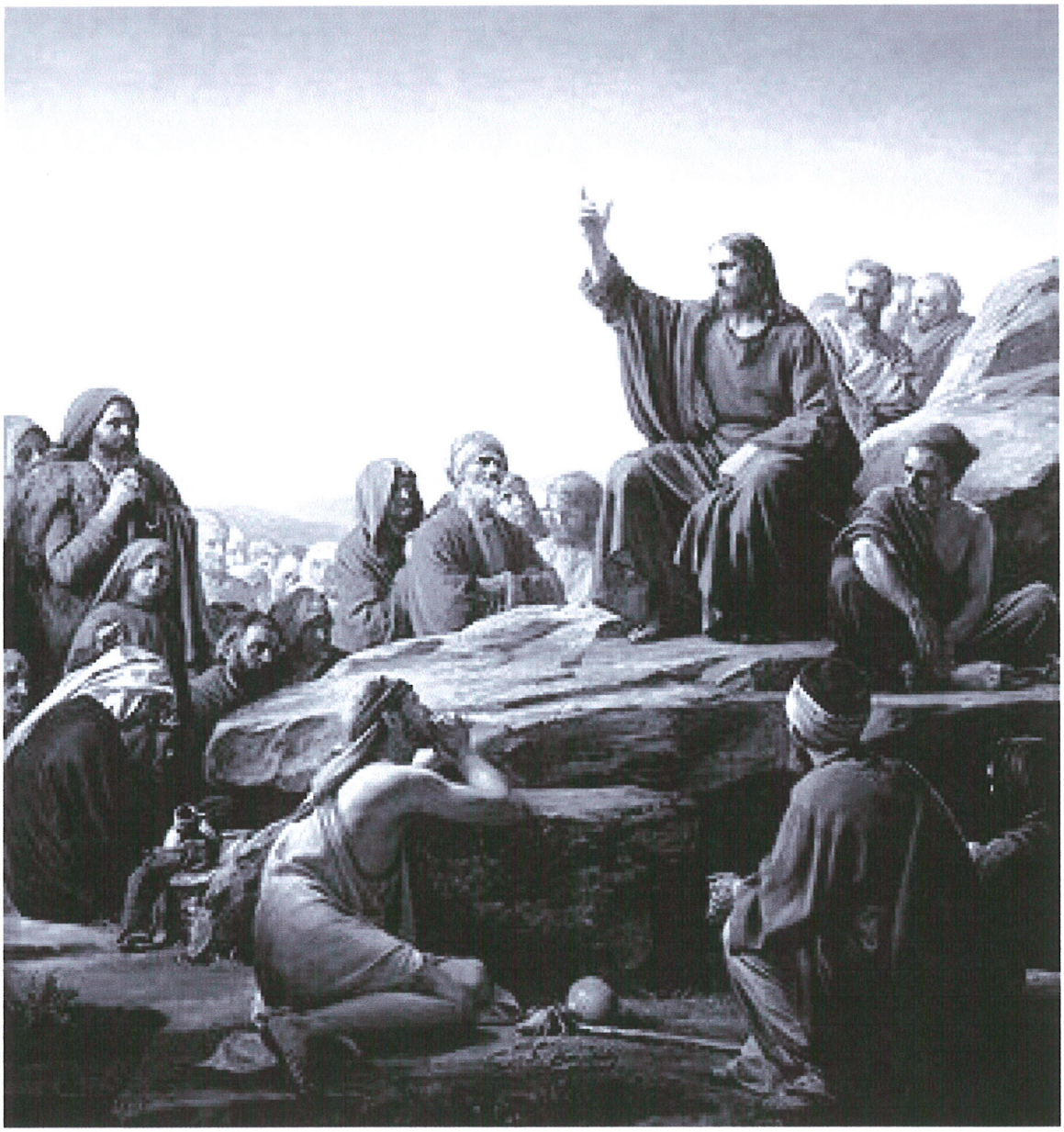
Jesus is not asking us to despise the past. "The wisdom of yesterday is one of our most precious possessions and we will ignore it to our sorrow. Jesus said that he came to fulfill and not to destroy and he was never unappreciative of past accomplishments." (Hunter, The Parables, pg. 60) However, Christ did call for a willingness to change when change is necessary.

Change is always slow coming, whether in or outside the Church. "The motor car, the railway train, the airplane were in the beginning regarded with suspicion. Simpson had to fight to introduce chloroform and Lister had to struggle to introduce antiseptics into the work of the doctor and the surgeon. Copernicus was compelled to retract his statement that the earth went around the sun and not the sun round the earth. Even Jonas Hanway, who brought the umbrella to this country, had to suffer a barrage of missiles and insults when he first walked down a street with an umbrella." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 346)

Even in the Church, new ideas and practices have been slow in being accepted. It appears from past history that one Church council was angry at John Hus because he encouraged congregational singing. "Isaac Watts, a dissenting teen, shocked his generation by writing songs which expressed the gospel of the New Testament. Until his day the only appropriate words for Church music were the Psalms. His controversial contributions include, 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross' and 'Joy to the World.'" (Youth in Action, July-Aug. 1971)

CONCLUSION

Following the pattern of Jesus the Master, Christian today must seek to live a truly "balanced life" – that is, a life characterized by understanding the conservative truths of the Christian faith, and also a life that seeks to apply these Biblical truths in relevant and practical and contemporary and adaptable way to our modern society. As it was with Jesus, we believers today must be "Conservative Revolutionaries"!



PART 1

JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT!

CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE THAT WINS! HOW TO LIVE!

The Beatitudes

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. **(Matthew 5: 1-12)**

OUTLINE

SUBJECT: **THE LIFE THT WINS! HOW TO LIVE!**

TEXT: ***"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps."*** **(1 Peter 2:21)**

INTRODUCTION

We find in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, Chapters 5, 6, and 7) the very essence of Jesus' teaching - teaching that was addressed to believers, NOT to unbelievers.

PROPOSITION

These three chapters of The Sermon on the Mount, outlines for us the perfect formula for the successful Christian life.

I. REMEMBER GOD'S PRECEPTS (Chapter 5)
II. REALIZE GOD'S PRESENCE (Chapter 6)
III. RESPECT GOD'S POWER (Chapter 7)

CONCLUSION

The Christian goes beyond the letter of the Law to obey the Spirit of the Law (Chapter 5). Nothing is hid from the All-Seeing Eye of God (Chapter 6). God is powerful because He is the Righteous Judge. (Chapter 7)

CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE THAT WINS! HOW TO LIVE!

INTRODUCTION

Says Barclay: "This Sermon on the Mount is not one single sermon which Jesus preached on one definite situation; it is the epitome, the distillation, the summary of His consistent teaching to His disciples." The expression in the first verse of Matthew Chapter 5 *'when He had sat down'*, describes the official Jewish way in which serious teaching was done. It means that the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' official, central teaching, that it is the very essence of His teaching. The phrase *'when He had opened His mouth'* is used of a solemn, grave and dignified utterance. It is used of a person's utterance when he is really opening his heart and fully pouring out his mind." (Reference to Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 80, 81) Thus, we find in the Sermon on the Mount the very core and essence of Jesus' teaching.

The question must be asked, "For whom was the Sermon on the Mount written?" Says Martyn Lloyd Jones: "We always tend to forget that every New Testament letter was written to Christians and not to non-Christians; and the appeals in terms of ethics in every Epistle are always addressed only to those who are believers, to those who are new men and women in Christ Jesus. This Sermon on the Mount is exactly the same." (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, v. 1, pg. 23, 24)

What particular value can be gained in studying, in depth, the Sermon on the Mount? (1) "Christ died in order that I might now live the Sermon on the Mount. He has made this possible for me." (2) "Nothing shows me the absolute need of the new birth, and of the Holy Spirit and His work within, so much as the Sermon on the Mount." (3) "The more we live and try to practice this Sermon on the Mount, the more shall we experience blessing...If you want to be filled, don't seek some mystic blessing; don't rush to meetings hoping you will get it. Face the Sermon on the Mount and its implications and demands, see your utter need, and then you will get it. It is the direct road to blessing." (4) "It is the best means of evangelism...What the Church needs to do is not to organize evangelistic campaigns to attract outside people, but to begin to live the Christian life herself. If she did that, men and women would be crowding into our buildings." (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, v. 1, pg. 18)

PROPOSITION

With these introductory considerations in mind, let us take a bird's eye view of these great chapters (Matthew 5, 6, and 7), which we call the Sermon on the Mount. These chapters outline for us the perfect formula for the successful Christian life. Chapter 5 exhorts us to remember God's Precepts. Chapter 6 exhorts us to Realize God's

Presence. Chapter 7 exhorts us to Respect God's Power. Let us look at each of these points separately.

I. REMEMBER GOD'S PRECEPTS (Chapter 5)

Throughout Chapter 5, the Christian's relationship to God's Law is spoken about. The Christian's response to the Law must never be legalistic or mechanical. This was the fault of the scribes and Pharisees. *"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20) The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was self-righteousness, based upon the observance of petty, man-made rules and regulations. The Pharisees majored on the minors and minored on the majors or ignored the majors altogether. In their preoccupation with the peripheral and non-essential, they forgot the more weighty matters of the Law. They strained at ants and swallowed camels. While these Pharisees observed a multiplicity of rules, they lived a life of hypocracy and deceit.

The Christian must go beyond the legal and mechanical observance of the Law; it is not the letter of the Law that the Christian must observe, but it is the spirit of the Law that the Christian must observe. One must know what the 'spirit of the Law' means, in order properly to apply any particular injunction to the whole of life. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has a good comment on this. "The relation of any particular injunction to the whole life of the soul is the relationship, I think; the artist to the particular rules and laws that govern what he is doing. Take, for example, the realm of music. A man may play a piece of great music quite accurately; he may make no mistakes at all. And yet it may be true to say of him that he did not really play Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. He played the notes correctly, but it was not the Sonata. What was he doing? He was mechanically striking the right notes, but missing the soul and the real interpretation. He wasn't doing what Beethoven intended and meant. That, I think, is the relationship between the whole and the parts. The artist, the true artist, is always correct. Even the greatest artist cannot afford to neglect rules and regulations. But that is not what makes him the great artist. It is this something extra, the expression; it is the spirit, it is the life, it is 'the whole' that he is able to convey. There, it seems to me, is the relationship of the particular to the general in the Sermon on the Mount. You cannot divorce, you cannot separate them. The Christian, while he puts his emphasis upon the spirit, is also concerned about the letter. But he is not concerned only about the letter and he must never consider the latter apart from the spirit." (Ibid, pg. 28, 29)

There are those that say that not even the spirit of the Law is important to keep. There are those that maintain that Christians have no obligation to keep the Law because Christians are now under the dispensation of grace. Law is nothing; grace is everything. This is Antinomianism.

Too many times those who divorce themselves from any moral Law and become solely preoccupied with grace, adopt a presumptive attitude towards life. Many times an antinomian entertains a sentimental view towards God and a complacent attitude towards sin. The complacent antinomians of Paul's day went so far as to think that continuing in sin would make grace abound that much more. Such a presumptuous attitude towards God and sin leaves a person unchanged and shoddy in moral make-up.

It is important for us to realize as Christians that "we are not 'under the law' but we are still meant to keep it; the 'righteousness of the law' is meant to be 'fulfilled in us', says the apostle Paul in writing to the Romans. Christ coming 'in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh'. Well, why? *'That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'* (Romans 8:3, 4) So the Christian is a man who is always concerned about living and keeping the law of God. Here he is reminded how that is to be done." (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, Vol. 1 pg. 26)

Jesus never taught the Christian has no obligation to keep the moral Law. *Said Jesus, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or title shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."* (Matthew 5: 17-19)

A Christian is not only to keep the letter of the moral law, but he is to go beyond the letter. The internal quality of one's life is as important as the eternal adherence to the Law. Jesus called forth for truth in the inner parts. Is a Christian to live by rules (legalism), without rules (antinomianism) or beyond rules (Grace)?

The old law said, No murder, I say, No angry passion. The old law said, No adultery. I say, No lustful thought. The old law said, Divorce on condition, I say, No divorce. The old law said, No false swearing. I say, No swearing at all. The old law said, Eye for eye. I say, No retaliation. The old law said, Love your neighbor. I say, Love your enemy. (Hunter, Introducing New Testament Theology, pg. 38)

Jeremiah talked about the Law being written on the heart. Internal motive important!

Antinomianism oftentimes results in divorcing practice from profession. Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount that character is important, that profession alone is not enough. Jesus urged upon Christians to let their light shine *("You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither*

do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." **Matthew 5:14-16); to be salt to the earth** ***("You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."*** **Matthew 5:13); to be compassionate to their brothers and to be reconciled to them ("T*herefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth; you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."* Matthew 5:23-26)**

Thus, Chapter 5 urges Christians to remember God's Precepts and Commandments. Christians are to fulfill the Law, and even to go beyond the Law.

II. REALIZE GOD'S PRESENCE

"Again, one of the essential and most obvious things about a Christian is that he is a man who lives always realizing he is in the presence of God." (Lloyd-Jones, Studies in Sermon on the Mount, pg. 26)

In Chapter 6 the Christian is described as a man who realizes that God sees and knows all things. There is an All-Seeing Eye watching us. Everywhere we go and everything we do, this Great Eye is aware of us.

God sees all secrets. Three different times in the sixth chapter, there appears the statement*: "Father seeth in secret."* (Matthew 6: 4, 6, and 18)

God sees ones religious activities. The Christian is not to display his piety before his fellowmen. God sees, and that's all that counts. A Christian is a man who lives always realizing he is in the presence of God, therefore alms must be given to glorify God and not to display piety ***("Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.)*** **(Matthew 6:1-4) A Christian must pray, not to be seen of men, but to fellowship with God, in**

whose presence he continually dwells. ***("And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.***

"This, then, is how you should pray:
" 'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one."
(Matthew 6:5-13)

A Christian must not piously disfigure his face when he fasts in secret, and God who sees in secret will reward him openly. ***"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen, and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*** **(Matthew 6: 16-18)**

God sees one's social relationships. God knows whether there are hidden grudges or whether there is a spirit of forgiveness in a person's life. Jesus taught Christians to pray, ***'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.'*** **(Matthew 6:12) this is a frightening proposition. We are asking God to forgive us in the same proportion as we forgive our fellowmen.** ***Said Jesus, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, you're heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*** **(Matthew 6:14, 15) God sees what is in our hearts!**

God sees ones temporal and physical needs. Because a Christian is a man who lives always realizing he is in the presence of God, he is not to be preoccupied with worldly care and anxieties. ***"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important***

than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well." **(Matthew 6:25, 26, 33)**

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, concerning this last point, said: "The Christian is not worried about food and drink and housing and clothing. It is not that he says these things do not matter but they are not his main concern, they are not the things for which he lives. The Christian sits loosely to this world and its affairs. Why? Because! He belongs to another kingdom and another way. He does not go out of the world; that was the Roman Catholic error of monasticism. The Sermon on the Mount does not tell you to go out of life in order to live the Christian life. But it does say that your attitude is entirely different from that of a non-Christian, because of your relationship to God and because of your utter dependence upon Him. The Christian therefore should never worry about his circumstances in this world because of his relationship to God. That, again, is fundamental about the Christian." (Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, pgs. 26, 27)

That the Christian lives constantly in the presence of God and therefore should regulate his religious, social, and physical activities accordingly, is a fundamental fact about the Christian. Susanna Wesley had a prayer: "Help me, Lord, to remember that religion is not to be confined to the Church or closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation, but that everywhere I am in Thy presence." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 2, pg. 180) Brother Lawrence who lived in the 17th century and who worked as a humble monastery cook, could say, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament." (Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God (pg. 6)

III. RESPECT GOD'S POWER. (Chapter 7)

The seventh Chapter of Matthew makes it clear that the Christian lives with a sense of destiny. Judgment is a fact of life, and the Christian is aware that Christ is the Judge of Life. "The Christian is a man who always walks in the fear of God – not craven fear, because 'perfect love casteth out' that fear. Not only does he approach God in terms of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'with reverence and godly fear', but he lives his whole life like that. The Christian is the only man in the world who does live always with and under this sense of judgment." (Lloyd-Jones, Studies in The Sermon on the Mount, pg. 27) The Christian lives as a steward, with a sense of final accountability. The Bible says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

Paul wrote that "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." (II Corinthians 5: 10) Jesus said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Barclay's Matthew 10:28) A Christian respects God's power. A Christian knows that God stands at the end of life to meet every soul.

A. THIS SENSE OF ONCOMING JUDGMENT IS MOTIVATION FOR HABITABLENESS IN OUR TREATMENT OF OUR FELLOWMEN

***"Do not judge or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Matthew* 7: 1-5, 12).**

Jesus said, *"Judge not, that ye be not judged."* (Matthew 7:1) The Christian realizes that God alone knows all the facts and is alone qualified to judge justly. In the light of judgment the Golden Rule becomes very relevant: *"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."* (Matthew 7:12)

B. THIS SENSE OF ONCOMING JUDGMENT IS MOTIVATION FOR PRAYER

***"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!* Matthew 7:7-11).**

A Christian knows he needs to find constant solace and comfort in the bosom of a loving Father, who someday will stand as a vengeful Judge. Therefore, the Christian asks, seeks, and knocks. (*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.* Matthew 7:7)

C. THIS SENSE OF ONCOMING JUDGMENT IS MOTIVATION FOR EARNEST EFFORT

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. [14]But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. **Matthew 7: 13, 14)**

A Christian knows that he must strain every muscle and burn up all of his energy in his endeavor to serve God. The road to heaven is not an easy road and there are many snares on the way. There are only two ways in life – the way of sin which leads to Hell and the way of righteousness which leads to Heaven. ***Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in threat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."*** **(7: 13, 14)**

D. THIS SENSE OF ONCOMING JUDGMENT IS MOTIVATION FOR WATCHFULNESS

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Matthew 7: 15-20)

Said Jesus, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." **(Matthew 7:15) The Christian must guard against falsehood and seek always for the truth. Deception can rob a Christian of his eternal reward.**

E. THIS SENSE OF ONCOMING JUDGMENT IS MOTIVATION FOR OBEDIENCE

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? 'Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers!' "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it

had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. **Matthew 7: 21-27)**

Obedience is the final test of sonship. Works without faith produces self-righteousness. Humanitarian labors must be coupled with genuine Christian love. ***"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoer. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*** **(Matthew 7: 22, 23, and 27)**

CONCLUSION

The Christian is a man who remembers God's Precepts. He knows that Christ died in order that the 'righteousness of the law' might be fulfilled in him. The Christian forges go beyond the letter of the Law to obey the spirit of the Law.

A Christian is a man who realizes God's Presence. He realizes that the 'Father seeth in secret'. Nothing is hid from the All-Seeing Eye of God; God sees all religious activities and the motives behind those activities. God sees all social relationships – whether there is a forgiving spirit or a grudging spirit. God sees all physical and temporal needs, and therefore the Christian is not to become preoccupied with materialistic pursuits, but is to trust the loving Father.

A Christian is a man who respects God's Power. God is Powerful because he is the Righteous Judge. Aware of oncoming judgment, a Christian lives with a constant sense of destiny, and is clothed in the garments of godly fear. This sense of oncoming judgment is motivation for charitableness, prayer, effort, watchfulness, and obedience.

CHAPTER 2

OUTLINE

SUBJECT: **THE POVERTY THAT IS RICH!**

TEXT: ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."*** **Matthew 5: 3**

INTRODUCTION

"The Christian has the serene and untouchable joy which comes from walking forever in the company and in the presence of Jesus Christ." (William Barclay)

PROPOSITION

Let us seek to understand the meaning of the Beatitude: ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."***

I. MEANING OF 'POOR IN SPIRIT'

- **A. BEING 'POOR IN SPIRIT' MEANS THAT ONE RELIES COMPLETELY UPON GOD**
- **B. BEING 'POOR IN SPIRIT' MEANS THAT ONE ACKNOWLEDGES HIS INABILITY TO SAVE HIMSELF**
- **C. BEING 'POOR IN SPIRIT' MEANS THAT ONE POSSESSES A SENSE OF DEEP UNWORTHINESS**
- **D. BEING 'POOR IN SPIRIT' MEANS THAT ONE GIVES GOD THE GLORY FOR PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

II. MEANING OF 'KINGDOM OF HEAVEN'

- **A. WHAT REALLY IS THE MEANING OF 'THE KINGDOM OF GOD'**
- **B. WHO REALLY ARE THE MEMBERS OF 'THE KINGDOM OF GOD'**

CONCLUSION

Gathering all the facts in this message, we can come up with an interpretation of this Beatitude:

> ***"Blessed-happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous, regardless of his outward conditions – is the man who has realized his own utter helplessness, and who has put his whole trust in God, for thus alone he can render to God that perfect obedience which will make him a citizen of The Kingdom of Heaven!"***

CHAPTER 2

THE POVERTY THAT IS RICH!

INTRODUCTION

William Barclay said "The word blessed which is used in each of the beatitudes is a very special word. It is the Greek word makarios. Makarios is the word which specially describes the gods. In Christianity there is a divine and godlike joy... Makarios then describes that joy which has its secret within itself, that joy which is serene and untouchable, and self-contained, that joy which is completely independent of all the chances and the changes of life. The English word happiness gives its own case away. It contains the root hap which means chance. Human happiness is something which is dependent on the chances and the changes of life, something which life may give and which life may also destroy. The Christian blessedness is completely untouchable and unassailable. *'Your joy,' said Jesus, 'no man taketh from you'.* (John 16: 22) The beatitudes speak of that joy which seeks us through grief, that joy which sorrow and loss, and pain and heartache are powerless to touch, that joy which shines through tears, and which nothing in life or death can take away. The world can win its joys, and the world can equally well lose its joys. A change in fortune, a collapse in health, the failure of a plan, the disappointment of an ambition, even a change in the weather, can take away the fickle joy the world can give. But the Christian has the serene and untouchable joy which comes from walking forever in the company and in the presence of Jesus Christ."

"The 'poor in spirit' describes those who are conscious of deserving nothing and needing everything from God. They accept with gratitude what He bestows, and without bitterness what he withholds. Their trust is not in human resources, but in divine faithfulness. (Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 84, 85)

PROPOSITION

Let us seek to understand the meaning of the Beatitude*: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."*

I. MEANING OF 'POOR IN SPIRIT'

In seeking to understand the meaning of a phrase or a word, it is good first to show what the phrase or word does not mean. By implication we can then understand what the phrase means.

Being 'poor in spirit' does not necessarily mean material poverty. "The Bible nowhere teaches that poverty as such is a good thing. The poor man is no nearer to the kingdom of heaven than the rich man, speaking of them as natural men. There is no merit or advantage in being poor. Poverty does not guarantee spirituality. Clearly, therefore, the passage cannot mean that."

(Studied in the Sermon on the Mount by Martyn Lloyd Jones, pg. 43) "Poverty is not in itself a blessing. Since it tends to give one a sense of need, it may more readily become a roadway to real happiness than riches. Riches tend to give a false independence. But no man is necessarily blessed simply because he is poor. Nor is any man necessarily unblessed because he is rich. Dives blundered out into the dark. Lazarus found a place in Abraham's bosom. But Dives was not condemned because he was rich, any more than Lazarus was saved because he was poor. One may be just as poor as Lazarus and yet be greedy and grasping and wretched, while another may be as rich as Dives and yet be truly blessed." (The Sermon on the Mount; by Clovis Chappell; pgs. 11, 12)

Being 'poor in spirit' does not mean self-contempt. "Jesus never tells us to despise ourselves. He never asks any man to crawl and cringe and grovel. He discovered to us the worth of the individual. He believed that the meanest human soul had immeasurable possibilities, might realize a glorious destiny. To be poor in spirit, therefore, is not to despise yourself." (Ibid; 14) Being 'poor in spirit' cannot be equated with timidity, lack of courage or downgrading of God-given ability. There is a type of false humility that is far removed from being poor in spirit. One who is poor in spirit does not advertise his humility.

Being poor in spirit does not mean suppression of personality. Jesus did not come to deform or to destroy one's personality, but He came to perfect and to develop one's personality. The forward and assertive person can be 'poor in spirit' just the same as the meek and reserved person.

If being 'poor in spirit' does not mean any of these things, what does it mean? To help answer this question, let us trace the root meaning of the word 'poor' in its Greek and Hebrew backgrounds. "In Greek there are two words for poor. There is the word penēs. Penēs describes a man who has to work for his living; it is defined by the Greeks as the man who serves his own needs with his own hands. Penēs describes the working man, the man who has nothing superfluous, and the man who is not rich, but who is not destitute either. It is not Penēs that is used in this beatitude, it is ptochos, which describes absolute and abject poverty...As it has been said, penēs describes the man who has nothing superfluous; ptochos describes the man who has nothing at all. So this beatitude becomes even more surprising. Blessed is the man who is abjectly and completely poverty-stricken. Blessed is the man who is absolutely destitute.

"The beatitudes were not originally spoken in Greek, but in Aramaic. Now the Jews had a special way of using the word poor. In Hebrew the word is 'ani' or 'ebion'. These words in Hebrew underwent a four-stage development of meaning: (1) They began by meaning simply poor. (2) They went on to mean, because poor, therefore having no influence or power, or help, or prestige. (3) They went on to mean, because having no influence, therefore down-trodden

and oppressed by men. (4) Finally, they came to describe the man who, because he has no earthly resources whatever puts his whole trust in God. In Hebrew the word poor was used to describe the humble and the helpless man who put his whole trust in God." (Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 85, 86)

In consideration of the root meaning of the word 'poor', we can draw certain conclusions about what it means to be 'poor in spirit.

A. BEING 'POOR IN SPIRIT' MEANS THAT ONE RELIES COMPLETELY UPON GOD

Martyn Lloyd-Jones describes well the person who is poor in spirit. "It means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance. It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. It is nothing, then, that we can produce; it is nothing that we can do in ourselves. It is just this tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face to face with God. That is to be 'poor in spirit'. Let me put it as strongly as I can, and I do that on the basis of the teaching of the Bible. It means this, that if we are truly Christian we shall not rely upon our natural birth. We shall not rely upon the fact that we belong to certain families; we shall not boast that we belong to certain nations or nationalities. We shall not build upon our natural temperament. We shall not believe in and rely upon our natural position in life, or any powers that may have been given to us. We shall not rely upon money or any wealth we may have. The thing about which we shall boast will not be the education we have received, or the particular school or college to which we may have been. No, all that is what Paul came to regard as 'dung' and a hindrance to this greater thing because it tended to master and control him. We shall not rely upon any gifts like that of natural 'personality', or intelligence or general or special ability. We shall not rely upon our own morality and conduct and good behavior. We shall not bank to the slightest extent on the life we have lived or are trying to live. No; we shall regard all that as Paul regarded it. That is 'poverty of spirit'. There must be a complete deliverance from and a sense of all that. I say again, it is to feel that we are nothing, and that we have nothing, and that we look to God in utter submission to Him and in utter dependence upon Him and His grace and mercy." (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount; pgs. 50, 51)

To rely completely on God assumes that one does not rely on riches for happiness. True happiness is an internal quality rather than an external condition. Billy Graham's World Aflame, says "I have a friend who vowed in college that he would be a millionaire before he was twenty-five years old, and he achieved that goal with little effort. He became a successful businessman. He had arrived. He married a beautiful woman. He could say *'Soul...take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.'*

(Luke 12:19) However, they were both miserable in the midst of their affluence. Out of curiosity they came to one of our meetings and responded to the appeal to receive Jesus Christ. Christ demanded a decision, a plunge, a choice! They took that plunge and today they are two of the most radiantly happy people I know." (pg. 56)

B. BEING 'POOR IN SPIRIT' MEANS THAT ONE ACKNOWLEDGES HIS INABILITY TO SAVE HIMSELF

Isaiah understood that he could not save himself. *"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."* (Isaiah 57:15) It was Isaiah who cried out, *"I am a man of unclean lips."* The poor in spirit is represented by the publican who smote his breast and said, *"God be merciful to me a sinner."* (Luke 18: 13) The prodigal son manifested a humble spirit when he repented. Said the prodigal son to himself, *"I will arise and go to my father; and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."* (Luke 15:18, 19) One who is 'poor in spirit' acknowledges his abject poverty and inability to save himself. He throws himself upon the mercy of God.

Just and holy is Thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.

C. BEING 'POOR IN SPIRIT' MEANS THAT ONE POSSESSES A SENSE OF DEEP UNWORTHINESS

When Gideon received his call, he replied to God, *"No, no, this is impossible; I belong to the least tribe and to the lowest family in the tribe." Moses felt deeply unworthy to be the leader of God's people. He was a man who was known for his spirit of meekness. David felt unworthy when he declared to God, "Lord, who am I that then shouldest come to me?" David wrote, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite hear O God, you will not despise.* (Psalm 51: 17) Paul wrote, *"Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."* (Roman 12:10) The great apostle Paul wrote about himself, *"I am the least of the messengers, and indeed I do not deserve that title at all, because I persecuted the Church of God."* (I Corinthians 15: 9, Phillips)

"When John Rough, the preacher, publicly, from the pulpit in St. Andrews, summoned John Knox to the ministry, John Knox was

appalled. In his own History of the Reformation, he writes: 'Thereat said John, abashed, burst forth in most abundant tears, and withdrew himself to his chamber. His countenance and behavior, from that day until the day that he was compelled to present himself in the public place of preaching, did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart. No man saw in him any sign of mirth, nor yet had the pleasure to accompany any man, for many days together.' So, far from being filled with ambition, the great men were filled with a sense of their own unworthiness and inadequacy to hold high office at all." (Barclay's Philippians, pg. 39)

In the Diary of David Brainerd, the great missionary to the American Indians, are found these words, "When I return home and give myself to meditation, prayer, and fasting, my soul longs for mortification, self-denial, humility and divorcement from all things of the world." (Power Through Prayer, pg. 54)

D. BEING 'POOR IN SPIRIT' MEANS THAT ONE GIVES GOD THE GLORY FOR PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

The one who is poor in spirit does not downgrade success or pose as a person who has no desire for success. A Christian is meant to be successful, but he is also meant to give God the glory for all personal success. God gave the ability; therefore God should reap the praise.

The 'poor in spirit' ask simple questions: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" "Where did you get it?" "How came you by it?" "How long is it going to last?" "Is it such a very big thing after all?" "We have all come out of nothing, and are anything, simply because God is everything. If He were to withhold His upholding and inbreathing power from any of us for one moment, we should shrivel into nothingness. The things of which we are so proud are what God has poured into us."

"When Bishop Francis Asbury, the dauntless dean of the circuit-riders, the father of American Methodism, was near the end of his notably fruitful life, he said: 'Were I disposed to boast, my boastings would be found true. I was converted at the age of sixteen. At the age of eighteen I began to preach, and travelled some in Europe. At twenty-six I left my native land, bade adieu to my weeping parents, and crossed a boisterous ocean to spend the rest of my days in a strange land, partly settled by savages. In thirty years I have crossed the Allegheny Mountains fifty-eight times. I have slept in the woods and been without food and covering. Through the Southern states I have waded swamps and led my horse for miles, and in these journeys took

cold that brought on the diseases that now prey on my body and must soon terminate in death. But my mind is still the same, that through the merits of Christ and by the grace of God I am saved." (Prayer and Life's Highest by Rees, pgs. 109, 109) Thus, although Asbury acknowledged his true success, he realized that his success was due to the grace of God and not because of any merits of his own.

II. MEANING OF 'KINGDOM OF HEAVEN'

We have discussed in some detail the meaning of 'poor in spirit'. Let us now note the meaning of 'Kingdom of Heaven'. In the Gospels, the 'Kingdom of Heaven' and the 'Kingdom of God' are equated. Matthew used 'Kingdom of Heaven' to emphasize the spiritual, rather than the material and earthly, character of the kingdom.

The reward for the 'poor in spirit' is the Kingdom of Heaven'.

A. WHAT REALLY IS THE MEANING OF 'THE KINGDOM OF GOD'

Let us offer a two-fold definition to the 'Kingdom of God.' First, as Hunter says, "To understand the phrase in the Gospels, we must remember that it means, linguistically, the kingly Rule of God and that it implies the Biblical idea of God, the God who acts, whose workshop is history and who is working out a great and gracious purpose in it to an appointed end." (Hunter's: Introduction to New Testament Theology, pg. 26)

The kingly Rule of God naturally results in kingly subjects; thus the Kingdom of God carries the secondary meaning of 'realm.' Those who submit to the kingly rule of God are an intimate part of the Kingdom of God. In this connection, however, it is important to realize that "God's Reign exists, however men respond. God's Reign claims the obedience of men truly; but it is there before the claims are made, and it is still there if men reject them." (Ibid pg. 26)

To better appreciate the latter definition, it would be to our advantage to ask the question "Who really are the members of the Kingdom of God?"

B. WHO REALLY ARE THE MEMBERS OF 'THE KINGDOM OF GOD'

To answer this, let us go directly to The Lord's Prayer, that Jesus taught us to pray: "Let your Kingdom come: Let your will be done, as in heaven, so also in earth."

This portion of the Lord's Prayer is an example of parallelism. "The Hebrew tended to say everything twice. He said it in one way, and then He said it in another way which repeats or amplifies or explains the first way...We then have the perfect definition of the Kingdom of God – The Kingdom of God is a society upon earth where God's will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven." (Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 211, 212)

Thus, all people of all ages who have sought to do the will of God in their lives are members of the Kingdom of God. Membership in the Kingdom of God is not limited to any certain nation, race, or age, but includes all people who have and all people who done and all people who will do the will of God in their lives. Thus we see how the Kingdom of God can be past, present, and future all at the same time.

"Only he who does God's will is a citizen of the Kingdom; and we can only do God's will when we realize our own utter helplessness, our own utter ignorance, our own utter inability to cope with life, and when we put our whole trust in God. Obedience is always founded on trust. The Kingdom of God is the possession of the poor in spirit, because the poor in spirit have realized their own utter helplessness without God, and have learned to trust and obey." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 87)

CONCLUSION

Gathering all the facts in this message, we can come up with an interpretation of this Beatitude:

> **"Blessed-happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous, regardless of his outward conditions – is the man who has realized his own utter helplessness, and who has put his whole trust in God, for thus alone he can render to God that perfect obedience which will make him a citizen of The Kingdom of Heaven!"**

become involved in the shaping of men and nations. The Christian joy must be shared; it cannot be self-contained, despite the tribulation and persecution that may be caused because of sharing. Christians know that the *"God of all comfort comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, but the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforteth of God."* (II Corinthians 1:4)

The Christian finds that as he sorrows over the sin and suffering of the world, and as he becomes actively involved in the healing of its wounds, he is greatly comforted of God.

CONCLUSION

Jesus said, "*Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.*" There is a mourning that gives comfort. There is a mourning that gives anything but comfort. The mourning of which Jesus was speaking is the mourning that is produced because of the conviction of sin. This mourning results in a moral change. The Christian mourns over personal failure and sins of omission. The Christian mourns because of the sin and suffering of the world. Such mourning gives comfort. Sorrow over sin and over the heartbreak it caused God, brings about personal reconciliation to God. Reconciliation brings hope. Hope brings lasting joy. Joy brings a desire to share with others.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT: **THE BLISS OF MEEKNESS!**

TEXT: ***"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth"*** **(Matthew 5:5)**

INTRODUCTION

The world challenges us to be self-assertive and self-promoting (at the expense of people around us). But Jesus calls us (through His empowering presence) to be self-giving, self-forgiving, caring and loving for the needs of others.

PROPOSITION

Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is divinely-given character, strong character, character that is characterized by self-control, tempered anger and humility.

I. TEMPERED ANGER

A. THERE IS A WRONG KIND OF ANGER
B. THERE IS A RIGHT KIND OF ANGER

II. SELF-CONTROL

III. HUMILITY

CONCLUSION

The meek man is the man who knows when to be angry and when not to be angry. The meek man is the self-controlled man, or more realistically, the God-controlled man. The meek man is the humble man.

CHAPTER 4

THE BLISS OF MEEKNESS!

INTRODUCTION

The world thinks that the Beatitude 'Blessed are the meek' is ridiculous. The man of the world "believes in the survival of the fittest. He believes the most fit to survive in a world like ours is the aggressive, heavy-handed, hard-fisted, self-assertive man." (Sermon on the Mount, by Chappell; 36) "The world thinks in terms of strength and power of ability, self-assurance, and aggressiveness. That is the world's idea of conquest and possession. The more you assert yourself and express yourself, the more you organize and manifest your powers and ability, the more likely you are to succeed and get on." (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, Lloyd-Jones; pg. 63)

So many times, "We do not want to be meek. We prefer to be like the little boy whose mother kept calling him, 'my little lamb'. Finally, he said, 'Mother, I don't want to be your little lamb, I want to be your little tiger.'" (God's Psychiatry by Allen, pg. 137)

"Years ago, we are told, there was a peddler who pushed a cart about the back streets of Paris earning a meager living by selling cheap jewelry and trifling gewgaws. Among his commonplace wares there was a bit of stone tagged with a dirty little card that bore this inscription: 'Rock crystal, price twenty-four francs'. It seemed for a long time that nobody wanted this piece of rock crystal. Of course the price was rather high for an object of such seemingly small value but one day a man chanced to pass that way that had a seeing eye. He had ability to distinguish the worthless from the worthful, the best from the second best. He saw value in this bit of rock crystal that other eyes failed to see. In fact, he saw that it was not rock crystal at all, but genuine diamond. So he bought it, and that rare gem is now said to be among the royal jewels of a great nation. In the same fashion many tend to pass by the rare gem of meekness, while only the few realize its value and seek to possess it." (The Sermon on the Mount by Chappell, pg. 39)

PROPOSITION

Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is divinely-given character, strong character, character that is characterized by self-control, tempered anger, and humility.

It is true that 'meekness' is a rare gem. It is important for us to understand what meekness is, in order that we may distinguish between the artificial and the genuine.

In our search to discover the true meaning of meekness, it is first important to eliminate from our thinking those shallow conceptions of meekness.

Meekness is not a natural disposition that some people are born with and that others are not born with. There are some people who are good-natured from birth, but this is not the meekness of which Jesus is speaking.

Meekness is not a quality that only some Christians are meant to possess. It is a quality that all Christians are to possess. Every Christian, whatever his natural temperament or psychology may be, is meant to be like this. This quality is not a human quality but it is a divine quality. Meekness cannot be humanly achieved, but it must be divinely imparted. Moses had a very fiery disposition in his earlier life, but God made him meek. *"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."* (Numbers 12: 3)

Meekness is far removed from mere niceness. Niceness is a mere human, biological quality and has nothing to do with meekness. Meekness does not mean that one lacks firmness of character. There are some people who never want to disagree with anyone or anything. They are the kind of people who stand firm for nothing and fall for anything. Meekness is not equivalent with spinelessness or excessive tolerance.

Meekness is far removed from indolence, laziness, or apathy. Those who are meek are "not those who grieve at nothing, because they know nothing; who are not discomposed at the evils that occur, a stupid insensibility." (Wesley's Sermons, v. 1, pg. 188)

"Meekness is not merely a matter of outward manner, but also, and still more of inward spirit." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 68) To appear peaceful on the outside while one is attempting to cope with a war of anger on the inside, is to entertain insincerity.

If 'meekness' is none of the things just discussed, what is the true meaning of meekness? Let us note the Greek background for this term, in an attempt to discover its true meaning.

I. TEMPERED ANGER

It comes as a surprise to many to realize that Aristotle defined praotes (meekness) as the happy medium between too much and too little anger. Aristotle defined every virtue as the mean between two extremes, and in the case of 'meekness', it was that virtue which was between excessive anger and excessive angerlessness. As Barclay well brings out, the first possible translation of this beatitude is: "Blessed is the man who is always angry at the right time, and never angry at the wrong time." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 1, pg. 91)

What is the wrong kind of anger and the right kind of anger? The anger which is selfish, passionate, undisciplined, and uncontrolled is a sinful, useless and a hurtful thing, which must be banished from the Christian life. But the anger which is disciplined into the service of Christ and of our fellow men, and which is utterly pure and utterly selfless, is one of the great dynamic forces in this world." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 185)

Jesus never became angry when he was personally insulted or injured, but he became very angry over the injuries and injustices done to others. When the

money changers polluted the temple, his anger blazed up within him! The Scripture says that Jesus *"looked around about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts."* (Mark 3:5) As Christians, we are to follow in Jesus' footsteps. The Scripture says, *"Be angry and sin not."* Says Wesley: Meekness holds an even scale, with regard to anger, and worry, and fear; reserving the mean in every circumstance of life, and not declining either to the right hand or the left." (Wesley's Sermons, v. 1, pg. 188)

A. THERE IS A WRONG KIND OF ANGER

Drummond said that bad temper causes more real suffering than almost any other one sin. (Sermon on the Mount by Chappell, pg. 42) A Christian is never to become angry over personal insult or injury. Said Jesus, *"And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also."* (Luke 6: 29)

John Wesley says that at Wednesbury the mob came "pouring down like a flood." "To attempt speaking was vain; for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea... so they dragged me along till we came to the town; when, seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in; but a man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the crowd. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other." George Foxe tells us of what happened to him at Tickhill. "I found the priest and most of the chief of the parish together in the chancel. So I went up to them and began to speak, but immediately they fell upon me; the clerk took up the Bible as I was speaking, and struck me on the face with it, so that it gushed out with blood, and I bled exceedingly in the steeple-house. Then the people cried, 'Let us have him out of the Church' and when they had got me cut they beat me exceedingly, and threw me down, and over a hedge; and afterwards they dragged me through a house into the street, stoning and beating me as they drew me along, so that I was besmeared all over with blood and dirt;...Yet when I was got upon my legs again I declared to them the word of life and shewed them the fruits of their teachers, how they dishonored Christianity." (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 239)

Both John Wesley and George Fox maintained a spirit of love and compassion for the cruel mobs which persecuted them.

B. THERE IS A RIGHT KIND OF ANGER

We have already noted that Jesus was angry and yet he did not sin. "F.W. Boreham tells how F.W. Robertson of Brighton, that great preacher and saint, tells in one of his letters, that he bit his lips until they bled when he met on the street a certain man whom he knew to be

luring a pure young girl to her destruction. There was white hot anger in Robertson's heart." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 185)

Lord Shaftesbury was one who had the capacity to be angry. He was exceedingly angry at the social injustices around him. "Lord Shaftesbury probably did more for ordinary working men and women and for little children than any social reformer ever did. It all began very simply. When he was a boy at Harrow, he was going along the street one day, and he met a pauper's funeral. The coffin was a shoddy, ill-made box. It was on a hand-barrow. The barrow was being pushed by a quartette of men who were drunk; and as they pushed the barrow along, they were singing ribald songs, and joking and jesting among themselves. As they pushed the barrow up the hill the box, which was the coffin, fell off the barrow and burst open. Some people would have thought the whole business a good joke; some would have turned away in fastidious disgust; and some would have shrugged their shoulders and would have felt that it had nothing to do with them, although it might be a pity that such a thing should happen. The young Shaftesbury saw it and said to himself, 'When I grow up, I'm going to give my life to see that things like that don't happen.'" (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 89)

Shaftesbury won the Ten Hours' Bills which included the Saturday half-holiday enactments and suppression of night work. He passed legislation that released women and children from underground drudgery in mines. He pioneered in popular education in which the Bible would hold an honored place. He saw legislation passed for the insane, and he labored for sanitation, good housing, public parks and wholesome recreation. He was first President of the Y.M.C.A. "All told, he was associated with some two hundred societies for the self-help and betterment of the people...Shaftesbury forced more important social enactments upon the Statue Books than any other British statesman." (Faith and Freedom by J. Wesley Bready, pgs. 107-109) Disraeli said about Shaftesbury: "Shaftesbury's name will descend to posterity as the one who has ...worked more than any other individual to elevate the condition, and to raise the character of his countrymen." (Ibid, pg. 109)

Shaftesbury was truly a king among men. He knew when to be angry and when to be longsuffering. In a true sense it can be said that he inherited the earth. He introduced social legislation that influenced countless millions on the face of the earth. He inherited the respect and gratitude of the earth.

II. SELF-CONTROL

The Greek word for meek (praus) "had a second standard Greek usage. It is the regular word for an animal which has been domesticated, which has been trained to obey the word of command, which has learned to answer to the reins. It is the word for an animal which has learned to accept control. So the second possible translation of this Beatitude is: 'Blessed is the man who has every instinct, every impulse, and every passion under control. Blessed is the man who is entirely self-controlled.'" (Barclay's Matthew; v. 1; pgs. 91, 92)

However, self-control in its secular connotation is not the same as the Biblical idea of meekness. True self control is a divinely imparted virtue rather than a humanly achieved power. Man cannot exercise true self-control independent of God's aid.

Looked at properly then, self-control is really God-control. How does one really become meek or God-controlled in his actions and attitudes? This God-controlled life comes about as a man sees himself in the light of God's demands and standards, and then realizes his own utter helplessness. Realizing ones helplessness is being 'poor in spirit'. Being 'poor in spirit' leads to mourning and mourning leads to a moral change that results in a person becoming God-controlled. Conviction over sin leads to conversion which can best be explained in terms of the God-controlled life or the life of meekness. Thus, we see the logical connection between these three beatitudes.

It is interesting to note, that meekness as a divine quality, is closely associated with gentleness. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, patient, and apt to teach, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." The meek person is the gentle person or, in other words, is the true Christian gentleman.

Let it be clearly repeated that meekness is not weakness. Rather, meekness is strength. "Meekness is compatible with great strength. Meekness is compatible with great authority and power. The meek man is one who may so believe in standing for the truth that he will die for it if necessary." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 68) "It is strength grown tender. It is might with a caress in its brawny hands." (Chappell, pg. 41)

It is the passion-controlled man that is weak. "It was the lack of (meekness or self-control) which ruined Alexander the Great, who, in a fit of uncontrolled temper in the middle of a drunken debauch, hurled a spear at his best friend and killed him." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 93)

The Christian life is the God-controlled life. The God-controlled life is the life that seeks no vengeance. When Jesus was reviled, he *"reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."* (I Peter 2: 23) The Christian follows Christ's example.

Paul wrote. *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."* (Romans 12: 19) It is the meek person who is strong, for it is the meek person who can return good for evil, love for hate.

"Fosdick points out that no one treated Lincoln with more contempt than did Stanton. He called him 'a low cunning clown'. He nicknamed him 'the original gorilla' and said that DuChaillu was a fool to wander about Africa trying to capture a gorilla when he could have found one so easily at Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln said nothing. He made Stanton his war minister because Stanton was the best man for the job. He treated Stanton with every courtesy. The years wore on and then one night came when the assassin's bullet murdered President Lincoln at the theatre. In the little room to which the President's body was taken there stood that same Stanton that night, and, looking down on the silent face of Lincoln in all it ruggedness, Stanton said through his tears, 'There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen.'" (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 133) Lincoln was a king among men. In a real sense, his self-control resulted in him inheriting the earth. The whole earth respects the character of and has felt the influence of Abraham Lincoln, who was a God-controlled man.

III. HUMILITY

The Greeks contrasted the quality of meekness with the quality of lofty heartedness. Thus meekness is that true humility which banishes pride.

Paul wrote concerning Christ's humility; *"Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."* (Philippians 2: 5-7)

The humble person is the teachable person. Only as one realizes his own ignorance, can he truly learn. He who considers that he has already attained, remains a complacent, conceited, and ignorant person. Quintilian, the great Roman teacher of oratory, said of certain of his scholars: "They would no doubt be excellent students, if they were not already convinced of their own knowledge." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 1: 92)

"The man who is meek is not even sensitive about himself. He is not always watching himself and his own interests. He is not always on the defensive. We all know about this, do we not? Is it not one of the greatest curses in life as a result of the fall – this sensitivity about self? We spend the whole of our lives watching ourselves. But when a man becomes meek he has finished with all that; he no longer worries about himself and what other people say. To be truly meek means we no longer protect ourselves, because we see there is nothing worth defending. So we are not on the defensive; all that is gone. The man who is truly meek never pities himself, he is never sorry for

himself. He never talks to himself and says, 'You are having a hard time, how unkind these people are not to understand you'. He never thinks: 'How wonderful I really am, if only other people gave me a chance.' Self-pity! What hours and years we waste in this! But the man who has become meek has finished with all that. To be meek, in other words, means we have finished with our self altogether and you come to see you have no rights or deserts at all. You come to realize that nobody can harm you. John Bunyan puts it perfectly. 'He that is down need fear no fall'. When a man truly sees himself, he knows nobody can say anything about him that is too bad. You need not worry about what men may say or do; you know you deserve it all and more. Once again, therefore, I would define meekness like this. The man who is truly meek is the one who is amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do. That, it seems to me, is its essential quality." Studies in the Sermon on the Mount; Lloyd-Jones (pg. 69)

The humble person is the person who considers others before himself. Wrote Paul*: "Live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you. Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of one another than you do of yourselves. None of you should think only of his own affairs, but each should learn to see things from other people's point of view."* (Philippians 2: 3, 4)

Blessed is the man who considers others before himself, for that man does not lose himself through competition but rather finds himself through cooperation.

Such a person considers people as being very important and things as being relatively unimportant. Learning how properly to evaluate reality, changes one from a grasping person to a giving person. One, who serves people instead of things, finds his rich reward in satisfaction. "To inherit the earth, it is not necessary that one literally possess it. Those inherit it who finds in it the richest and fullest and freest life. The selfish man cannot inherit the earth. The small bit of the earth that he wins rather possesses him and makes him, in some measure, its slave, while the wealth that is not his tends to make him restless by exciting his desire or his envy. But with the meek it is different. I have an old friend who recently spent a day sight-seeing in New York. He had a delightful time but when he returned to his hotel, he bowed reverently before God and said: 'Lord, I just want to thank thee that I haven't seen a thing today that I want'. This man is inheriting the earth. He can admire without coveting, and enjoy without owning." (Chappell, pgs. 46, 47) said Paul, *"I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how; to abased, and I know how in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want."* (Philippians 4: 11-12, RSV)

Ultimately the meek shall inherit the earth in every literal sense of the word. Says John the Revelator, *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be*

priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." **(Revelations 20: 6)**

CONCLUSION

We have noted the various meanings of the word 'meek'. The meek man is the man who knows when to be angry and when not to be angry. The meek man is the self-controlled man, or more realistically, the God-controlled man. The meek man is the humble man. He does not have an exaggerated view of his own importance, but rather he finds his satisfaction in service to his fellowmen. In a real sense the meek man inherits the world. His reward is found in the respect gained from his fellowmen, is found in the positive influence he can exert on the world, is found in the development of his personality through a life of serving people rather than grasping through for things. "Happy, blithesome, joyous, spiritually prosperous" is such a man.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT: **HOW MUCH TO YOU HUNGER?**

TEXT: ***"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."*** **(Matthew 5: 6)**

INTRODUCTION

Man is a spiritual being, and can't help but have spiritual longings. The question is, "Am I only half-hearted or am I whole-hearted in my quest to satisfy my spiritual longings?"

PROPOSITION

To the extent that I hunger, to that same extent I will be fulfilled.

I. MAN'S HUNGER

- **A. MAN HAS A PHYSICAL HUNGER**
- **B. MAN HAS A AESTHETIC HUNGER**
- **C. MAN HAS A MENTAL HUNGER**
- **D. MAN HAS A SPIRITUAL HUNGER**

II. MAN'S QUEST

- **A. MANY ARE MISGUIDED IN THEIR QUEST**
  1. **Many Are Seeking Happiness Instead Of Righteousness.**
  2. **Many Are Seeking To Dull Their Pain Instead Of Getting Rid Of the Cause Of the Pain.**
  3. **Many Are Seeking a Religious Experience Of Emotion, Instead Of the Righteousness Of God.**
- **B. MANY ARE HALF-HEARTED IN THEIR QUEST**
- **C. SOME ARE WHOLE-HEARTED IN THEIR QUEST**

III. MAN'S FULFILLMENT

- **A. HE WHO HUNGERS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE DELIVERED FROM THE GUILT OF SIN WHICH HAS ALIENATED HIM FROM GODS FELLOWSHIP FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE DELIVERED FROM THE GUILT OF SIN**
- **B. HE WHO HUNGERS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF SIN WHICH HAS HELD HIM IN BONDAGE TO EVIL HABITS**
- **C. HE WHO HUNGERS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE DELIVERED FROM THE POLLUTION OF SIN WHICH HAS INVADED HIS ENTIRE NATURE WITH EVIL DESIRE.**

CONCLUSION

Those who hunger for righteousness will be made positively holy and more Christ-like daily and progressively.

CHAPTER 5

HOW MUCH DO YOU HUNGER?

INTRODUCTION

The question is not 'Do I Hunger?' All men hunger for something. The question is 'How much do I hunger?' 'Do I hunger only for the bread that perishes?' 'Do I hunger only for physical, material beauty which soon fades?' 'Is my hunger limited to cultural enjoyment?' 'Do I hunger for more than knowledge which shall vanish away'? Or 'do I hunger for spiritual fulfillment also?'

The fact of the matter is, all men are seeking for spiritual fulfillment, whether they realize it or not. Man is a spiritual being, and can't help but have spiritual longings. The question is, "Am I only half-hearted or am I whole-hearted in my quest to satisfy my spiritual longings?" 'How much do I hunger?'

'Do I hunger for complete righteousness, for total deliverance from sin and self?'

PROPOSITION

These are the questions that each of us must personally face and answer for ourselves. Generalities will not suffice; each of us must be specific and personal in our answers to these questions. In considering our text, we will first look at Man's Hunger, then at Man's Quest, and finally at Man's Fulfillment. While the message speaks in general terms, each of us must specifically apply the truth to ourselves. To the extent that I hunger, to that same extent I will be fulfilled. The intensity of my hunger is an indication of the intensity of the satisfaction that I can anticipate. Man's greatest hunger is spiritual, and to the satisfaction of that hunger I must give myself totally.

I. MAN'S HUNGER

A. MAN HAS A PHYSICAL HUNGER

As Chappell well points out, hunger is a mark of life. Man cannot live without bread. A dead man needs no food; only the alive. At the funeral of a Chinaman, a friend of the deceased put a bottle of water and a bit of bread into the casket, in order to aid the departed in his journey into the unknown. But, of course, no gratitude was shown by the deceased. The dead need no food, only the living.

Man shares a common need with the entire animal and plant world for physical food and water. "An ordinary beech tree will drink sixty-five gallons on a hot summer day. An oak tree will drink far more. Some of this water must be carried to a height of more than one hundred feet." (Chappell, pg. 49)

A good appetite is a sign of good health. Growth is the product of a good appetite. To hunger is most normal, and leads even to genuine enjoyment. Man then, along with all other creatures and plants of the earth, experiences physical hunger.

B. MAN HAS AN AESTHETIC HUNGER

Man cannot live without bread, but man is not satisfied with physical bread alone. Man was made to gaze into the starry heavens and to be fascinated by the floating clouds. Who but man can compose and enjoy great music? Who but man longs to express himself on the canvas? Who but man is moved to tears or to laughter by great literature? Who but man is thrilled by the splendor of a sunrise, or fascinated by the song of a mocking bird?

Man longs to experience beauty. It is an innate quality that sets man apart from all other creatures of the earth.

C. MAN HAS A MENTAL HUNGER

Man hungers and thirsts for greater knowledge. One discovery drives him on in his next quest of the unknown. One invention leads naturally to a great and more complex invention. An answer creates a question; a solution leads to a further problem. Man must know; therefore man probes, experiments, and researches. There are those who are determined

> **"To follow like a sinking star,**
> **Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought."**
> **(Chappell, pg. 53)**

It is this insatiable hunger for knowledge that sets man apart as unique from all the creatures of the field. He who earnestly hungers and thirsts for knowledge, will find knowledge.

D. MAN HAS A SPIRITUAL HUNGER

Man is overbuilt for this life. Man is built for eternity and thus possesses a hunger for an ultimate fulfillment which goes beyond a hunger for simply the physical, aesthetic, and mental capacities. Man is basically and foremost a spiritual creature, and as such has spiritual cravings.

Man hungers to know the 'whys' of life, and is not satisfied to know merely the 'hows' of life. Man longs to know why he is living; he seeks to know the rhyme and reason for existence. 'Where did I come from?' 'Why am I here?' 'Where am I going?' 'What in life is lasting and

permanent?' 'What is right and what is wrong?' 'Do I as a person have any significance?'

Even when man has reached the lowest depths of depravity they are "clutching the remnants of virtue to them, in the brothel and on the scaffold." (Robert Louis Stevenson, quoted by Barclay in Matthew v. w, pg. 95) Man is made for goodness, righteousness, fellowship, nobility. However much man may try to deny his spiritual capacities, there remains an inextinguishable and gnawing hunger for spiritual fulfillment.

II. MAN'S QUEST

It is this latter hunger – the spiritual hunger – to which Jesus' Beatitude is directed. Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (a spiritual quality) for they shall be filled."* In other words, blessed are those who have an earnest hunger for spiritual fulfillment in life. The tragic thing of life is that so many are either misguided in their spiritual quest, or are only half-hearted in their quest.

A. MANY ARE MISGUIDED IN THEIR QUEST

1. Many Are Seeking Happiness Instead Of Righteousness.

"Now the whole world is seeking for happiness; there is no question about that. Everybody wants to be happy. That is the great motive behind every act and ambition, behind all striving and effort. Everything is designed for happiness. But the great tragedy of the world is that, though it gives itself to seek for happiness, it never seems to be able to find it. The present state of the world reminds us of that very forcibly. What is the matter? I think the answer is that we have never understood this text as we should have done. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness'. What does it mean? Let me put it negatively like this. We are not to hunger and thirst after blessedness; we are not to hunger and thirst after happiness. But that is what most people are doing. We put happiness and blessedness as the one thing that we desire, and thus we always miss it; it always eludes us. According to the Scriptures happiness is never something that should be sought directly: it is always something that results from seeking something else." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 75)

2. Many Are Seeking To Dull Their Pain Instead Of Getting Rid Of the Cause Of the Pain.

"Think of a man who is suffering from some painful disease. Generally the one desire of such a patient is to be relieved of his pain, and one can understand that very well. No-one likes suffering pain. The one idea of this patient therefore is to do anything which will relieve him of it. Yes, but if the doctor who is attending this patient is also only concerned about relieving this man's pain he is a very bad doctor. His primary duty is to discover the cause of the pain and to treat that. Pain is a wonderful symptom which is provided by nature to call attention to disease, and the ultimate treatment for pain is to treat the disease, not the pain. So if a doctor merely treats the pain without discovering the cause of the pain, he is not only acting contrary to nature, he is doing something that is extremely dangerous to the life of the patient The patient may be out of pain, and seems to be well; but the cause of the trouble is still there. Now that is the folly of which the world is guilty. It says, 'I want to get rid of my pain, so I will run to the pictures, or drink, or do anything to help me forget my pain.' But the question is, what is the cause of the pain and the unhappiness and the wretchedness? They are not happy who hunger and thirst after happiness and blessedness. No. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.'" (Lloyd-Jones, pgs, 75. 76)

Many feel the pangs of guilt, alienation, and fear, but instead of finding deliverance through seeking righteousness, they seek to dull their pain by drowning their thoughts. Some seek to silence their conscience through the consumption of alcoholic beverages or through the use of drugs. Others seek pleasures in sexual experimentation. Some are seeking pleasure in popular entertainment and world travel.

Many are the escapisms today, but none produces a cure for the pain of spiritual alienation and guilt. Man continues to be hounded by his conscience. His suppressed spiritual hunger seeks for satisfaction.

However, when one persistently denies his spiritual hunger and continues to feed from the husks of the world, he gradually loses any desire for the Bread of Life. Such a state is most pathetic. "As a proof of this, consider the vast number of people who frankly have no taste for the spiritual. The most inspiring service ever held would scarcely awaken their interest. The best sermon ever preached would bore them. The very thought of worship is

repellent. The Bible, throbbing with 'thought that breaths and words that burn', is to them the deadest of dead books. The great hymns of the Church, that for centuries have thrilled the hungry hearts of devout men and women and have served as stairways by which they have climbed into the presence of God, leave them dull and listless and uninterested. The man who has lost all appetite for his daily bread is to be pitied, but how infinitely greater is the tragedy when we lose all desire for the Bread of Life!" (Chappell, pg. 54)

3. Many Are Seeking a Religious Experience Of Emotion, Instead Of the Righteousness Of God.

In our consideration thus far we have noted the sinner's misguided quest for fulfillment and happiness. It is important for us to realize that even the Christian can become misguided in his quest for fulfillment and happiness. "There are large numbers of people in the Christian church who seem to spend the whole of their life seeking something which they can never find, seeking for some kind of happiness and blessedness. They go round from meeting to meeting, and convention to convention, always hoping they are going to get this wonderful thing, this experience that is going to fill them with joy and flood them with some ecstasy. They see that other people have had it, but they themselves do not seem to get it. So they seek it and covet it, always hungering and thirsting; but they never get it. Now that is not surprising. We are not meant to hunger and thirst after experiences; we are not meant to hunger and thirst after blessedness. If we want to be truly happy and blessed, we must hunger and thirst after righteousness. We must not put blessedness or happiness or experience in the first place. No, that is something that God gives to those who seek righteousness." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 76)

Church Shoppers; Church Hoppers who leaves one Church to go to another, seeking emotional happiness, excitement, the spectacular.

B. MANY ARE HALF-HEARTED IN THEIR QUEST

Says Barclay, "Many people suffer from what Robert Lewis Stevenson called 'the malady of not wanting'. It would obviously make the biggest difference in the world, if we literally desired goodness more than anything else in the world." (Barclay's Matthew; v. 1, pg. 95) Says God through Jeremiah, *"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."* (Jeremiah 29: 13) There are too many who serve God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him.

Many there are who are sentimental in their religious exercises but who are shallow in their conception of God.

The prophets of Israel criticized the Israelites for their religious ceremony and elaborate ritual, which were not accompanied with true repentance and lasting devotion. Their repentance was shallow; their love vanished like morning clouds and disappeared like dew. (Hosea 6: 4) *"The hearts of her people are false toward God."* (Hosea 10: 2; Living Prophesies)

God will not honor half-hearted devotion and mere sentimental expressions of faith. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. God said to Israel, *"I don't want your offerings – I want you to know me."* (Hosea 6:6) Said God to the complacent Church in Revelation, *"I know what you have done, and that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish that you were either cold or hot! But since you are lukewarm and neither not nor cold, I intend to spit you out of my mouth!"* (Revelations 3: 15, 16; Phillips)

C. SOME ARE WHOLE-HEARTED IN THEIR QUEST

When Jesus spoke about hungering and thirsting after righteousness, He was not speaking of a passing appetite but He was speaking of an overwhelming, desperate appetite. What did Jesus mean when he spoke of this spiritual hunger and thirst? He meant a deep and profound hunger for righteousness. "To hunger and thirst really means to be desperate, to be starving, to feel life is ebbing out, and to realize my urgent need of help." (Lloyd-Jones; 81) Hunger like a Starving man!

"The fact is that very few of us in modern conditions of life know what it is to be really hungry or really thirsty...In the ancient world it was very different. A working man in Palestine ate meat only once a week, and in Palestine the working man and the day laborer were never far from the borderline of real hunger and actual starvation. It was still more so in the case of thirst. In the ancient world it was not possible for the vast majority of people to turn a tap and find the clear, cold water pouring into their house. A man might be on a journey and in the midst of it the hot wind which brought the sand-storm might begin to blow. There was nothing for him to do but to wrap his head in his buries and turn his back to the wind, and wait, while the swirling sand filled his nostrils and his throat until he was like to suffocate for breath, and until he was parched with an imperious thirst. In the conditions of modern western life there is no parallel at all to that." (Barclay's Matthew; v. 1, pg. 94)

A man was "lost on the hot sand of a desert, without water. His thirst whipped his weary body to the point of madness. His distorted mind

was mocked with a cruel mirage of an oasis. He died frantically digging with his bare hands in the sand." (God's Psychiatry, pg. 143) Our thirst for righteousness must be as desperate as a dying man's thirst is for water. Wrote the Psalmist: *"As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."* (Psalms 42: 1)

"A soldier, returning from the front, said that he lay for long hours in the trenches without water. 'I became thirsty', he declared. 'I became so thirsty that I would gladly have given my right arm for one drink of water. I became so thirsty that I would have given both my arms for one drink of water. I became so thirsty that I would have given my life for one drink of water.'" (Chappell; pgs. 58, 59)

The man who is blessed is the man who is not seeking blessedness or happiness itself, but who is seeking righteousness. The natural benefit of righteousness is blessedness and happiness. His quest is not half-hearted and his devotion is not lukewarm. He is earnest, desperate and single-minded in his spiritual quest.

III. MAN'S FULFILLMENT

Says Barclay: "At the back (of this beatitude) there is the meaning that the man who is blessed is not necessarily the man who attains and achieves his goodness, but the man who longs for it with his whole heart. If blessedness came only to him who achieved, then none would be blessed. But blessedness comes to the man who, in spite of failures and failings, still clutches to him the passionate love of the highest. H.G. Wells somewhere said, 'A man may be a bad musician and yet be passionately in love with music.'" (Barclay's Matthew, v. 1, pg. 95) Browning said, "It is not what man does, but what man would do, that exalts him." (Chappell, pg. 59) David longed to build the Temple but was forbidden. However, he was blessed for having the right desire. "Whereas it was in thine heart to build me a house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart." So then, it is important for us to realize that a person is blessed in that he even hungers and thirsts for righteousness.

However, he who hungers for righteousness as a starving man hungers for food, will surely be satisfied. Jesus said, *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."* (Matthew 7: 7, 8)

The man who spiritually hungers and thirsts is the man who desires to be delivered from the guilt of sin, who desires to be delivered from the power of sin, and who desires to be delivered from the pollution of sin. In other words, he is the man who desires total or complete righteousness, complete deliverance from sin and self-centeredness.

A. HE WHO HUNGERS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE DELIVERED FROM THE GUILT OF SIN WHICH HAS ALIENATED HIM FROM GOD'S FELLOWSHIP

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness leads to reconciliation with God. To desire righteousness is to desire God's friendship and fellowship. It is to desire the Light instead of the Darkness. "It means that one's supreme desire in life is to know God and to be in fellowship with Him, to walk with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the light." (Lloyd Jones, pg. 79)

B. HE WHO HUNGERS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF SIN WHICH HAS HELD HIM IN BONDAGE TO EVIL HABITS

"The man we have been looking at in terms of these Beatitudes is a man who has come to see that the world in which he lives is controlled by sin and Satan; he sees that he is under the control of a malign influence, he has been walking 'according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' He sees that 'the god of this world' has been blinding him to various things, and now he longs to be free from this power that drags him down in spite of himself. He wants to be free from the power and the tyranny and the thralldom of sin." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 78) How great is our desire to be delivered from hurtful, harmful, unclean habits? (I Corinthians 6: 19, 20)

C. HE WHO HUNGERS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE DELIVERED FROM THE POLLUTION OF SIN WHICH HAS INVADED HIS ENTIRE NATURE WITH EVIL DESIRE.

The man who hungers for righteousness is the man who wants not only deliverance from what he has done, but also deliverance from what he is. "The man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, is a man who wants to get rid of that desire for sin, not only outside, but inside us well. In other words, he longs for deliverance from what you may call the pollution of sin. Sin is something that pollutes the very essence of our being and of our nature. The Christian is one who desires to be free from all that." (Ibid, pg. 78)

In other words, the person who truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness, is the person who desires complete deliverance from sin and selfishness, and who desires to be like Christ.

The person who earnestly seeks righteousness will be continually feeding from the Bread of Life. Jesus said, *"I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."* (John 6: 35) When a person earnestly hungers after righteousness, his hunger will always be fulfilled. "This does not mean, of course, that when we have come to Jesus he meets our needs once and for all, so that we never need come any

more. It rather means that we shall ever go on hungering and thirsting as those do who are in normal health, but that for every hunger and every thirst there shall be abiding satisfaction." (Chappell, pg. 60)

Such a person will be made gradually and progressively more like Christ, the altogether Righteous One. The Holy Spirit indwells the Christian and produces in him the fruits of Christ-like living. *"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Holy Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive)."* (John 7: 38, 39) The one, who seeks righteousness, is the one who is seeking Christ. Such a person shall be truly satisfied in this life and in the life hereafter.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that man's greatest hunger is his spiritual hunger. All men have this hunger, but many are misguided in their quest to satisfy this hunger. Others are only half-hearted in their quest to satisfy this spiritual hunger.

It is only those who hunger as a starving man hunger, who will be satisfied. Those who so hunger will be delivered from the power of sin which has held them in bondage to evil habits. And those who so hunger will be delivered from the pollution of sin which has pervaded their entire nature with evil desires. Those who hunger for righteousness will be made positively holy and more Christ-like daily and progressively.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 6

SUBJECT: **THE BLISS OF THE MERCIFUL!**

TEXT: ***"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."*** **(Matthew 5:7)**

INTRODUCTION

He who has truly been filled with God's righteousness is he who is truly merciful in his relationship with his fellowmen.

PROPOSITION

Let us note the meaning of 'being merciful'.

I. MEANING OF 'BEING MERCIFUL'

II. APPLICATION OF 'BEING MERCIFUL'

- **A. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE PHYSICALLY DISTRESSED**
- **B. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE SOCIALLY DISTRESSED**
- **C. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE MERCIFUL TO THE MENTALLY DISTRESSED**
- **D. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE MERCIFUL TO THE MORALLY DISTURBED**

III. RESULTS OF 'BEING MERCIFUL'

CONCLUSION

The merciful man is the man who combines pity, with action. Because he is merciful, he receives mercy in this life, and he will receive mercy in the life hereafter.

CHAPTER 6

THE BLISS OF THE MERCIFUL!

INTRODUCTION

We can discern a beautiful line of sequence in the Beatitudes. The man who sees himself in the light of God's holiness and God's standards, feels like Peter who cried out to Jesus, "Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8) He is a man who is "poor in spirit." The man who is poor in spirit is the man who mourns or repents of his sins. The man who repents is not proud but humble, not conceited but meek. The meek or humble man is the man who hungers for righteousness, in the same way a starving man hungers for food. He who is brought to this state of hungering and thirsting will surely be filled with God's righteousness.

The beatitude which we are concerned with today is a beatitude that describes the disposition of a healthy, growing Christian. He who has truly been filled with God's righteousness is he who is truly merciful in his relationships with his fellowmen. He who is delivered completely from sin and self- centeredness is able to care intensely for his fellowmen. In other words, he who has a wholesome vertical relationship is equipped to have a proper horizontal relationship.

PROPOSITION

Let us note the meaning of 'being merciful'.

I. MEANING OF 'BEING MERCIFUL'

To eliminate from our mind any distorted concepts in regards to mercy; let us note what 'being merciful' does not mean.

'Being merciful' does not mean being easy-going. "There are so many people today who think that being merciful means to be easy-going, not to see things, or if we do see them, to pretend we have not. That, of course, is a particular danger in an age like this which does not believe in law or discipline, and in a sense does not believe in justice or righteousness. The idea today is that man should be absolutely free minded, that he has the right to do just what he likes. The merciful person, many people think is one who smiles at transgression and law breaking." (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount; Lloyd-Jones; p 98) The merciful person does not entertain a tolerant view toward sin or wink at evil practices. He recognizes the seriousness of sin and realizes that mercy never negates justice and righteousness.

'Being merciful' does not mean merely the shedding of tears. The merciful person does sometimes shed tears, but those tears are a mere expression of a deep sympathy which finds its fulfillment in redemptive action. 'Being merciful' is more than merely shedding tears because we are sorry for someone.

'Being merciful' does not mean merely serving someone. It is possible to serve someone out of a selfish motive. It is possible to serve someone with an icy piety, which service belittles another instead of helping another. It is possible to give money or services to another and make that recipient feel that he has merely been the object of charity to be pitied rather than the subject to be love and cherished.

It is even possible to give service and to think we are being merciful, when we really are not. Martha thought she was being merciful and kind to Jesus when Jesus came to her home. Wanting to provide the best meal possible for Jesus, she hurried and scurried around the house. What Jesus wanted, however, was not the best in food and entertainment, but He wanted quiet and rest and fellowship with His friends. It was Mary who was truly merciful. Martha thought she was merciful simply because she was serving Jesus with great physical energy.

What does it mean to be merciful? "Mercy means the ability to get right inside the other person's skin until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind, and feel things with his feelings. This is sympathy in the literal sense of the word. Sympathy is derived from two Greek words, 'sun' which means 'together with', and 'paschain' which means 'to experience' or 'to suffer'. Sympathy means experiencing things together with the other person, literally going through what he is going through." (Barclay's Matthew; v. 1, pg. 98)

Mercy then is pity plus action. To have pity alone is not enough. That would result in the shedding of tears without the object of pity being helped. Action is not enough, for humanitarian effort which is not coupled with heartfelt pity, is cold and belittling to the needy person. The Good Samaritan is an excellent example of what mercy is. The Good Samaritan felt pity for crippled and his pity produced action. It is not enough to be sorry for someone – the priest and Levite were both sorry for the injured man. That sorrow must take on hands and feet and give money to help the unfortunate. The merciful man can actually identify with the sorrows of others. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and the Christian must be like his Master.

II. APPLICATION OF 'BEING MERCIFUL'

We have noted in a general way what it means to be merciful. Let us now note the various ways in which Christians are to be merciful.

A. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE PHYSICALLY DISTRESSED

Florence Nightingale was one who was merciful to the physically injured. She nursed the fighting men in the Crimean War, and was outstanding in promoting the development of the nursing profession.

"There was Father Damien, for thirteen years a missionary to the lepers on Molokai. Finally the dread disease laid hold of him. One morning he spilled some boiling water on his foot. But there was not the slightest pain. Then he knew he was doomed. He knew that death had come to his body and little by little would take possession." (God's Psychiatry, pg. 133) He gave his life to save others.

Francis of Assisi is one of the most noted in history for his concern for the distressed and downtrodden. "Francis set about preaching in his native town. Others, attracted, joined themselves to him. As their rule he gave them the command of Jesus to sell all and give to the poor and to go forth without staff, food, money, or a second coat, preaching the kingdom of God and healing the sick. They called themselves the penitents of Assisi. They made the Portiuncula their headquarters and built near it huts of boughs. For a habit, they wore tunics of the brown coarse cloth from which peasants made clothing. They went about, barefooted, two by two, preaching and helping the peasants in the work of the fields." (A History of Christianity by Latourette, pg. 4430)

B. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE SOCIALLY DISTRESSED

"John Howard Griffin undertook in the fall of 1959 a personal assignment to find out the hard way, possibly the only way a white man can, what it is like to be a Negro in the South. He decided to darken his skin and travel through several southern states. 'Black Like Me' (his book) is the record, offered in all its crudity and rawness, of this dangerous and often terrifying mission." (Cover preview of 'Black Like Me)

Said Griffin; "With my decision to become a Negro I realized that I a specialist in race issues really knew nothing of the Negro's real problems." (Black Like Me, pg. 2) He identified in a very literal sense with the Negro race, and as a consequence is able to better communicate a heartfelt concern to the White community.

William Booth is noted for his great social concerns. "One day Booth arrived at the door of a fine, newly built London Church with a group of ragged people from the slums and was told to take them to their proper place at the back. The very people to whom Methodism had first come were thus discriminated against. As a consequence Booth, driven by the same compassion as had stirred Wesley, organized the East London Revival Society, later known as the Salvation Army." (Living In Two Worlds; pgs. 104, 105)

Jesus was socially ostracized because he was willing to identify with the socially despised and outcast. He identified with their problems, not with their practice. He was called a winebibber not because he drank wine to excess, but because he identified with winebibbers' problems, and associated in their company. Jesus truly cared, and His followers must also truly care.

C. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE MENTALLY DISTRESSED

There are many kinds of mental stresses. Whether it is working in a mental hospital with advanced cases, or whether it is putting an arm of understanding around the neck of a teenager who is mentally distressed over his sudden introduction into manhood, the Christian is one who seeks to truly sympathize and help.

"There may be those who are shivering with cold from lack of adequate clothing or for want of a fire to keep them warm. But for every one of these there are thousands who are shivering in their souls for lack of sympathy or encouragement or the handclasp of a brother." (Chappell, pg. 57)

"There is a story of a certain preacher who was one day having his shoes shined. He was in a bit of a hurry. When he thought it was about time for the task to be finished, he looked down only to find his shoes in worse condition than they were at the beginning. He spoke sharply to the little bootblack. It was then that the little fellow looked up and showed a fact that was wet with tears. 'I am sorry, sir', he said. 'But my mother died this morning, and I am trying to make a little money to buy some flowers to put on her coffin'. And the preacher saw that it was his tears falling on his shoes that were making it impossible for him to shine them. Of course all condemnation died in his heart. 'Since that experience,' he declared, "I have gone about my ministry with a new outlook. I feel now as if I were walking over a battle field after the battle, caring for the wounded and the dying.'" (Chappell, pg. 69)

"Queen Victoria was a close friend of Principal and Mrs. Tulloch of St. Andrews. Prince Albert died and Victoria was left alone. Just at the same time Principal Tulloch died and Mrs. Tulloch was left alone. All unannounced Queen Victoria came to call on Mrs. Tulloch when she was resting on a couch in her room. When the Queen stepped forward: 'My dear', she said, 'don't rise. I am not coming to you today as a queen to a subject, but as the woman who has lost her husband to another.'" (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 100)

The Christian is like his Master. Jesus got inside of human skin and is thus able truly to sympathize. The Christian is a sympathetic person.

D. CHRISTIANS RARE TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE MORALLY DISTURBED

Christians do not loath the sinner, for the Christian knows that he is merely a sinner saved by grace. Said George Whitefield as he saw a criminal walk to the gallows "There but for the grace of God, goes I." (Barclay's Roman, pg. 176) There is no feeling of pride or superiority in that.

If God has forgiven, then we should forgive others. Says Lloyd-Jones, "Have you not felt sorry for people who show from the expression on their faces the bitterness and the anger they feel? They are to be pitied. Look at the things about which they get angry, showing that their whole central spirit is wrong; so unlike Christ, so unlike God who has forgiven them everything. We should feel a great sorrow for them; we should be praying to God for them and asking Him to have mercy upon them. I say that all this follows of necessity if we have truly experienced what it means to be forgiven. If I know that I am a debtor to mercy alone, if I knew that I am a Christian solely because of that free grace of God, there should be no pride left in me, there should be nothing vindictive, there should be no insisting upon my rights. Rather, as I look out upon others, if there is anything in them that is unworthy, or that is a manifestation of sin, I should have this great sorrow for them in my heart." (pgs. 103, 104)

III. RESULTS OF 'BEING MERCIFUL'

Jesus said, *"Blessed are the merciful,for they shall obtain mercy." The reward for showing mercy is to be shown mercy.*

There is not a man alive who does not need to be shown mercy. We are full of mistakes in judgment and in conduct. We need forgiveness for our sins of omission as well as forgiveness for our sins of commission. Each of us must feel like the men to whom Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, cast the first stone." One by one, each left the scene.

"That was a wise and just word that John Wesley spoke to Governor Oglethorpe. The Governor was berating a servant who had just drunk all his favorite wine. 'I will be avenged', he cried. 'I never forgive'. 'In that case', said Mr. Wesley, 'I hope you never sin'. It is a fitting word for every one of us." (Chappell, pg. 88)

Because Onesiphorus was a merciful man, Paul asked God that he might obtain mercy on the Day of Judgment. "But may the Lord have mercy on the household of Onesiphorus. Many times did that man put fresh heart into me, and he was not in the least ashamed of my being a prisoner in chains. Indeed, when he was in Rome he went to a great deal of trouble to find me – may the Lord grant he finds his mercy in that day! – And you will know in how many ways he helped me at Ephesus as well." (II Timothy 1: 16-18; Phillips.) We too will need mercy on the Day of Judgment when all of our life is totally scrutinized by God. Those who have shown mercy here on earth will receive mercy hereafter.

In a real sense, the merciful man receives mercy in his everyday relationships. "The attitude of men toward ourselves depends largely upon our attitude toward them." (Chappell, pg. 70) The merciful is friendly, therefore he has friends. The merciful shows kindness in times of hardship, therefore he is shown kindness in his own times of hardship. The merciful sacrifices for others, therefore others sacrifice for him. The merciful honors others, and therefore he is honored.

CONCLUSION

William Barclay feels that the true explanation of this beatitude is as follows:

> **O the bliss of the man who gets right inside other people,**
> **Until He can see with their eyes, think with their thoughts,**
> **Feel with their feelings, for he who does that will find others do the same for him, and will know that that is what God in Jesus Christ has done!**
>
> **(Barclay's Matthew, pg. 100)**

The merciful man is the truly sympathetic man. He is the man who combines pity with action. The Christian man follows Christ's example. He shows true sympathy for the physically distressed, the socially distressed, the mentally distressed, and the morally distressed. Because he is merciful, he receives mercy in this life, and he will receive mercy in the life hereafter.

CHAPTER 7

OUTLINE

SUBJECT: NEEDED: SINGLE-MINDEDNESS AND CLEANSING

TEXT: ***"Blessed are the pure in heart" for they shall see God."*** **(Matthew 5:8)**

INTRODUCTION

One who is completely filled with all of God's righteousness is pure in his nature and affections.

PROPOSITION

What does it mean to be pure in heart? How can I become pure in heart? What happens when I am pure in heart?

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PURE IN HEART?

- **A. MEANING OF 'HEART'**
- **B. MEANING OF 'PURITY'**
  1. **Purity of Motive**
  2. **Purity of Desire**
  3. **Purity of Affection**
  4. **Purity of Mind**

II. HOW CAN I BECOME PURE IN HEART?

- **A. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PERSONAL INSUFFICIENCY**
- **B. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY**

III. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I BECOME PURE IN HEART?

- **A. IN GOD'S WORKS**
- **B. IN GOD'S PROVIDENCES**
- **C. IN THE HEREAFTER**

CONCLUSION

It is the pure in heart who see God everywhere – in nature, in history, in circumstances, in redemption, in science, in the hereafter.

CHAPTER 7

NEEDED: SINGLE-MINDEDNESS AND CLEANSING!

INTRODUCTION

"Now the first three Beatitudes were concerned with our need, our consciousness of need – poor in spirit, mourning because of our sinfulness, meek as the result of a true understanding of the nature of self and its great ego-centricity, that terrible thing that has ruined the whole of life. These three emphasize the vital importance of a deep awareness of need. Then comes the great statement of the satisfaction of the need, God's provision for it, 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled'. Having realized the need, we hunger and thirst, and then God comes with His wondrous answer that we shall be filled, fully satisfied. From there on we are looking at the result of that satisfaction, the result of being filled. We become merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 107)

Today we want to look at a beatitude that describes one of the results of "being filled with righteousness." One who is completely filled with all of God's righteousness, that is one who is delivered from all sin and all self, is merciful in his relationships and is pure in his nature and affections.

PROPOSITION

Let us look at this beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." What does it mean to be pure in heart? How can I become pure in heart? What happens when I am pure in heart? These are the questions that we will endeavor to answer.

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PURE IN HEART?

A. MEANING OF 'HEART'

Jesus speaks about the pure in 'heart'. What is the Biblical meaning of 'heart'? Says one, "The heart in Scripture is variously used, sometimes for the mind and understanding, sometimes for the will, sometimes for the affections, sometimes for the conscience, sometimes for the whole soul. Generally, it denotes the whole soul of man and all the faculties of it." (Paul Rees, Prayer and Life's Highest, pg. 121)

Lloyd-Jones adds also a helpful definition. "According to the general scriptural usage of the term, the heart means the centre of the personality. It does not merely mean the seat of the affections and emotions. This Beatitude is not a statement to the affect that the Christian faith is something primarily emotional, not intellectual or pertaining to the will; Not at all. The heart in Scripture includes the three. It is the centre of man's being and personality; it is the fount out

of which everything else comes. It includes the mind; it includes the will; it includes the heart. It is the total man; and that is the thing which our Lord emphasizes." (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount; pgs. 109, 110)

B. MEANING OF 'PURITY'

When Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart", He meant, "Blessed are those whose total being is purified by God." This purity is purity from unholy affections, purity from ulterior motives, purity from double-mindedness, purity from pride. Says Chappell; "To be pure in heart is to be simple, sincere, and whole-hearted." (pg. 85) Says Lloyd-Jones; about purity, "This pureness of heart corresponds to 'singleness'. It means, if you like, 'without folds'; it is open, nothing hidden. You can describe it as sincerity; it means single-mindedness, or single-eyed devotion...It also obviously carries the further meaning of 'cleansed', 'without defilement." (pg. 111)

1. Purity of Motive

The one who is 'pure in heart' is the one who is cleansed from ulterior or inferior motives. "The Greek word for pure is katharos...The basic meaning of katharos is unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed. This beatitude could be translated: Blessed is the man whose motives are always entirely unmixed, for that man shall see God." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 101)

Says Barclay, "If we are quite honest we will have to admit that we very seldom do anything with absolutely unmixed motives. Even when we do something fine there may be entangled with it motives of prudence, of prestige, of self-display, of fear, of calculations, of reward. Men may never see these motives, but, as Thomas Aquinas said, 'Men regardeth the deed but God seeth the intention'." (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 194)

2. Purity of Desire

Said Professor James W. Clark, of Princeton Theological Seminary, "So many of us Christians are going through life at half or three-quarter pressure. We are thought to be alive, and are partly dead. We make religious affirmations, but are defective in religious conduct and service. We are, like Ananias, keeping back part of the price, for we are split in our enthusiasms, divided in our minds, and faltering in our loyalties." (Paul Rees; Prayer and Life's Highest, pg. 81)

Because we are 'split in our enthusiasm', we are half-hearted in our devotion, inconsistent in our practice, shallow in our testimony, sporadic in our progress, and irregular in our Church attendance. We need to be cleansed of wrong desire or of inferior desire. "We should live to the glory of God in every respect, and that should be the supreme desire of our life. It means that we desire God that we desire to know Him that we desire to love Him, and to service Him." (L. Jones, pg. 112)

Beware what you desire, for what you desire you will surely receive. If you desire evil companions, you will find evil companions. If you desire the company of the righteous, you will seek out the company of the righteous. What your really want, you will organize all your time and energy around, to obtain. You have time to do what you really want to do. Where your treasure is, there is where your heart will be also. If God is your treasure, then all of your desires will be God-honoring.

3. Purity of Affection

Being pure in heart means that "we have an undivided love which regards God as our highest good, and which is concerned only about loving God. To be pure in heart, in other words, means to keep 'the first and great commandment', which is that 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind'." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 112)

To love God supremely, we must be cleansed thoroughly. This cleansing involves the cleansing of body, soul, and spirit – the three components that generally identify man as unique from all other creatures. Wrote Paul, *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (I Thessalonians 5:23)

Dr. Griffith Thomas says "The spirit is that innermost part of our life which is related to God. The soul is the inner life regarded in itself, as the seat and sphere of intellect, heart and will. The body is the outward vehicle and expression of the soul and spirit through which we are enabled to serve God." (Prayer and Life's Highest, pg. 85)

Our spirit is made to love God supremely. Our soul with its rational, volitional, and affectional capacities is made to love

God supremely. Our body with all of its members is made to love God, supremely.

4. Purity of Mind

Wrote Paul *"Unto the pure all things are pure but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."* (Titus 1:15) The mind and conscience needs a thorough cleansing from all defilement. Paul wrote to Christians, *"Let this same attitude and purpose and (humble) mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 2:5, Amplified)

Our mind must be cleansed, for, as someone said, what we ponder we will perform. Meditation leads to action. Mental blueprints precede metal inventions. Impure thoughts lead to impure acts. A mental landslide always precedes a moral landslide. What I think I gradually become. To take garbage into the mind results in living a trashy life. *"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."* (Proverbs 23:7a)

"Sow a thought, reap an action;
Sow an action, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny."

II. HOW CAN I BECOME PURE IN HEART?

If a man is polluted in his nature by sin and in need of cleansing, how can man become pure in heart?"

A. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PERSONAL INSUFFICIENCY

Before one can become cleansed from the pollution of sin, he must realize that he cannot cleanse his own nature. "The very acceptance of the blood of Christ for cleansing excludes confidence in any other mode of deliverance suggested. Self-sanctification is out of the question. The blood of Jesus Christ is the sovereign remedy. It needs no supplement, and it can have no substitute. The great Physician has proved and prescribed the all-sufficient cure for sin. Self-cure by self-administered patent medicines, concocted by religious quacks, or by homemade remedies, is impossible, for the germs of the disease are in the medicine, especially the germs of pride. Efforts at self-cure remind one of the words Shakespeare put in Caesar's mouth 'its monstrous

labor when I wash my brain, and it grows fouler'." (Paul Taylor, Holiness, the Finished Foundation, pgs. 55, 56)

B. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY

"What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my pardon this I see –
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
For my cleansing, this my plea –
Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

"Therefore Jesus also suffered and died outside the (city's) gate in order that He might purify and consecrate the people through (the shedding of) His own blood, and set them apart as holy – for God." **(Hebrews 1312; Amplified) Christ died in order that we might be made pure and holy. Christ is able to deliver from all sin.**

"Let the water and the blood
From thy wounded side which flowed
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure."

It is Christ who cleanses; it is man who exercises faith in Christ's cleansing power. "Frances Ridley Havergal was saved in her 14th year, but did not enter into the experience of entire sanctification until she was 37. Active in Church work and hymn writing, she longed for the hour 'when He will reveal himself to me more directly – gleams and glimpses, but oh to be filled with Joy and the Holy Ghost! Why cannot I trust Him fully'? A friend sent her a tiny book, 'All For Jesus', which she read carefully. 'It was that one word 'cleanseth' which opened the door of a very glory of hope and joy for me. Not a coming to be cleansed in the fountain only, but a remaining so that it may go on cleansing'. Joyously she cried, 'I see it all, and I have the blessing'." (Entire Sanctification: Studies in Christian Holiness, pg. 73)

III. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I BECOME PURE IN HEART?

Jesus said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Only the pure in heart can truly see God.* Says E. Stanley Jones: "The central insight that is needed is men who can see God – God at work in redemption, in

science, in beauty, in the moral universe, overruling the affairs of men. The pure in heart are in the breathless adventure of seeing God everywhere"!

The one who is pure in heart sees God in different ways.

A. IN GOD'S WORKS

"Where other men see dead matter, they (the pure in heart) see the Creator's delicacy of touch." (Ibid, pg. 334)

To the one who is pure in heart:

> **"Heaven above is softer blue,**
> **Earth around is sweeter green;**
> **Something lives in every hue,**
> **Christless eyes have never seen;**
> **Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,**
> **Flowers with deeper beauties shine,**
> **Since I know, as now I know,**
> **I am His, and He is mine."**
> **(Barclay's Hebrews, pg. 57)**

Robert Burns said that he could see in the meanest flower that blows thoughts that lay too deep for tears. Nature is not God, but God saturates nature. The pure in heart sees God in all of nature. Nature is a shrine for God's beautiful presence.

> **"This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise**
> **The morning light, the lily white, declare their Master's praise.**
> **This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair:**
> **In the rustling grass I hear him pass,**
> **He speaks to me everywhere."**

Said Wesley; "The pure in heart see all things full of God. They see him in the firmament of heaven; in the moon, walking in brightness; in the sun, when he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. They see him 'making his clouds his chariots, and walking upon the wings of the wind'. They see him 'preparing rain for the earth, and blessing the increase of it; giving grass for the cattle, and green herb for the use of man'." (Book of Sermons; v. 1; pgs. 200, 201)

B. IN GOD'S PROVIDENCES

The pure in heart can also see God in history and in circumstances. Because the Christian believes in God's Sovereignty, the Christian also believes in God's Providence in the events of mankind and in the choices that determine personal destiny. To the Christian, history has a goal. History is not an endless maze of detached events with no cohesion or consummation. History is not cyclic, endlessly repeating itself for no purpose. Rather, history is dynamic and all leading to God who will have the last word and the final battle. A Christian is an optimist, despite the sin, suffering, and crime all around. A Christian cannot view history's consummation as H.G. Wells did. Wells once said, "Man, who began in a cave behind a windbreak, will end in the diseased soaked ruins of a slum." The end of history is not despair but it is hope, for Christ stands at the end of history as the final Consummator. In E. Stanley Jones book, he states, "Where others see history as a mere matter of meaningless events, they (the pure in heart) see history as his story pg. 335."

If it is important to realize that God is big enough and powerful enough to control the laws of nature and the events of history, then it is equally important to realize that God is loving enough and Fatherly enough to control the circumstances of life which determine personal destiny.

"To see God, then, is to realize him, to be sure of him. It is to have life made radiant by the most blessed of all certainties, the certainty of God...To see God, therefore, is to be sure of him, to realize him amidst all the laughter and tears of the life that now is." (Chappell, pg. 78)

C. IN THE HEREAFTER

The pure in heart not only see God in the works of nature and in the providences of history and of circumstances, but finally the pure in heart shall see God face to face in the hereafter. What a glorious hope and anticipation! ***"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."*** **(I Corinthians 13:12)** ***"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."*** **(I John 3:2)**

The future is so wonderful and glorious for the Christian that he cannot even comprehend it. ***"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."*** **(I Corinthians 2:9)**

The Christian shall live with God forever! ***"And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever."*** **(Revelations 22: 4, 5)**

God's glory is so marvelous that it defies words to describe it, but John endeavored to give a description of God's glory. ***"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*** **(Revelations 19:11-16)**

CONCLUSION

When we consider the rewards for the pure in heart, it ought to make us desire purity more than anything else in the entire world. It is the pure in heart who sees God everywhere – in nature, in history, in circumstances, in redemption, in science, in the hereafter.

The pure in heart are those who are cleansed of ulterior motives, who are cleansed of divided loyalties, who are cleansed of a double mind, who are cleansed of unworthy desires, who are cleansed of faulty affections. The pure in heart loves God with all of his spiritual capacities, with all of his volitional capacities, with all of his affectional capacitates, with all of his rational capacities, with all of his physical capacities.

To become pure in heart, one must acknowledge his inability to cleanse himself, and he must acknowledge that Christ's Blood alone is able to cleanse from all sin and from all self-centeredness.

Mrs. Phoebe Palmer and her husband were pioneer teachers in the holiness movement of this country. Although converted at an early age, her realization of God's full provision was not satisfied until sometime later. Determined to seek until she found, she gathered a few friends together to pray f or her own sanctification.

Her unforgettable experience is related in her hymn 'The Cleansing Wave'. As it was not until the breaking of the new day that she comprehended this unmerited gift of God, we realize the significance of this stanza, written while watching the sunrise:

"I see the new creation rise
I hear the speaking blood;
It speaks! Polluted nature dies
Sinks 'neath the crimson flood."

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 8

SUBJECT: **THE BLISS OF THE PEACEMAKER**

TEXT: ***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*** **(Matthew 5:9)**

INTRODUCTION

Being a peacemaker is the outward expression of inward holiness and purity.

PROPOSITION

While most desire peace, it is another thing to understand the true way to peace and the true works of peace.

I. DESIRE FOR PEACE

II. WAY TO PEACE

- **A. PEACE BETWEEN INNER SELF AND OUTER SELF**
- **B. PEACE BETWEEN FORWARD DRIVE AND BACKWARD PULL**
- **C. PEACE BETWEEN THE HIGHER NATURE AND THE LOWER NATURE**

III. WORK FOR PEACE

CONCLUSION

God is called the God of peace, and it was for this purpose that He came – to give peace to man.

CHAPTER 8

THE BLISS OF THE PEACEMAKER!

INTRODUCTION

Martyn Lloyd-Jones suggests that verse 6, *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled",* is the link which closely connects the three beatitudes before this verse and the three beatitudes after this verse. He says that there is a close connection between the beatitudes which proceed and which follow the statement in verse 6 –"poverty of spirit and being merciful can be regarded together, the mourning for sin and being pure in heart are similarly connected, and, in exactly the same way, the meekness and being peacemakers correspond to each other; and the link between them is always that waiting upon God for that fullness which He alone can give." (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, pg. 117)

Our subject for today is peace and peacemakers. Becoming a peacemaker is a result of being filled with the righteousness of God. Being a peacemaker is the outward expression of inward holiness and purity. Being at peace with God, which is being delivered from all sin, self-centeredness – prepares one to bring peace to one's fellowmen?

PROPOSITION

Let us discuss in some detail the dynamics of this peace. While most desire peace, it is another thing to understand the true way to peace and the true works for peace.

I. DESIRE FOR PEACE

There is little doubt that the desire for peace appears to be almost universal among mankind. There is a great differences of opinion as to what peace really is, and how to attain peace, but it will not be denied that there is a great desire for peace among us.

The night before Franklin D. Roosevelt died; he wrote a speech which he intended to present before the organization of the United Nations. The last words he ever wrote were these:

> **"We seek peace – enduring peace...We must cultivate the science**
> **Of human relations – the ability of all people, of all kinds,**
> **To live together and work together, in the same world, at peace.**
> **As we go forward toward the greatest contribution that any generation**
> **Of human beings can make in the world – the contribution of**
> **Lasting peace – I ask you to keep up your faith."**
> **(God's Psychiatry, pg. 152)**

We despise the ravages of war, which bring so much loss and tragedy to home and nation. Streams of tears are shed over the loss of human lives – lives that represent families, jobs, dreams, aspirations, hopes. We are reminded of that heart-rending poem that describes the tragedy of personal loss through war.

"Where are you going, Young Fellow, My Lad,
On this glittering morn of May?
I am going to join the colors, Dad,
They are wanting men, they say.
But you are only a boy, Young Fellow, My Lad,
You are not obliged to go.
I'm seventeen and a quarter, Dad,
And ever so strong, you know."

"So you are off to France, Young Fellow, My Lad?
And you are looking so fit and bright.
I'm dreadfully sorry to leave you, Dad,
But I feel that I am doing right.
God bless you and keep you, Young Fellow, My Lad,
For you are all my life, you know.
Don't worry; I'll soon be back, dear Dad,
And I', awfully proud to go."

"What is the matter, Young Fellow, My Lad?
No letter again to-day?
And why did the postman look so sad
And sigh as he turned away?
I hear them say that we've gained new ground,
But a terrible price we've paid.
God grant, my boy, that you are safe and sound,
But O, I'm afraid, afraid"!

"They've told me the truth, Young Fellow, My Lad,
And you'll never come home again.
O God, the dreams and the dreams I've had
And the hopes I've nursed in vain!
For you passed in the night, Young Fellow, My Lad,
But you proved in that terrible test,
Of the bursting shell and the battle hell,
That my boy was one of the best."
(Chappell's Sermon on Mount, pg. 94)

We shudder to think of the millions of lives which have been ushered into eternity from off the battlefields of the world – the more than thirty millions of human lives in World War II alone.

And yet, Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the peace-lovers"; he said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers."* To desire peace at any price is simply to complicate problems and eventually to bring more devastating wars. "You can postpone war by appeasement; but it generally means that you are doing something that is unjust and unrighteous in order to avoid war. The mere avoidance of war does not make peace; it does not solve the problem." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 121)

"Pacifism will fail, for the pacifist acts as if all men are regenerate and can be appealed to through persuasion and goodwill. The pacifist also refuses to recognize the role of power in the preservation of justice, alongside the role of love. While disarmament might be desirable, unilateral disarmament would be folly in our present world. We must first disarm men's passions and change their hearts. War must be removed from men's hearts before it can be removed from the world's battlefields." (Billy Graham; World Aflame, pg. 209)

Many are the books that are written on the way to happiness and peace of mind. "The fact that the late Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman's book 'Peace of Mind' has now sold nearly a million copies is eloquent testimony that people are interested in peace." (God's Psychiatry, pg. 153)

II. WAY TO PEACE

If mankind desires peace so much and has sought peace for so long without finding it, then the urgent question we must face is this, 'What is the true way to peace?'

Man has failed to find peace because he has gone down the wrong roads in his attempt to find peace. Some have felt that Economics had the answer to peace. Others have felt that primarily through political processes or across the peace tables, lasting peace could be achieved. Many have felt that psychology and sociology would give the final solutions to war and misunderstandings. Others have put all their faith in science or in military might as the guarantees to peace.

"The explanation of all our troubles is human lust, greed, selfishness, self-centeredness; it is the cause of all the trouble and the discord, whether between individuals, or between groups within a nation, or between nations themselves...Why is there so much trouble and difficulty in maintaining peace in the world?...I suggest to you that there is only one adequate answer to that question; it is not political, it is not economic, it is not social. The answer once more is essentially and primarily theological and doctrinal. And it is because the world in its folly and blindness will not recognize this that it wastes so much time. The trouble according to the Scripture is in the heart of

man, and until the heart of man is changed, you will never solve this problem by trying to make manipulations on the surface. If the source of the trouble is in the fountain and the origin from which the stream comes, is it not obviously a waste of time and money and energy to be pouring chemicals into the stream in an attempt to cure the condition? You must go to the source. There is the essential trouble; none of these things can possibly work while man remains what he is. The tragic folly of this twentieth century is our failure to see that. And, alas, it is not only the failure which is found in the world, it is a failure to be found even in the Church herself." (Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, pgs. 119, 120)

Christ came to give inner peace. He died on the cross for this purpose. *"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."* (Colossians 1:19, 20)

***"By his sacrifice he removed the hostility of the Law, with all its commandments and rules, and made in himself out of the two, Jew and gentile, one new man, thus producing peace."* (Ephesians 2:15, Phillips)**

What this beatitude probably means is "Blessed is the one who helps produce right relationships between his fellowmen." However, before one can help produce peace between others, he himself must be at peace with God.

One person points out that the peacemaker must have peace between his inner self and his outer self, between his forward drive, and his backward pull, between his higher nature and his lower nature. (God's Psychiatry, pg. 154)

A. PEACE BETWEEN INNER SELF AND OUTER SELF

To attempt to appear peaceful and loving on the outside while one is tumultuous and hateful on the inside is to live a hypocritical life. *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.* (Matthew 23:27, 28; R.S.V.)

Jesus came to bring peace between the inner self and the outer self. He came to make man sincere and righteous. It is only as one has found such peace can he ever bring peace to others.

B. PEACE BETWEEN FORWARD DRIVE AND BACKWARD PULL

The aspirations, dreams, hopes, and plans drive one towards the future for fulfillment and realization. However, the guilt and condemnation, that the memory of sin brings results in pulling one backwards in life. Memory of the unpleasant past produces a drag on the present and obscures the vision of the future. What man needs is a resolution of the guilt and hangover from the past. We need to know that our past is forgiven and that we are in a right relationship with God ourselves, before we can ever help produce a right relationship between our fellowmen.

Clarence E. Macartney, the great Presbyterian preacher, once announced to his congregation that he was going to bring a sermon on the most beautiful word in the Bible and in human speech. Some thought the word would be "grace", some thought it would be "mother" or "salvation" or "come." The word that received the greatest vote was "love." But none of these Macartney chose. In his message he stated, "The greatest word in the Bible, the most beautiful word spoken in heaven or on earth is the word 'forgiveness.' There you have love in action, for 'herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' Like all the colors of the rainbow, this word 'forgiveness' includes all the attributes of God, His Wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth...Forgiveness is the most beautiful word because it kindles the most beautiful light in the face of God or in the countenance of man. It is the most beautiful word because it is the costliest word. Before God could pronounce it, Christ had to die on the cross. It is the word that the apostles and the angels like to pronounce. It is the word that is dearest to every true believer. It is the word that will awaken the music of the redeemed in heaven, for that is what they sing about there – the forgiveness of God"! (Forgetting to Remember; Sermon by Robert Andrews; Transmitter, Sept. 1968)

One of the greatest thinkers of all time was Copernicus. He revolutionized the thinking of mankind in regard to the universe. The epitaph on his grave at Freudenberg is this: 'I do not seek a kindness equal to that given to Paul; nor do I ask the grace granted to Peter; but that forgiveness which thou didst give to the robber – that I earnestly pray. God's Psychiatry (pg. 156)

Christ came to take the guilt of sin away, to remove the backward pull and drag on life. Removing the backward pull, Christ enables one to surge ahead with confidence in bringing peace to the world of men and nations.

C. PEACE BETWEEN THE HIGHER NATURE AND THE LOWER NATURE

Christ died on the Cross in order that our whole nature might be perfected and cleansed by God. Christ came to heal our split enthusiasms, to cure our divided loyalties, to destroy our double-mindedness, and to cleanse our carnal hearts. We must completely decide to go God's way. "Oh the tragedy of one who cannot make a decision, there is marvelous inner peace which comes to one who completely decides for God." (God's Psychiatry, pg. 15) Divided loyalties will result in divided personality and eventually a destroyed personality. "A divided personality means at once the loss of happiness and the loss of our highest effectiveness. A unified personality, on the other hand, means the attainment of both peace and power." (Chappell, pg. 92)

"Before one can be a peacemaker one really must be entirely delivered from self, from self-interest, from self-concern. Before you can be a peacemaker you really must be entirely forgetful of self because as long as you are thinking about yourself, and shielding yourself, you cannot be doing the work properly. To be a peacemaker you must be as it were absolutely neutral so that you can bring the two sides together. You must not be sensitive, you must not be touchy, and you must not be on the defensive. If you are, you will not be a very good peacemaker. Perhaps I can best explain it like this. The peacemaker is one who is not always looking at everything in terms of the effect it has upon himself. Now is not that the whole trouble with us by nature? We look at everything as it affects us. 'What is the reaction upon me? What is this going to mean to me?'" (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 122)

Christ came to cleanse us of defective motives; defective desires; defective affections; and defective standards. Christ came to deliver us from all sin and self, and to destroy the civil war within us, in order that we might help destroy the war and strife within the world.

III. WORK FOR PEACE

Jesus said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."* To work to bring about right relationships between men and nations, the peacemaker himself must know the Prince of Peace. We have noted that the Prince of Peace brings about peace between the inner self and the outer self, between the forward drive and the backward pull, and between the higher nature and the lower nature. One who really knows the Prince of Peace is in a place where he can truly work for peace in the world of men.

Someday there will be universal peace, when the Prince of Peace establishes peace on the earth. Until then we, as God's followers, are to do God's work of

bringing peace to men and nations of the earth. God equips his followers for the great job of peace-makers. *"Now the God of peace, who brought back from the dead that great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, by the blood of the everlasting agreement, equip you thoroughly for the doing of his will!"* (Hebrews 13:20, Phillips)

The Christian is to work to bring as many as he can to a peaceful relationship with God. Wrote Paul: *"God was in Christ personally reconciling the world to himself – not counting their sins against them – and has commissioned us with the message of reconciliation. We are now Christ's ambassadors, as though God were appealing direct to you through us. As his personal representative we say, 'Make your peace with God'."* (II Corinthians 5:18-20, Phillips)

A peacemaker is one who has a new view of himself. He realizes that he is a sinner saved by grace, and has no merit or worth aside from God's grace.

A peacemaker is one who has a new view of his fellowmen. He realizes that he cannot despise or reject the sinner, but that he must love him and be involved in his life. "He does not ask, 'Why are they like that'? He says, 'They are like that because they are still being governed by the god of this world, "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." That poor person is a victim of self and of Satan; he is hell bound; I must have pity and mercy upon him'. The moment he begins to look at him like that he is in a position to help him, and he is likely to make peace with him. So you must have an entirely new view of the other person." (Lloyd-Jones, 123)

Maratyn Lloyd-Jones suggests some very practical ways in which we can help to bring about peace among men:

> **(1) Learn not to speak. *James said, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."* (James 1:19) Wrote the writer of Proverbs, *"Whose keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles."* (Proverbs 21:23*) "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."* (Proverbs 15: 1, 2) There is a time to speak and there is a time to refrain from speaking. Silence is golden and oftentimes brings about reconciliation. "Do not repeat things when you know they are going to do harm. You are not a true friend when you tell your friend something unkind that was said about him by somebody else. It does not help; it is a false friendship." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 124)**
>
> **(2) "You must become positive and go out of your way to look for means and methods of making peace." (Ibid, pg. 125) That means that we will not think evil of the one who has treated us in an evil**

way. It means that we will actively do well to him who has rendered evil deeds to us.

(3) "As peacemakers, we should be endeavoring to diffuse peace wherever we are. We do this by being selfless, by being lovable, by being approachable and by not standing on our dignity. If we do not think of self at all, people will feel, 'I can approach that person, I know I shall get sympathy and understanding.'" (Ibid, pg. 125)

CONCLUSION

Thus we have seen that in order to realize peace in the world, we must, as peacemakers, have perfect peace with God. God is called the God of peace, and it was for this purpose that He came – to give peace to man. Christ brings peace between our inner self and outer self, between our forward drive and backward pull, between our higher nature and lower nature. To know peace is to know deliverance from all sin and self-centeredness.

Peacemakers work actively to bring the message of peace and reconciliation to mankind. Says Wesley, "Hence we may easily learn, in how wide a sense the term peacemakers are to be understood. In its literal meaning it implies, those lovers of God and man, who utterly detest and abhor all strife and debate, all variance and contention; and accordingly labor with all their might, either to prevent this fire of hell from being kindled, or, when it is kindled, from breaking out, or, when it is broke out, from spreading any farther. They endeavor to calm the stormy spirits of men, to quiet their turbulent passions, to soften the minds of contending parties, and, if possible, reconcile them to each other. They use all innocent arts, and employ all their strength, all the talents which God has given them, as well to preserve peace where it is, as to restore it where it is not. It is the joy of their heart to promote, to confirm, to increase, mutual good will among men." (Book of Sermons, v. 1, pg. 203)

God is called the God of peace, and it was for this purpose that He came – to give peace to man.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 9

SUBJECT: **THE BLISS OF PERSECUTED**

TEXT: ***"Bless are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** **(Matthew 5:10)**

INTRODUCTION

The Beatitude which we look at today describes the world's natural response to the Christian.

PROPOSITION

Let us look at the types, the reasons, and the results of persecution.

I. TYPES OF PERSECUTION.

- **A. PHYSICAL PERSECUTION**
- **B. SOCIAL PERSECUTION**
- **C. MENTAL PERSECUTION**

II. REASON FOR PERSECUTION

- **A. BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY IS CONSCIENCE OF NATION AND PEOPLE**
- **B. BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY INTERFERES WITH WORLD'S ACTIVITIES**

III. RESULT OF PERSECUTION.

- **A. PERSECUTION IS a SIGN THAT ONE IS a MEMBER OF GOD'S FAMILY**
- **B. PERSECUTION DRIVES ONE TO GOD**
- **C. PERSECUTION SPREADS THE GOSPEL FASTER**

CONCLUSION

Whether a Christian's persecution is physical infliction, social ostracism, or mental taunting, the Christian can be assured of God's understanding and comfort.

CHAPTER 9

THE BLISS OF THE PERSECUTED!

INTRODUCTION

The Beatitudes describe the character and behavior of the Christian. A Christian is one who is poor in spirit – who has seen himself in the light of God and His holiness. A Christian is one who mourns because of the consequent sin which he sees in himself as a result of this holy vision. A Christian is one who is humble and repentant because of his sin. A Christian is one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness and is fully satisfied. One who has been filled with God's righteousness is a merciful man in his relationships, a pure man in his affections, and a peacemaker in society.

The Beatitude which we look at today describes the world's natural response to the Christian. Jesus is saying, "As a true follower of myself, don't be surprised if the world persecutes you. But rejoice even in persecution for you are a citizen of heaven.

PROPOSITION

Let us look at the types, the reasons, and the results of persecution.

I. TYPES OF PERSECUTION

There are various kinds of persecution that a Christian may have to endure. Jesus told his followers to expect persecution – not to be amazed when it came. ***"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master ' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*** **(John 15:18-20)** ***Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.*** **(I John 3: 13-14)**

A. PHYSICAL PERSECUTION

Throughout the centuries, many have endured physical persecution and torture for Christ. It is said that more have died for Christ in the twentieth century than in any other one century.

Many have been the people who have died for Christ. ***"Others were exposed to the test of public mockery and flogging, and to the torture of being left bound in prison. They were killed by stoning, by being sawn in two; they were tempted by specious promises of release and then were***

killed with the sword. Many became refugees with nothing but sheepskins or goatskins to cover them. They lost everything and yet were spurned and ill-treated by a world that was too evil to see their worth. They lived as vagrants in the desert, on the mountains, or in caves or holes in the ground." **(Hebrews 11: 35-38, Phillips)**

"Still further, the penalties which a Christian had to suffer were terrible beyond description. The entire world knows of the Christians who were flung to the lions or burned at the stake; but these were kindly deaths. Nero wrapped the Christians in pitch and set them alight, and used them as living torches to light his gardens. He sewed them in the skins of wild animals and sent his hunting dogs upon them to tear them to death. They were tortured on the rack; they were scraped with pincers; molten lead was poured hissing upon them; red hot brass plates were affixed to the tenderest parts of their bodies; eyes were torn out; parts of their bodies were cut off and roasted before their eyes; their hands and feet were burned while cold water was poured over them to lengthen the agony. These things are not pleasant to think about, but these are the things a man had to be prepared for, if he took his stand with Christ." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 108)

It may be asked why Christians had to endure so much. It, or course, was not because they deserved to be so treated. It was because of cruel slanders that were spread abroad about them. Christians were accused of cannibalism because of the words of the Lord's Supper *"This is my body", "This cup is the New Testament in my blood."* The Christians' weekly meeting called the Agape (Love Feast) was grossly misinterpreted and the Christians were accused of immoral practices. When the Christians spoke of the end of the world being in flames of fire, the rumor was spread that Christians were plotting to set Roman cities on fire. Because Christianity sometimes resulted in dividing husband and wife or parent and child, Christianity was accused of splitting families. Perhaps the greatest reason why the Christians were persecuted is because Christians refused to burn a pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar and say, "Caesar is Lord." To the Christians there was no lord but Jesus.

B. SOCIAL PERSECUTION

A Christian may not be persecuted or harmed physically for serving Christ, but he may be persecuted socially. A Christian may have to suffer verbal lashings and taunts from wicked men. The world rejects Christians from its associations and wishes not to have the disturbing, convicting presence of Christians in its company. Because a Christian is not willing to conform to group convention, the Christian oftentimes

must be a Daniel – standing alone upon Christian principles while all of one's associates seek to turn against him. Because a Christian seeks the favor of God instead of the favor of men, he oftentimes will have to reap the scoffing and rebuke of the world.

We are told that when a Jew accepts Christ as Savior that he is rejected from his home, and that he is symbolically buried by his parents. The convert is the same as dead. He is ostracized from home and relatives.

A Christian may lose a job because of his Christian principles. Recently a Christian man who is very talented in editing films, refused to edit a film that he considered to be obscene. As a result he soon lost his job.

C. MENTAL PERSECUTION

Think of the mental anguish of a Christian who knows that his character is being murdered through a malicious, whispering campaign. The world still attempts to create mental depression in the Christian through reviling and reproaching him, and by calling the Christian narrow, fanatical, and square. The world shrugs its shoulders and uses the Christian as his laughing stock. The world uses Christians as scapegoats, strangely heaping evil abuse upon the most kind. Sinners are bitterly resentful and jealous of Christians and go to great ends to inflict little and big hurts upon the Christian.

"There were those who loved him (Jesus) with passionate devotion, but there were those who hated him with hellish hatred. There was nothing too harsh and cruel for them to say about him. They called him a gluttonous man and a winebibber. They said that he was a blasphemer, that he was crazy, and that he was in league with the devil." (Chappell, pg. 102)

Jesus said, *"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and ...shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."*

II. REASON FOR PERSECUTION

It would seem that of all people Christians would be most favored and honored and liked. What beautiful traits the true Christian possesses – love, joy, meekness, kindness, mercy – and yet how unseemly the Christian is treated - rejected, despised, persecuted. Why should this be?

A. BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY IS CONSCIENCE OF NATION AND PEOPLE

Because the Christian is a changed man, he is different in his actions and attitudes from the men of the world. The world hates people who are different and the Christian is a man who is different. *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you."* (II Corinthians 6:17) The Christian is a light in the dark world of sin. Because men love their dark deeds of sin they shy away from the light which exposes their true sinful nature.

Christ was different and his difference was his righteousness which condemned the sin and selfishness of wicked men. A Christian is God's representative on earth and as such stands for the same things Christ stood for. Christ's superior light put sinners in an inferior light and this belittling comparison caused sinners to hate Christ. The same is true of sinners' reaction to Christians.

Said Jesus to His followers, *"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."* (Matthew 10:22) *"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations, for my name's sake."* (Matthew 24:9) Said Paul, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* (2 Timothy 3:12) Because Christianity is the conscience of a nation and people, the followers of Christ will be the objects of violent reaction from the world and will suffer persecution in some form – physical, social, or mental.

B. BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY INTERFERES WITH WORLD'S ACTIVITIES

Christians are disturbing and an interfering influences in worldly society. A Christian is against all discrimination and thus Christians have a head-on-collision with men who are filled with hate, discrimination, and prejudice. A Christian is a drag to the world in its pursuit of sinful and sensual pleasures. The world seeks to silence the Christian voice which is proclaiming the message of purity and holiness. The Christian is a roadblock to selfish business pursuits.

The Christian standard for behavior is different than the worldly standard for behavior, and thus the world looks upon the Christian as a hindrance and interference. The Christian standards are a standard that is God-given. *"He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of them but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."* (Micah 6:8)

The Christian interferes with the world's injustice. The Christian interferes with the world's exploitation. The Christian condemns the world's haughty spirit and egotistical pursuits. Whether it is condemnation of social injustice, personal indulgence, or pretentious religious ceremony, the Christian is looked upon as a detriment to worldly practices, and thus becomes the butt of criticism and persecution.

III. RESULT OF PERSECUTION

Persecution may pose as an unpleasant threat to a Christian and be thought to be something desirable to escape. Although none should court persecution or throw himself into the martyr's role, yet persecution should be looked upon by the Christian as having positive benefits.

A. PERSECUTION IS A SIGN THAT ONE IS A MEMBER OF GOD'S FAMILY

It should be pointed out, however, that it is possible to be persecuted and yet not be a member of God's Family. Sinners persecute one another because of undesirable traits. Cultists feel they are persecuted, but such persecution is not a sign of genuine truth.

It is those who are persecuted for righteousness sake that are truly blessed. To be persecuted for righteousness' sake is "the very badge of our discipleship; it is one of the seals of our calling." (Wesley, pg. 207)

Jesus said, *"Woe unto you, when all men shall s peak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets."* Jesus said, *"In the world ye shall have tribulations; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (John 16: 33b)

"To be persecuted for righteousness' sake is an indication that the one so persecuted is a child of the King. It indicates that such a one has become a menace to the kingdom of evil. If you are persecuted, that means that you are in great company. You are fighting shoulder to shoulder with the prophets who were before you. You are being opposed because, like them, you are counting in the good fight of faith." (Chappell, pg. 110) To suffer for Christ is to take our place in the great succession of the prophets. Jesus said, *"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."* Says Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "So if you find you are being persecuted and maligned falsely for Christ's sake, you know you are like the prophets, who were God's chosen servants,

and who are now with God, rejoicing in glory. Now that is something to rejoice about." (pg. 143)

In the face of persecution, a Christian is not to have a sense of retaliation or even resentment but instead, Jesus said a Christian should "rejoice and be exceeding glad." The word for 'be exceeding glad' is from a verb which in turn is derived from two Greek words which mean 'to leap exceedingly'. "It is the joy which leaps for joy. As it has been put, it is the joy of the climber who has reached the summit, and who leaps for joy that the mountain path is conquered." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 112)

To be persecuted for righteousness' sake, is proof that one is going to heaven. "By thus persecuting you the world is just telling you that you do not belong to it...you belong to another realm, thus proving the fact that you are going to heaven. And that, according to Christ, is something which causes us always to rejoice and be exceedingly glad." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 144)

To be persecuted for righteousness' sake, is proof that one is going to heaven, and it also shows that one is a child of the Heavenly Father. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:44, 45a)

B. PERSECUTION DRIVES ONE O GOD

A thousand prayers may ascend to God in times of persecution and hardship for every one prayer that ascends to God during periods of prosperity and gain. In the midst of great conflict, Abraham Lincoln said that he was driven to his knees in prayer for he had no one else to turn to.

The presence of God has been unusually sensed by martyrs at the moment of crisis. John G. Paton tells of the bitter opposition that he met in the far–off Hebrides. During a season of persecution he spent one night in a tree. He could hear the savages beating the bushes beneath him, carefully searching for him in an effort to take his life. But he declared that he would gladly pass through another such experience of peril to be privileged to enjoy the assuring and comforting presence of Jesus as he did on that night." (Chappell, pg. 111)

Persecution can result in cleansing a Christian for more effective service to God. Wrote James*: "When all kinds of trials and temptations*

crowd into your lives my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence." **(James 1:2-4, Phillips)**

"Then persecution renders another important service. It not only makes for a more Christ-like Church by bringing her into a closer fellowship with Jesus, but it also serves to drive away the triflers and the cowards. It repels those who are not willing to pay the price." (Chappell, pg. 111) There is a place in the Acts which speaks of *"no one outside their number venturing to join with them* (Christians)." (Acts 5:13, NEB)

C. PERSECUTION SPREADS THE GOSPEL FASTER

It is popularly known that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." "When Patrick Hamilton was burned in Scotland, someone dared to say to his persecutors, 'If you are going to burn any more, you had better do it in a cellar, for the smoke of Hamilton's burning has opened the eyes of hundreds.'" (The Triumph of John and Betty Stam by Mrs. Howard Taylor, pg. 148)

John and Betty Stam were young missionaries who prepared long but who spent a short time in China as missionaries. They were dedicated and talented missionaries who gave their lives for the Christian witness. Led to the top of a hill, John and Betty Stam were made to kneel before their persecutors and they were both beheaded.

Following John's and Betty's deaths, seven hundred students stood up in a great memorial service held in the Moody Bible Institute to consecrate their lives to missionary work wherever God might call them. A fellow worker of John and Betty Stam wrote from China to Betty's folks these memorable words:

> **"We all go Home in some way! Your dear daughter and her husband have gone in a chariot of fire...Now, full of vigor, their lives, their personalities, their work, their witnessing are known in every town and city of our land. A life which had the longest span of years might not have been able to do one-hundredth of the work for Christ which they have done in a day." (Ibid, pg. 151)**

Thus, as Spurgeon said, "It is always so, suffering saints are living seed." (Ibid, pg. 148)

CONCLUSION

Said Jesus to His followers, *"And what happiness will be yours when people blame you and ill-treat you and say all kinds of slanderous things against you for my sake! Be glad then, yes, be tremendously glad – for your reward in Heaven is magnificent. They persecuted the prophets before your time in exactly the same way."* (Matthew 5:10-13, Phillips)

Whether a Christian's persecution is physical infliction, social ostracism, or mental taunting, the Christian can be assured of God's understanding and comfort. Just as Jesus pricked the conscience of people and interfered with their sinful pleasures, so the Christian too is a disturbing and interfering presence to the world. Persecution can be a sign that one is a child of God and results in driving one to God and results in perfecting character. Persecution almost always results in spreading the Gospel faster. Happy, to be envied and spiritually prosperous, is the man who is persecuted for righteousness' sake.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 10

SUBJECT: **HOW SALTY ARE YOU?**

TEXT: ***"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is there forthgood for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of man."*** **(Matthew 5:13)**

INTRODUCTION

One way in which the world reacts to the Christian is persecution. However, sometimes the world reacts with admiration and spiritual hunger to the winsome Christian. When a Christian truly exemplifies Christ in the manner of living, such a Christian will inevitably draw some people to Christ.

PROPOSITION

The question we wish to ask today is this, "What is the Christian's relationship to society and to the world"? Jesus answered this question through the use of an illustration. A Christian is like "salt."

I. SALT STANDS FOR PURITY

II. SALT IS a PRESERVATIVE

III. SALT LENDS FAVOUR

IV. SALT CAUSES THIRST

CONCLUSION

The Christian is to make his life useful. If a Christian is not careful to stand for purity, if he is not a preservative in society, if he does not lend flavor and enjoyment to life, and if he does not cause a spiritual thirst in his associates, then he is waiting disaster.

CHAPTER 10

HOW SALTY ARE YOU!

INTRODUCTION

The eight beatitudes which we have looked at in detail describe Christian character. The Scripture which we are considering today introduces a new section in the Sermon on the Mount. "Having seen what a Christian is, we now come to consider how the Christian should manifest this." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 149)

We must discuss what the Christian's relationship to the world must be. In the last message we saw that the Christian will inevitably be persecuted by the world. Because the Christian is the conscience of society and is a hindrance to sensual pursuits, the Christian will be persecuted either: physically, socially, or mentally. However, the Christian is not to develop self-pity or entertain resentment or seek retaliation, but a Christian is to rejoice in his persecution. To be persecuted for righteousness' sake is evidence that one is a member of God's family and is on his way to heaven.

Thus, one way in which the world reacts to the Christian is persecution. However, sometimes the world reacts with admiration and spiritual hunger to the winsome Christian. When a Christian truly exemplifies Christ in the manner of living, such a Christian will inevitably draw some people to Christ.

PROPOSITION

The question we wish to ask today is this, "What is the Christian's relationship to society and to the world"? Jesus answered this question through the use of an illustration. A Christian is like "salt." Jesus called Christians 'salt'; therefore we must ask what the function of salt is and try to relate this to the Christian life. As we shall discuss in detail, salt stands for purity, salt is preservative, salt lends flavour, and salt causes thirst.

I. SALT STANDS FOR PURITY

"No doubt its glistening whiteness made the connection easy. The Romans said that salt was purest of all things, because it came from the purest of all things, the sun and the sea. Salt was indeed the most primitive of all offerings to the gods, and to the end of the day the Jewish sacrifices were offered with salt."

The Christian is to be an example of purity within an impure society. A Christian is a non-conformist in worldly society, conforming only to the standards of purity and righteousness. A Christian must not let the world around him squeeze him into its own mold. " *With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to*

***give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him*" (Romans 12:1; Phillips)**

Jesus said that we, as Christians, are not of the world, just as He is not of the world. The worldly standard and practice is diametrically opposed to the Christian standard and practice, and therefore the Christian must inevitably appear in the eyes of the world as different. Peter wrote that Christians are *"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."* (I Peter 2:9a)

Paul wrote to Christians, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."* (II Corinthians 6:17)

"The Christian is not only to be different; he is to glory in this difference. He is to be as different from other people as the Lord Jesus Christ was clearly different from the world in which He lived. The Christian is a separate, unique, outstanding kind of individual; there is to be in him something which marks him out, and which is to be obvious and clearly recognized. Let every man, then, examine himself." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 153)

The Christian is to have a giving hand in contrast to the world's grasping hand. The profit motive is the controlling motive of the world; the motive of service is to be the Christian's dynamic. The worldly person exploits his fellowmen; the Christian loves his fellowmen. The world may be dishonest; the Christian is honest. The world may be indolent in work; the Christian is diligent in work. The world may be slanderous; the Christian guards his tongue.

Paul wrote to young Timothy, *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."* (I Timothy 4:12) In our sensual society, the Christian must be an example in purity. Amidst the pleasure mania, the Christian is to refute the evil and to cultivate the noble and virtuous things of life.

One example of a Christian's avoidance of evil contamination lies in the area of popular music.

"Mini Benzell, an opera star, said that rock and roll music deadens the taste and 'endangers any chance of developing a wholesome attitude toward love and marriage'." (Erickson; Jungle to Jukebox) Much of the music of pop music is put to sensual, seductive verses. I list a few examples:

"I will never love you
The cost of love's too dear,
But though I'll never love you
I'll live with you one year."

"Right or wrong, day by day
All my love, all the way."

"And I like the way you let me come in
When your mother ain't there."

Much of the pop music perpetuates an indifferent and unconcerned attitude, and creates irresponsible, infantile individuals.

"I know that later on
After love's been and gone,
I'll still hear someone say,
I don't want to see you again."

Much of the pop music is merely another way in which young people, as well as older ones, can be squeezed into the world's sensual mold. Paul wrote to young Timothy: *"Flee youthful lusts."* The Christian is salt, and salt represents purity. The Christian is to maintain a separation from the world's practices, and is to cultivate pure affections, attitudes, and activities.

II. SALT IS a PRESERVATIVE

"The principle function of salt is to preserve and to act as an antiseptic. Take, for instance, a piece of meat. There are certain germs on its surface, perhaps in its very substance, which have been derived from the animal, or from the atmosphere, and there is the danger of its becoming putrid. The business of salt which is rubbed into that meat is to preserve it against those agencies that are tending to its putrefaction." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 153)

Plutarch of the ancient world, "said that meat is a dead body and part of a dead body, and will, if left to itself, go bad; but salt preserves it and keeps it fresh, and is therefore like a new soul – inserted into a dead body." (Barclay's Matthew; pg. 115)

When Jesus said that the Christian is to be the salt of the earth, He was assuming that the world of men and the world of society tends to become more and more degraded in and of itself, and is therefore in need of a preservative, an element in society that can check its downward trend. People of the ancient world became so wicked that they were not fit to live. *"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.* (Genesis 6:5) Because there was not enough saltiness in the world, God sent a flood and destroyed the inhabitants. Sodom was destroyed because ten 'salty people' could not be found. The society became so rotten that it could no longer exist.

Individual Christians must be salty preservatives on their jobs, in their homes, and in society. "For instance, a number of people may be talking together in a rather unworthy manner. Suddenly a Christian enters into the company, and immediately his presence has an effect. He does not say a word, but people begin to modify their language." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 155)

Without the presence of Christians in society, society would decompose and rot altogether. Society is not mainly preserved through military armaments, natural resources, geographical positions or national spirit

When Elijah was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, Elisha shouted as he saw him ascend, *"My father, my father, the horsemen of Israel, and the chariots thereof."* "What did he mean? He meant to say, 'Yonder goes the defender of this nation. Yonder goes the one who, above all others, has stood between Israel and ruin.'" (Chappell, pg. 120)

A Christian must influence society. John Wesley will always be remembered as the greatest instrument for societal change in the eighteenth century England. Said one, of Wesley, "No man lived nearer to the centre than John Wesley, neither Pitt, neither Mansfield, nor Johnson. You cannot cut him out of the national life. No single figure influenced so many minds; no single voice touched so many hearts. No other man did such a life's work for England'." (J. Wesley Bready; Faith and Freedom, pg. 16) Says the Cambridge Modern History concerning Wesley's influence, "The earlier half of the Eighteenth century in England was an age of materialism, a period of dim ideals and expiring hopes, before the middle of the century its character was transformed; there appeared a movement headed by a mighty leader, who brought forth water from the rocks to make a barren land live again." (Ibid, pgs. 129, 130)

Dr. Tenney gives an incisive summary of the changes wrought in England as a result of the Evangelical Revival:" "What took place among the squalid, filthy, brutal masses, on the verge of revolution: Totally transformed in their ambitions, habits, ethical code, and outlook on life, they rose rapidly to self-respecting citizenship, community influences and material prosperity. By the end of the century Methodists had become factory owners, large scale merchants, and city officials. Once outcast, they now had become shapers of public opinion on business ethics, popular amusements, Sabbath observance, state of the under-privileged and all kindred matters." (Living in Two Worlds, pg. 100)

Christians must go into every level of society to influence it for righteousness and preserve it from destruction and gradual rotting away. Business and politics must commend more attention from Christians. As salt penetrates meat, so the Christian influence must penetrate society.

III. SALT LENDS FAVOUR

Says Barclay: "Food without salt is a sadly insipid and even a sickening thing. Christianity is to life what salt is to food. Christianity lends flavour to life." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 116) "The Christian is the man of joy; the Christian is the laughing cavalier of Christ. A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms, and nothing in all religious history has done Christianity more harm than its connection with black clothes and long faces." (Barclay's John, v. 2; pgs. 206-207)

How tragic that some have thought of Christianity as a negative, subtractive element in life. Swinburne said: "Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from Thy breath." One of the Roman Emperors, called Julian, made the following devastating comment about Christians:

> **"Have you looked at these Christians closely? Hollow-eyed, pale-cheeked, flat-breasted all; they brood their lives away, unspurred by ambition, the sun shines for them, but they do not see it: the earth offers them its fullness, but they desire it not; all their desire is to renounce and to suffer that they may come to die." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 116)**

Paul wrote that Christians are to be happy and radiant people. Even while a prisoner in Rome, Paul wrote the Epistle of Joy – Philippians. Many times in the book he mentions joy and rejoicing. *"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."* (Philippians 4:4) In I Thessalonians 5:16 Paul wrote, *"Rejoice evermore."* Peter wrote, *"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."* (I Peter 1:8)

Salt is a positive thing that can't be ignored. We immediately know if salt is lacking. Likewise, a true Christian is a positive influence that can't be ignored. A Christian can be rejected, but he can't be ignored.

Just as salt is a necessity – not a luxury alone – so Christianity is among the necessities of life. "Without it the feast of life loses its tang." (Chappell, pg. 118)

Without Christ, man is driven to despair and some even adopt the futile philosophy of Nothingness. To remove the Christian influence from life makes life bleak, dull, insipid, and unbearable. Attempting to have some savor in life, many have succumbed to the pleasure mania, only to become disillusioned and unsatisfied. Many have been driven to despair and hopeless futility. Vanchel Lindsey, our late American poet who shot himself through the brain, said, "Life is a loom, weaving illusion." ("The Word of the Lord Came Unto Me Also, pg. 127) Said P.J. Bailey, Life is "a

bridge of groans across a stream of tears." Mencken's creed, "The universe, a gigantic wheel in rapid revolution; man, a sick fly taking a dizzy ride on the rim thereof; religion, the fly's delusion that the wheel was constructed to give him the ride." (Ibid, pg. 128) This philosophy is well described in Ecclesiastes 3:19, *"For that which befalleth the sons of man befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them, as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast; for all is vanity."* (Ecclesiastes 3:19)

Amidst all this despair, the Christian must show the world that there is hope. The Christian can point to joy instead of regret, peace instead of turmoil, forgiveness instead of guilt, and life instead of death. Life without Christ is tasteless and not worth living.

The following poem was written by a young woman, three days after she had attempted to commit suicide. She discovered Christ as the answer to life and this is her testimony:

DISCOVERING – CHRIST IN ME

Discovering daily who God really is.
Thanking Him daily He's mine and I'm, His.
Discovering daily God's great love for me;
Such mercy, forgiveness, amazingly free.
Discovering daily that He really cares.
Discovering daily He does answer prayers.
Discovering daily what grace really means.
Discovering daily God speaking to me,
Through His Holy Word. Once blind, now I see,
Discovering, discovering each day that I live
That all that I need, He freely will give.

Discovering daily Christ working through me,
Accomplishing daily what never could be.
Discovering daily I can't, but He can.
Thanking Him daily for my place in His plan.
Discovering daily how REAL life can be
When I'm living in Christ, and He's living in me,
Discovering daily a song in my heart,
With anticipation for each day to start.
Delighting and basking in love so divine,
Secure in the knowledge I'm His, and He's mine.
Besides mere contentment; excitement I see;
A daily adventure; Christ living in me.

IV. SALT CAUSES THIRST

Salt causes one to crave for water. Christianity causes sinners to thirst for spiritual satisfaction. We said earlier in the message that a Christian is to live a pure and separated life. Let it be clearly understood that while it is true that the Christian is to separate himself from the indulgences of sin, a Christian is not to separate himself from the company of sinners. A Christian does not become involved in the world's practices, but he does become involved in the world's problems. Jesus prayed to His Father, for His disciples, *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."* (John 17:15) A Christian is to live in two worlds – the world of men and the world of spiritual reality.

Because Christianity is a social religion, it cannot function without contact with men of the world. It is only as a Christian has contact with society will society become thirsty for what Christianity has to offer. Christian character must be lived in the context of worldly society, if society is ever to be converted. As Wesley points out, meekness, which implies mildness, gentleness, and longsuffering, "cannot have a being without an intercourse with other men." (Sermons, pg. 212) Peacemaking cannot be carried on in a vacuum. It must be carried on in the face of a hostile world. "Will any man affirm that a solitary Christian (so called) can be a merciful man, - that is, one that takes every opportunity of doing all good to all men?" (Ibid; 212)

Peter says that Christians are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" for a certain purpose. Not just to be different or odd, as some people like to be, but to draw attention to them.

No, the reason is *"that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* (I Peter 2:9b) How can a Christian "show forth the praises of him" by removing himself from society? A Christian is to be salt and salt that causes thirst, but before the worldling can become thirsty for Christianity, he must see Christianity demonstrated before him.

There is a word in the New Testament Greek which vividly describes the character of an effective witness. That word is Kalos. This word describes the goodness of a person who is characterized by beauty, loveliness, graciousness, and winsomeness. The person, who is kalos, has an indestructible and intrinsic loveliness, attraction, and fragrance in his life. A witness who is a kalos has a character which is lovely and pleasing to the eyes of others.

After H.M. Stanley had discovered David Livingstone in Central Africa, and had spent some time with him, he said, "If I had been with him any longer I would

have been compelled to be a Christian and he never spoke to me about it at all." The radiance of Livingstone's life was self-evident. It caused a spiritual thirst in Stanley.

CONCLUSION

Jesus said that salt that has lost its savor *"is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."* (Matthew 5:13b) Because salt does not lose its flavour and its saltiness, what could this statement mean? The following suggestion is offered. "In Palestine the ordinary oven is out of doors and is built of stone on a base of tiles. In such ovens 'in order to retain the heat a thick bed of salt is laid under the tiled floor. After a certain length of time the salt perishes. The tiles are taken up, the salt removed and thrown on the road outside the door of the oven...It has lost its power to heat the tiles and it is thrown out"!

Regardless of what the true picture behind Jesus' statement, the abiding lesson is this, 'Uselessness invites disaster'. The Christian is to make his life useful. If a Christian is not careful to stand for purity, if he is not a preservative in society, if he does not lend flavor and enjoyment to life, and if he does not cause a spiritual thirst in his associates, then he is inviting disaster.

The same goes for a Christian Church. The Church which is compromising Christian standards and presenting a diluted message is the Church that is inviting disaster. If a Church is half-hearted in its ministry to the world, it is failing in its function and is courting destruction. *"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."* (Revelations 3:15, 16) Because the one talented servant hid his talent and refused to invest it in some worthwhile pursuit, he was cast out into outer darkness.

Uselessness always invites disaster. As Christians we must be pure and stand against the unfruitful works of evil. As Christians we must seek to preserve society and restrain its downward trend. As Christians we must manifest joy and add zest to life, thus creating a thirst for spiritual reality within the sinner.

***"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste (its strength, its quality), how can its saltness be restored? It is not good for anything any longer but to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men.* (Matthew 5:13; Amplified)**

HOW SALTY ARE YOU?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 11

SUBJECT: CHRISTIANITY'S RELATIONSHIP TO LAW!

TEXT: ***"God sent 'his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us."*** **(Romans 8: 3-4)**

INTRODUCTION

The remainder of Mathew 5 is a discussion of the Christian's relationship to the Old Testament Law.

PROPOSITION

We will discuss the Law's Temporary Ministry, then the Christian's Standard of Righteousness, and finally the Christian's Source of Righteousness.

I. LAW'S TEMPORARY MINISTRY

- **A. LAW'S INTRODUCTION**
- **B. LAW'S NECESSITY**
- **C. LAW'S LIMITATION**

II. CHRISTIAN'S STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

- **A. PHARISEE'S EXTERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS**
- **B. CHRISTIAN'S INTERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS**

III. CHRISTIAN'S SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

- **A. CHRIST'S SIGNIFICANT LIFE AND DEATH**
  1. **Christ Perfectly Fulfilled the Law's Requirements**
  2. **Christ Revealed the True Nature of Sin**
  3. **Christ Fulfilled the Law's Punishment for Sin**
- **B. CHRISTIAN'S LIFE OF LOVE**

CONCLUSION

Only through Christ can man be made righteous. Christ fulfilled the Law's penalty for sin. Christ died that death might die and man might live.

Chapter 11

CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO LAW!

INTRODUCTION

The Beatitudes which we studied in detail describe the character of the Christian. One who sees himself in the light of God's character has a small estimate of self and is made to mourn because of his sin. He who humbles himself before God and hungers and thirsts for God's righteousness is merciful in his actions, is pure in his motives, and is a peacemaker in his relationships. A Christian is described as a light in the world and as salt in the world. Neither salt nor light can be ignored. So the Christian witness may be persecuted, but it cannot be ignored. Thus, the Christian in his character and in his active witness is vividly and concisely described in the opening verses of Matthew 5.

We come now to a new and distinct division or thought in the Sermon on the Mount. The remainder of Mathew 5 is a discussion of the Christian's relationship to the Old Testament Law, a controversial subject which is still debated.

PROPOSITION

Let us look carefully at this subject. As a background for our study of the Christian's relationship to the Law, we will discuss the Law's Temporary Ministry, then the Christian's Standard of Righteousness, and finally the Christian's Source of Righteousness.

I. LAW'S TEMPORARY MINISTRY

The relationship between Law and Grace is a much-talked-about and yet little-understood subject. In seeking to understand the purpose of the Old Testament Law, we will briefly discuss the (a) Law's Introduction, (b) Law's Necessity, and (c) Law's Limitation.

A. LAW'S INTRODUCTION

When God gave promises to Abraham, the Law had not yet been given. In fact, the Law was not given until the time of Moses, over four hundred years later. *"What I mean is this: the law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise."* (Galatians 3:17) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived under Grace – not Law.

The Israelites were delivered out of Egyptian bondage because of God's grace and mercy. After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and had seen God's miracle of deliverance, the Israelites, at times, became despondent, ungrateful, and murmuring. When the Israelites came to Marah, they *"murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'"* (Exodus 15:24) A little later they murmured because of lack of food and

said, *"Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger".* (Exodus 16: 3) On another occasion they murmured for water "*But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"* (Exodus 17:3)

These references illustrate Israels presumption of God's mercy. Israel took God's grace for granted. Israel needed to realize the seriousness of its sin – the sin of murmuring, the sin of presuming upon God's mercy. Therefore the Law had to be introduced.

B. LAW'S NECESSITY

Israel entertained a shallow conception of sin and possessed a self-sufficient attitude in regards to her ability to obey God. How dull and lacking in understanding Israel was! She had failed to obey God while Grace and Mercy alone prevailed. How could Israel think that she could obey God under Law? And yet when the idea of Law was introduced to Israel as the new standard for obedience, Israel presumptuously and self-sufficiently said, *"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."* (Exodus 19:8)

Israel felt that she could obey the dictates of the Law. In giving His perfect Law to Israel, God showed Israel that she was unable to keep the Law. In fact, this is one reason for the Law's introduction upon the human stage of history – to show man's inability to obey God. *"No man can justify himself before God by a perfect performance of the Law's demands – indeed it is the straightedge of the Law that shows us how crooked we are."* (Romans 3:20, Phillips)

"The Law is like a mirror – it reflects human sin. Without the mirror man did not see himself as he really is. But that is all a mirror can do – show the filthiness of the face, and the need for cleansing. It cannot do the washing. To take the mirror and try to use it for a washcloth will only smear the dirt and spread it all over your face. To rub the mirror over your soiled complexion will only make matters worse. We must turn from the mirror to soap and water. So, too, with the ministry of the law – it was given to show man his true condition and his need for cleansing, but beyond this it cannot go. We must now turn to the grace of God and in true repentance and confession of our guilt seek for cleansing by the water of the Word and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit." (Law or Grace, DeHaan, pg. 30, No. 1) Thus, the Law reflects sinful human nature and shows man that he needs a source of

help outside of himself – a help much greater than the Law. The Law only shows the need for cleansing; the Law itself cannot cleanse.

The Law shows the exceeding sinfulness of sin. *"Where then lies the point of the Law?" It was an addition made to underline the existence and extent of sin until the arrival of the 'seed' to whom the promise referred."* (Galatians 3:19, Phillips) *"Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ should come, when we should be justified through faith; and now that faith has come, the tutor's charge is at an end."* (Galatians 3:24, 25, NEB) *"Now we find that the Law keeps slipping into the picture to point the vast extent of sin."* (Romans 5:20) *"It can scarcely be doubted that in reality the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, fair and good. Can it be that something that is intrinsically good could mean death to me? No, what happened was this. Sin, at the touch of the Law, was forced to expose itself as sin, and that meant death for me. The contact of the Law showed the sinful nature of sin."* (Romans 7:12, 13, Philips)

C. LAW'S LIMITATION

We have already noted, in passing, that while the Law may be able to expose sinful nature like a mirror is able to expose a dirty face, yet the Law is no more able to cleanse from sin than a mirror is able to cleanse away dirt from a filthy face. That is to say, the Law is unable to change the desires of the human heart.

As M.R. DeHaan well illustrates this, "The law can restrain and discourage sin, but it cannot remove the desire to sin. If the penalty for an infraction of the law is made severe enough, it will inhibit and reduce infraction of the law, but cannot change the desire...Prohibition could forbid the manufacture and use of intoxicants, but it did not stop it or change man's desire for it. It merely drove it underground in an effort to escape the penalty of the law. The law prohibiting liquor under penalty might stop the practice for some, but it could not stop their thirst, and the law failed to put an end to the perverted appetites of men, and it blossomed out in an age of bootlegging, 'blind pigs', and flagrant violations." (Law or Grace; pgs. 24, 25)

The introduction of the Law into human history showed that goodness cannot be legislated. All men are born with a depraved nature, and thus no man has ever kept the law. "Everyone, however, who is involved in trying to keep the Law's demands falls under a curse, for it is written: *'Cursed is everyone which continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them.'"* (Galatians 3:10, Phillips)

Wrote the Psalmist: *"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek*

God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one." **(Psalms 14:2, 3)**

As DeHaan says, "The law is holy; therefore unholy sinners cannot keep it. The law is just; therefore it condemns the unjust sinner. The law is good; therefore it condemns the evil, wicked heart of the natural man. It was given to reveal the sinfulness of sin, not to enable man to get rid of his sin." Law or Grace (no. 1; pg. 28)

II. CHRISTIAN'S STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Considering the high demands of the Law and man's low failure in fulfilling these demands, Jesus following words gain startling significance: ***"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."*** **(Matthew 5:19, 20)**

A. PHARISEES' EXTERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted in teaching and keeping what was called the Scribal Law. The Scribal Law was that system of man-made rules and regulations, designed to regulate every area and possible situation of life. The Scribal Law contained hundreds and even thousands of minute regulations, most of which were petty and senseless. One example will illustrate this. One of the Ten Commandments says that no work is to be done on the Sabbath. The Jewish legalists said that to carry a burden on the Sabbath was work. The Scribal Law proceeded to define a burden. A burden is "food equal in weight to a dried fig, enough wine for mixing in a goblet, milk enough for one swallow, honey enough to put upon a wound, oil enough to anoint a small member, water enough to moisten an eye-salve, paper enough to write a customer's house notice upon, ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet, reed enough to make a pen" etc., etc.. Barclay comments, "So they spent endless hours arguing whether a man could or could not lite a lamp from one place to another on the Sabbath, whether a tailor committed a sin if he went out with a needle in his robe, whether a woman might wear a brooch or false hair, even if a man might go out on the Sabbath with artificial teeth or an artificial limb, if a man might lift his child on the Sabbath Day. These things to them were the essence of religion. Their religion was a legalism of petty rules and regulations." (Barclay's Matthew; pgs. 123, 125)

The Christian life is not a system of legalistic 'Do's' and 'Don'ts'. The Pharisees were strongly denounced by Christ. He called them

hypocrites, fools, blind guides, whitened sepulchers full of dead men's bones!

Although these petty rules and regulations of the Scribal Law are to be strongly denounced and denied, yet there are certain aspects of the Pharisees' religion that every Christian must practice.

As Wesley points out (Sermons, v.1, pgs. 229, 230), the Pharisees were singularly good in externals. There were no obvious sins of the flesh to be seen in them. The very least standard for a Christian is separation from the obvious, open sins of the flesh. The Pharisees used all means of grace. They fasted regularly, and so should Christians. They daily read the Scriptures and so must Christians. They listened and participated in the expounding of the Word at the synagogue, and so must Christians. They prayed regularly, so must Christians. They tithed and so must Christians. In all of these lasted named external religious practices, Christians must come up at least to the standard of the Pharisees.

B. CHRISTIAN'S INTERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. The Pharisees' religion was external and formal. The righteousness of a Christian is not simply external. It is primarily internal with mere external manifestations. The Christian's religion is a religion of the heart. To the Pharisees, Jesus said, *"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."* (Luke 16:15*)* Jesus said that it is out of the heart that all evil proceeds. (Matthew 15:19*) "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."* (I Samuel 16:7b) Says Lloyd-Jones, "What a man does with his own solitude is what ultimately counts. The things that are within, which we hide from the outside world because we are ashamed of them, these proclaim what we really are." (pg. 204)

The Pharisees were more concerned with ceremonial observances then they were with moral and ethical qualities in religion. It is still possible to go through a form of religion and yet fail to have a change of life.

The Pharisees were more concerned with man-made rules than they were with understanding God's overriding principles and standards. We have already noted the Pharisees' external adherence to the Scribal Law which Jesus so roundly condemned.

The Pharisees' righteousness was self-righteousness. They were satisfied with their religious observances and felt that they were God's

favorites, in contrast to the slum of the earth as exemplified in the publican. The righteousness of a Christian is not a righteousness of his own.

III. CHRISTIAN'S SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Pharisees failed in their rigorous endeavor to make themselves righteous through the observance of rules and regulations. If the Pharisees were unable to gain God's favor through their rigorous self-effort, how can a man possibly attain God's standard of righteousness which is much greater than the Pharisees' standard of righteousness? There is only one way that God's standard of righteousness can be reached. That is through Christ.

A. CHRIST'S SIGNIFICANT LIFE AND DEATH

How is Christ's life and death significant in the light of the Old Testament Law?

1. Christ Perfectly Fulfilled the Law's Requirements

The Law is perfect and therefore only a perfect man could fulfill its demands. Christ alone did that. The Law is holy and therefore only a holy man could keep it. Christ did that. The Law is holy and therefore only a sinless man could obey it. Christ did that. The Law is just and while it condemns all other men, it never condemned Christ. Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law, showing that he alone is divine – the Son of God. Said Jesus, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one title shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."* (Matthew 5:17, 18) Jesus perfectly fulfilled or realized in Himself every part of the law, the ceremonial, the judicial, and the moral.

2. Christ Revealed the True Nature Of Sin

Just as the Law was once the greatest mirror to reflect the ugliness of sinful human nature, so now the Cross of Christ is the most vivid mirror to reflect sin's tragedy. "To be sure, the law still stands to condemn the sinner, but we now have a much more convincing demonstration of the true nature of sin. It is seen not at Sinai, but at Calvary. After sixteen hundred years of the thundering of the law, not one single individual to whom the law was given ever kept it, but instead at the end of those sixteen hundred years they committed the capital crime of the ages by nailing the Only One who ever kept the law perfectly, to the Cross of Calvary and condemned Him to die as a criminal and a law-breaker. Mark this fact well – after living for centuries

under the law, they ended up by committing the crime of all crimes, crucifying the Son of God. Ah, my friend, if you really want to see what sin is in all its naked depravity, and then come with me to Calvary." Law or Grace (No. 1; pg. 32)

3. Christ Fulfilled the Law's Punishment For Sin

The wages of sin is death. Sin must be punished. The justice of God must be satisfied. Someone must die for sin, if sin is to be forgiven and if the sinner is to be changed. If the law could save, there would have been no need for the Son of God to come to earth to die on a Cross. However, there is no way to God, other than the way of the Cross, which stands for sacrifice and suffering and atonement for sin. The Law brings condemnation and death; the Cross brings forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ met the Law's demands, therefore a Christian does not have to meet the Law's demands. By accepting what Christ has done, a man is made righteous in God's sight.

B. CHRISTIAN'S LIFE OF LOVE

Paul wrote, *"The Law never succeeded in producing righteousness – the failure was always the weakness of human nature. But God has met this by sending his own Son Jesus Christ to live in the human nature which causes the trouble. And, while Christ was actually taking upon himself the sins of men, God condemned that sinful nature. So that we are able to meet the Law's requirements, so long as we are living no longer by the dictates of our sinful nature, but in obedience to the promptings of the Spirit."* (Romans 8:3-6, Phillips)

Wrote Paul in this same letter, *"The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet; and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."* (Romans 13:9, RSV)

Love is the fulfilling of the Law, and it is Christ who imparts this love to us. *"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."* (Romans 13:I9, 10, RSV)

This love is the essence of the New Covenant, as prophesied by Jeremiah. *"The days are coming, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house*

> ***of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*** **(Jeremiah 31:31-34)**

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the Law was introduced for the purpose of showing man's sinfulness and his inability to save himself. The law is holy, but man is unholy, therefore the best the law can do is to show man's pollution. The law cannot save or change man's heart. Neither can the Pharisees' strict observance of the Scribal Law save man. Only through Christ can man be made righteous. Christ fulfilled the Law's penalty for sin. Christ died that death might die and man might live.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 12

SUBJECT: RECONCILIATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

TEXT: *"Be reconciled to thy brother."*

INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to note that Christ spoke with unquestioning authority. Never spake man as this man spoke.

PROPOSITION

Let us proceed with a discussion of Jesus' comments on the Old Testament statement: *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."* (Matthew 5:21)

I. ALIENATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

- **A. There Is Anger With His Brother**
- **B. There Is Calling His Brother 'Raca'**
- **C. There Is Saying To a Brother 'Thou Fool'**

II. IMPORTANCE OF RECONCILIATION

III. URGENCY IN RECONCILIATION

- **A. Quickly Become Reconciled Because Of Life – Time Consequences**
- **B. Quickly Become Reconciled Because Of Eternal Consequences**

CONCLUSION

If one has developed a breach between himself and his fellowmen, it is important to become reconciled. Reconciliation is so important that it is put before sacrifice.

CHAPTER 12

RECONCILIATION IN RELATIOSNSHIPS!

INTRODUCTION

It might be said that the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount is a series of examples to illustrate the truth of Jesus' statement: *"I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* The Scribes and Pharisees had misinterpreted and misapplied the Old Testament Law, and therefore it was Christ's purpose to give the true interpretation of the Law.

It is interesting to note that Christ spoke with unquestioning authority. Never spake man as this man spoke. The Jewish Rabbis never assumed any personal authority and "never dared to express even an opinion of his own unless he could buttress it with supportable quotations from the great teachers of the past." Barclay's Matthew" (pg. 131) After Jesus spoke in the Synagogue in Capernaum, it was said of His hearers: They are astonished at His teaching; for He taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes." (*When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.* (Matthew 7:28, 29) Considering Jesus' authoritative words, it must be said that Jesus was either mad or that Jesus was what he claimed to be – the unique Son of God.

In the remainder of Chapter 5, Christ is concerned to give a true account of the law. Several times in Chapter 5 Christ refers to specific statements in the Old Testament Law, and after quoting each statement, Christ proceeds to give the proper interpretation of the particular statement. The statements of Old Testament Law which Jesus gives an interpretation to, are as follows: (1*) 'Ye have head that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill.'* (v. 21); (2) *'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery.'* (v. 27); (3*) 'It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.'* (v. 31); (4) *'Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.'* (v. 33); (5) *'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.'* (v. 43)

Jesus made the following noteworthy changes in his interpretation of the Old Testament Law as contrasted to the Scribes' and Pharisees' interpretation of the Old Testament Law.

> **(1) Jesus showed that the spirit of the Law is more important than the letter of the Law. One may not murder and consider himself to have kept the letter of the Law, but what about the desire to hurt one's fellowman? One may not commit adultery, and yet desire the forbidden thing. Jesus showed that the**

true interpretation of the Law means that thoughts, motives, and desires are just as important, if not more so, than mere actions.

(2) Jesus showed that the Law is not meant primarily to keep us from doing certain things, but is meant to lead us to do and to love what is right. It is not primarily negative, but primarily positive in emphasis.

(3) Jesus showed that the purpose of the Law is not to heap oppressive rules upon us, but rather to provide principles from which free development of spiritual character is possible. The interpretation of the Old Testament Law is "It lays down certain principles and asks us to apply them. It's essential teaching is that we are given a new outlook and understanding which we must apply with respect to every detail of our lives. That is why the Christian, in a sense, is a man who is always walking on a kind of knife edge. He has no set regulations; instead he applies this central principle to every situation that may arise." (Lloyd-Jones; pg. 216)

(4) Jesus showed that the Sermon on the Mount (as representing the true interpretation of the Law) is not an end but a means to an end. Christ is the end and the Sermon on the Mount is the means to serving Christ more perfectly. "In other words, you examine yourself in the light of a living Person and not merely in terms of a mechanical code of rules and regulations. (Lloyd-Jones, p. 219)

PROPOSITION

With these introductory thoughts in mind, let us proceed with a discussion of Jesus' comments on the Old Testament statement: *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."* (Matthew 5:21)

I. ALIENATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

After quoting what the Old Testament Law says in regards to killing, Jesus said, *"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."* (Matthew 5:22)

As Barclay notes, "There is in this passage a neat gradation of anger, and an answering neat gradation of punishment." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 135)

A. THERE IS ANGER WITH HIS BROTHER

The Bible speaks of two kinds of anger: (1) Thumos – anger which quickly blazes up and which quickly dies down, like fire burning dried straw; (2) Orge – anger that is long-lived, nursed, brooded over, and not

allowed to die. Both types of anger are strictly forbidden for the Christian.

The punishment for this kind of anger is the judgment court. This refers to the local village council, the lowest court which punishes wrong. Of course, this is a symbolic way of speaking.

B. THERE IS CALLING HIS BROTHER 'RACA'

Barclay says, "Raca is an almost untranslatable word, because it describes a tone of voice more than anything else. Its whole accent is the accent of contempt. To call a man Raca was to call him a brainless idiot, a silly fool, an empty-headed blunderer." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 136)

To treat someone with contempt is to despise, distain, or scorn someone as being vile, mean, and worthless. There are various kinds of contempt.

There is intellectual contempt. There are many who feel that they are the elite, simply because they have a certain degree or have some other intellectual honors. There is social contempt. Some who are of high birth look down in snobbery upon those of lower birth. Some with material prosperity consider themselves more successful and more important than those with the bare necessities of life. Have you ever heard anyone say about those who were struggling financially or who were without a job, "I made my way to the top; let him make his own way." There is religious contempt. There are still those Pharisaical kinds in the Church who look down their nose in contempt upon the 'poor lost drunkards' and wouldn't go out of their way a block to help them.

There is a physical contempt. Some consider themselves better than others because they are more beautiful or handsome. Have you noticed how the homely girls in fifth school are ignored and even ridiculed? It appears that the Corinthians descended to the depth of discourtesy by ridiculing Paul because of his physical appearance. "A description of Paul's personal appearance has come down to us from a very early book called 'The Acts of Paul and Thecla.' It dates back to about 200 A.D. It is so unflattering that it may well be true. It describes Paul as 'a man of little stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrow meeting, and with nose somewhat hooked, full of grace, for sometimes he appeared like a man and sometimes he had the face of an angel.' A little, balding bandy-legged man, with a hooked nose and shaggy eyebrows - it is not a very impressive picture, and it may well be that the Corinthians made great

play with it." (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 271) "There is a rabbinic tale of a certain Rabbi, Simon ben Eleazar. He was coming from his teacher's house, and he was feeling uplifted at the thought of his own scholarship and erudition and goodness. A very ill-favored passer-by gave him a greeting. The Rabbi did not return the greeting, but said, 'You Raca! How ugly you are! Are all the men of your town as ugly as you?' 'That', said the passer-by, 'I do not know. Go and tell the Maker who created me how ugly is the creature He has made.'" (Barclay's Matthew; pgs. 136, 137)

He who says 'Raca' to his brother shall be in danger of the council, that is, the Supreme Court (the High Court of the Sanhedrin). Jesus is not speaking literally. He is saying that the punishment for anger is bad, but the punishment for contempt is even worse.

C. THERE IS SAYING TO A BROTHER 'THOU FOOL'

To call a person a fool (Moros) is to criticize his moral character and "brand him as a loose-living and immoral person." (Barclay's Matthew; pg. 137) It is to call him a moral fool and results in destroying his brother's name and reputation.

There are many ways to destroy one's reputation. The following are some ways in which a person can have his reputation murdered: (The Ten Commandments by G.C. Morgan, pgs. 97-106): (1) Tale-Bearing – "Repetition of report without careful investigation", (2) Slander – "Lie distributed with malicious intention", (3) Rumor – "Circulation of story without certainty of facts", (4) False Impression – "Implying another's guilt", (5) Fault-Finding – "Focus on fault to overlook strengths", (6) Imputation of Motive – "Attributing an ulterior motive to person", (7) Silence – "Failure to defend someone against an untruth."

To steal one's reputation is far worse than stealing one's goods. Said Shakespeare:

> **"Who steals my purse steals trash:**
> **But he that filches from me my good name**
> **Robs me of that which not enriches him**
> **And makes me poor indeed."**

He who says *'Thou fool'* to his brother shall be in danger of hell fire. It is as if Jesus is saying, "To be angry against your brother has bad punishment, but to show contempt to him has even worse punishment. However to murder your brother's character has the worse punishment of all – hell fire!"

II. IMPORTANCE OF RECONCILIATION

Jesus goes on to say that if a Christian has fallen into sin and becomes alienated from a brother that it is vitally important to become reconciled to him. Said Jesus, *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."*

"The picture which Jesus is painting is very vivid. The worshipper, of course, did not make his own sacrifice; he brought it to the priest who offered it on his behalf. The worshipper has entered the Temple; he has passed through its series of courts, the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Woman, the Court of the Men. Beyond that there lay the Court of the Priests into which the layman could not go. The worshipper is standing at the rail, ready to hand over his victim to the priest; his hands are on it to confess; and then he remembers his breach with his brother, the wrong done to his brother; if his sacrifice is to avail, he must go back and mend that breach and undo that wrong, or nothing can happen." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 140)

It was a belief among the Jews that before a sacrifice could be effective as atonement for sin, confession of sin and restitution to any fellowman who had been wronged must be made. The Jews were sure that the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement could avail nothing unless a man was first reconciled to his neighbor.

Putting this in a personal framework, I must say this to myself: "If any breach has developed between me and my fellowmen, I must not try to rationalize (or get myself 'off the hook') and attempt to outbalance evil (jealousy, strife) with good (religious ceremony, gifts, sacrifices). Instead, I must dissolve the breach between myself and my fellowman. I must dissolve this conflict before I even approach God to offer a gift or to utter a prayer. My horizontal relationship must be clear in order that my vertical relationship can be clear."

When Saul disobeyed God's command to kill all of the Amalekites, he attempted to balance his disobedience with a sacrifice. Said Samuel to Saul when Samuel found out about Saul's disobedience: *"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."* (I Samuel 15:22) Micah wrote, *"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed*

thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" **(Micah 6:6-8)**

No amount of sacrifice will wash away the guilt of transgression against our fellowman unless we also confess our sin and make restitution to our fellowmen and seek his forgiveness. Notes Lloyd-Jones, "They (the Pharisees) avoided every twinge of conscience by saying, 'After all I am worshipping God; I am taking my gift to the altar.'" (pg. 228) Lloyd-Jones then goes on to say, "I think I can say again that we all know something about this tendency not to face directly the conviction which the Holy Spirit produces in our heart, but to say to ourselves: 'Well, now; I am doing this and that; I am making great sacrifices at this point; I am being helpful in that matter; I am busily engaged in that piece of Christian work.'...we are balancing one thing with another, thinking that this good will make up for that evil. No, no, says our Lord, God is not like that." (pg. 228)

Wrote the Psalmist: ***"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*** **(Psalms 66:18) Nothing can be hid from God. Says Barclay, "We sometimes wonder why there is a barrier between us and God. We sometimes wonder why our prayers seem unavailing. The reason may well be that we ourselves have erected that barrier, because we are at variance with our fellowmen, or because we have wronged someone and have done nothing to put things right." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 141)**

III. URGENCY IN RECONCILIATION

Jesus said that it is not only important to be reconciled to our fellowmen, but He said that it is important to be reconciled quickly, before further trouble comes. Said Jesus, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou are in the way with hi; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." (Verses (5: 25, 26)

The picture here is interesting. "This is obviously a case of debt, for, if peace is not made, the last farthing will have to be paid. Such cases were settled by the local council of elders. A time was appointed when plaintiff and defendant had to appear together. When a man was adjudged guilty, he was handed over to the court officer...It was the duty of the court officer to see that the penalty was duly paid, and, if it was not paid, he had the power to imprison the defaulter, until it was paid. Jesus' advice may mean one of two things." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 142)

A. QUICKLY BECOME RECONCILED BECAUSE OF LIFE – TIME CONSEQUENCES

An unhealed breach becomes a greater breach. Bitterness breeds bitterness. An open quarrel between families of one generation is often inherited by the same families of a succeeding generation. It is reported that quarrels between two tribes in one generation actually break out in active fighting between the tribes in a succeeding generation.

A failure in reconciliation only causes a greater division in relations, with consequent grief and misery for many. Man is made to be at peace with his fellowmen. When he refuses to confess, guilt increases until the burden becomes almost unbearable. Guilt causes mental breakdown and physical sickness. Guilt is the internal result of failure at reconciliation. Several external relationships that are damaged result of failure at reconciliation.

Barclay states, "If ever we are at variance with someone else, we must get the situation put right straight away. It may mean that we must be humble enough to confess that we were wrong and to make apology; it may mean that even if were in the right, we have to take the first step towards healing the breach. When personal relations go wrong, in nine cases out of ten, immediate action will mend them, but if that immediate action is not taken, they will continue to deteriorate, and the bitterness will spread in an ever –widening circle." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 143)

B. QUICKLY BECOME RECONCILED BECAUSE OF ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES

While we walk the pathway of life with our fellowmen, we must learn to agree with him, for at the end of our life's pathway stands the Righteous Judge of Life. Life is a dressing room for Heaven and to fail in our relationships with our fellowmen is to leave us morally naked at the end of life as we stand before the Great Judge. Life has a way of pushing us on toward eternity. Man has a frightening fault – that of procrastination or negligence in moral duty. What we ought to do, we often put off – having good intentions but pushing our duties into the future. Jesus may be saying (as Barclay points out; pg. 143), "Put things right with your fellowmen, while life lasts, for some day – you know not when – life will finish, and you will go to stand before God, the final judge of all."

The lesson for us to learn is never to leave an unhealed breach between ourselves and our fellowmen. Act quickly to make things right. Be clear before all fellowmen, in order to keep clear before God.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the following cause alienation in relationships: (1) Anger – short or long-lived; (2) Contempt for less fortunate; (3) Abuse of fellowman' character. Each has a progressively severe punishment. If one has developed a breach between himself and his fellowmen, it is important to become reconciled. Reconciliation is so important that it is put before sacrifice. Not be reconciled results in a wider breech between fellowmen and results in deepening guilt in the offender. Not to become reconciled has lifetime consequences and also eternal consequences. Therefore "agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him."

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 13

SUBJECT: **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

TEXT: ***"Ye are the light of the world."*** **(Matthew 5:14a)**

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus said that Christians are the light of the world, He was paying the highest compliment possible to Christians.

PROPOSITION

It is important that we note the source of light, the nature of light, and the purpose of light and try to show how Christians are the light.

I. SOURCE OF LIGHT

- **A. SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN'S LIGHT**
- **B. SOURCE OF WORLD'S LIGHT**

II. NATURE OF LIGHT

- **A. LIGHT SHINES NATURALLY**
- **B. LIGHT IS COSTLY**

III. PURPOSE OF LIGHT

- **A. LIGHT IS TO BE SEEN**
- **B. LIGHT EXPOSES**
- **C. LIGHT AWAKENS**
- **D. LIGHT IS A GUIDE**

CONCLUSION

Light the world for Jesus – that is what Christians are called to do.

CHAPTER 13

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus said that Christians are the light of the world, He was paying the highest compliment possible to Christians. "It may well be said that this is the greatest compliment that was ever paid to the individual Christian, for in it Jesus commands the Christian to be what He Himself claimed to be." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 118) Jesus claimed to be the Light of the World, and we too, as Christians, are to be lights in the world. "You are the light of the world", said Jesus. "It is one of those statements which should always have the effect upon us of making us lift up our heads, causing us to realize once more what a remarkable and glorious thing it is to be a Christian." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 159)

PROPOSITION

In considering Christians as lights in the world of darkness, it is important that we note the source of light, the nature of light, and the purpose of light, and try to show how Christians are the light.

I. SOURCE OF LIGHT

A. SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN'S LIGHT

"When Jesus used this expression, He was using an expression which was quite familiar to the Jews who heard it for the first time. They themselves spoke of Jerusalem as 'a light to the Gentiles', and a famous Rabbi was often called 'a lamp of Israel'. But the way in which the Jews used this expression will give us a key to the way in which Jesus also used it. Of one thing the Jews were very sure – no man kindled his own light. Jerusalem was indeed a light to the gentiles, but "God lit Israel's lamp'. The light with which the nation or the man of God shone was a borrowed light." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 118)

Christians too reflect borrowed light. Only God alone is light, in and of Himself. God borrows His light from no one. He is Himself the source of all light. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, so Christians reflect the light of Christ. The moon's glory is the sun; the Christian's glory is Christ. The moon has no glory of its own, and so Christians have no glory of their own. "The radiance which shines from the Christian is lit by the presence of Christ within the Christian's heart." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 119) When Paul said, "For me to live is Christ", he could have said, "For me to shine is Christ."

"Buffalo, N.Y., is lighted by the power that comes from Niagara Falls. Every light that blazes in that city says 'For me to shine is Niagara'. Not that all the power of that thundering cataract is expended on that one light, but whatever power it has comes from Niagara. Apart from that power it could not shine. Apart from Christ we cannot shine." (Chappell, pg. 129)

Moses' encounter with God resulted in Moses' countenance radiating with God's glory. *"And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses behold the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him....And till Moses has done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face."* (Exodus 34:29, 30, 33)

Moses was a witness of God to the people of Israel. Every Christian is called to be a witness for Jesus Christ. One said, "God hasn't engaged many of us as lawyers but He has summoned all of us as witnesses." (Studies in Christian Living – the Navigator; Booklet 2, pg. 24) Says Lorne Sanny, "Witnessing is taking a good look at the Lord Jesus Christ and then telling others what you've seen." (Ibid, 22)

"Two things only are necessary to the lamp – the oil and the wick – and the two things always go together." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 175) The Holy Spirit is the oil. Without oil a lamp cannot burn. The Christian must be possessed of the Holy Spirit if he is to be a light in the world of darkness. What is the wick? The Christian is the wick. Without a wick there cannot be controlled light in a lamp. God is depending upon Christians to shine forth for Him. God usually works through Christians in bringing sinners to Christ.

> **"You are writing a Gospel, a chapter each day,**
> **By the deeds that you do and the words that you say.**
> **Men read what you write – distorted or true;**
> **- - What is the Gospel according to you?" (Ibid, pg. 24)**

B. SOURCE OF WORLD'S LIGHT

If Christ is the source of the Christian's light, what is the source of the world's light? When Jesus said, "*Ye are the light of the world,*" the 'YE' is emphatic and thus Christ meant, "Ye, and ye alone, are the light of the world." This is most significant, especially when we consider the ones to whom Christ first said this. Were they the culturally elite? Hardly, when you look at the rough faces, and hear the simple language

and smell the clothes saturated with the smell of fish. And yet Christ says that His followers are the lights in a darkened world.

It was not the culturally superior or the intellectually elite that Christ said were the lights of the world. Let us not misunderstand. There are people who are culturally and intellectually elite who are followers of Christ. But it is not these qualities that make them lights in the world.

God chose the so-called foolish things of this world to confound the world-wise. *"If someone among you seems to be wise in a worldly way, let him become foolish in order to grow wise; for the wisdom of this world is folly in God's estimation; as it is written, 'he snares the shrewd in their cunning.' And again, 'The Lord knows the deliberations of the learned, how futile they are.'"* (I Corinthians 3:18-20) *"For the message of the cross seems folly to those on their way to destruction, but to us, the saved, it is God's power."* (I Corinthians 1:18)

The great age of intellectualism in the time of Plato and Aristotle had already passed. Christ did not refer to their age and declare that rationalism brought light to the world. Christ was not against reason and was Himself a Master of reason in His teaching and preaching. Christ however was soon to show that it is the Cross – the instrument which brought about redemption – which must be preached as the Good News for Man. In the Cross of Christ Christians are to glory, for through the Cross man can be reconciled to God and enjoy new life. The Cross is not unreasonable; it is beyond reason. Therefore mere human reason is not sufficient. Intellectualism or culturalism is not the light of the world.

It is sad thing that while there is a greater composite of knowledge in the world than has ever been before, the darkness in the world seems to be deepening. While men knew more about things, men know less about life and how to live. We are living in an age which seems to be more interested in gadgets than in God. There is an increased breakdown in the home life, in worldly knowledge, but people are still ignorant of spiritual knowledge. It is knowledge of God's love of which there is a great dearth. It is this alone which will give light to the world, and it is Christians who are transmitters of that light. Therefore, Jesus did not exaggerate when He said about Christians, "Ye and ye alone, are the light of the world."

II. NATURE OF LIGHT

If Christians are called light, we should understand the nature of light, at least in its simplest form.

A. LIGHT SHINES NATURALLY

"How did this rose become so red? What rouge does it use? It uses none at all. Its nature is to be red. Why does the ocean sprawl so broad and wide between the continents? Why does that mountain climb so high that it has to wrap a mantel of shimmering whiteness around its shoulders even during the hottest days of summer? It is not standing on tiptoe. It is naturally tall. Why does that bird sing as if the whole world were listening? It is not putting on a show; it is the nature of that bird to sing. And if we are light in the Lord, we are going to shine naturally. There is going to be a beautiful spontaneity about our radiance." (Chappell, pg. 130)

Christians must manifest spontaneously "love, joy, and peace." To pump up a love, to feign a joy, or to imitate a peace is to be hypocritical and certainly not Christian. The fruit of the Spirit is to grow in the Christian, and fruit grows naturally and spontaneously. So Christians are to be natural and spontaneous in their witness. Each Christian is to be himself and not attempt to change his personality to be someone else. Christ wants to reflect his glory spontaneously and naturally through each personality as He has made it.

In the hour of persecution God's glory was reflected through Steven, without Steven being aware of it. *"And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly onto him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."* (Acts 6:15) The light of God's love so flooded Peter and John that they replied to their persecutors who tried to silence them, *"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."* (Acts 4:20) Jeremiah felt compelled to speak about God. God's message demanded utterance. *"If I say, I will not make mention of the Lord, or speak any more in His name, there is in my mind and heart as if it were a burning fire shut up in my bones and I am weary with enduring and holding it in; I cannot contain it longer."* (Jeremiah 20:9)

Dr. Tenney said about the early Methodist movement: "Methodism must not be thought of as a mass campaign, whipped up by exhortation to action. Evangelism was implicit rather than explicit. It had the same quality of spontaneity that one feels in the Acts of the Apostles. Search through Wesley's sermons, and you will be amazed to find none devoted specifically to personal evangelism. No pressure seems brought upon hearers to witness. The discovery of the Eternal was so compelling that witnessing was inevitable." (Living In Two Worlds, pgs. 72, 73)

Light shines naturally and spontaneously. Christians must shine unpretentiously and humbly. "At a conference at which D.L. Moody was present there were also present some young people who took their

Christian faith very seriously. One night they held an all night prayer meeting. As they were leaving it in the morning they met Moody, and he asked them what they had been doing. They told him; and then they went on: 'Mr. Moody, see how our faces shine'. Moody answered very gently: 'Moses wist not that his face shone'. The goodness which is conscious, which draws attention to itself, is not the Christian goodness." (Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 121, 122)

B. LIGHT IS COSTLY

Whether it is the sun constantly burning huge masses of gases or a candle melting wax, there is always a cost involved in having light. Oil is burned and a wick is consumed in an oil lamp. Even though we think electricity is cheap, electricity must be generated somewhere and occasionally we must buy bulbs to replace the burned out ones.

To be a Christian witness is costly. When Jesus cast the money changers out of the Temple *"His disciples remembered that it was written, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."* (John 2: 17) In other words, Jesus' fervent love for God's house and His consequent jealousy that it be used properly resulted in bringing reproaches and insults upon Him by the unholy and materialistically minded.

Jesus' witness to the world cost Him the loss of comfort and ease. At noonday while Christ witnessed to the woman of Samaria He was likely hungry and tired. After His disciples returned with bread, Jesus said to them *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish His work."* (John 4:34) On another occasion Jesus said, *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."* (Matthew 8:20) Oftentimes Jesus was weary with the crowds pressing in upon Him. Far into the night Jesus ministered unto the needy. With Christ there was no vacation from the life of compassion.

"Jesus said of John that he was a burning and a shining light. So he was. But if you will take a glance into that gloomy prison cell, if you look at that severed head that is now glutting the vengeance of that hard-faced woman, you will realize something of the price he paid." (Chappell, pg. 131)

III. PURPOSE OF LIGHT

The purpose of light is varied. So the purpose of the Christian witness is varied.

A. LIGHT IS TO BE SEEN

Light is useless if it can't be seen. Light is not to be hid. "People do not light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lamp stand," says Jesus. The Christian witness is also to be seen. Someone said, "There can be no such thing as secret discipleship, for either the secrecy destroys the discipleship, or the discipleship destroys the secrecy." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 119)

It is true that profession without possession is a sham, but it is also true that possession without profession is unchristian. What one possesses inwardly must be expressed outwardly. Secret discipleship cannot long exist. It soon becomes a contradiction in terms. Inward faith must issue forth in praises and thanksgivings and in verbal witness.

Some have mistakenly thought that the essence of Christianity was prayer and meditation. Christianity is a life of thought but it is more a life of action. Matthew 25 seems to bear this out. *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirst, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."* (Matthew 25:34-39)

What a contrast is the life of action and compassion with the life of withdrawal which monasticism practiced. "Some ascetics went so far as to denounce even beauty as evil, and, in pursuit of spiritual perfection by subordinating their flesh, tortured themselves and fasted to an unusual degree. In Syria, for example, St. Simeon Stylites lived for thirty years on top of a pillar sixty feet high, bracing pain and harsh weather." (Civilization Past and Present, pg. 368) Light is to be seen; Christianity is to be lived in the presence of worldly men.

B. LIGHT EXPOSES

When light shines in the dark, it exposes everything that is in its path. The Scripture says, *""Whatsoever doth make manifest is light."* Christians are to make manifest the evil works of godless men. The tragic thing is that man runs from the light, and seeks to hide in the darkness. Lady Macbeth hated the light and sought to hide her planned murder of Duncan in the darkness:

> **"Come, thick night,**
> **And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,**
> **That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,**

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry, 'Hold, hold!'" (Chappell, pg. 132)

Moving a rotting log in the forest causes little creatures to run hither and to, trying to find what they are most accustomed to – the dark. How sad to think that some people have become so accustomed to the dark, that they do not desire the light.

However, it is the Christian's job to warn the sinner of the error of his way. God appointed Ezekiel as a watchman. Every Christian must be a watchman. *"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speaketh to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warm the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."* (Ezekiel 3:17-19)

With compassion and love, the Christian warns people of the dangers and consequences of sin. "It was said of Florence Allshorn, the famous teacher and principal, that if she ever had occasion to rebuke her students, she did it 'with her arm around about them'. If our warnings are given, not in anger, not in irritation, not in criticism, not in condemnation, not in the desire to hurt, but in love, they will be effective." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 121)

C. LIGHT AWAKENS

"A few hours ago the world was asleep...But now our world is awake. How did it come about? Did God turn loose a million alarm clocks? Did he shake the birds out of the trees? No, he just lifted the sun above the eastern hills, and the multitudinous life of the world awakened and began a new day." (Chappell, pg. 137)

The light of God awakens, whether it is directly from God, or from a Christian witness, or from the revelations of nature.

Paul was awakened by the direct light of God. *"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?...and he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me do?"* (Acts 9:3, 4, 6a)

Felix was awakened through a personal Christian witness: *" And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and he heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled."* (Acts: 24, 25a)

God sometimes brings about an awakening through the light of nature. "Someone tells of a youth, who lived carelessly, and who began to study biology. Through a microscope he was watching certain of these living things whom you can actually see living and dying, and begetting others in a moment of time. He rose from the microscope. 'Now I see it', he said. 'I am a link in the chain, and I will not be a weak link anymore.'" (Barclay's Romans, pg. 203)

D. LIGHT IS A GUIDE

Like a beacon light to guide a ship to shore, or like street lights to mark out the road, so a Christian is a light to point men to the right destination – Christ.

"Light not only exposes the darkness; it shows and provides the only way out of the darkness. This is where every Christian should be jumping to the task. The problem of man is the problem of a fallen, sinful polluted nature. Can nothing be done about it? We have tried knowledge, we have tried education, we have tried political enactments, we have tried international conferences, and we have tried them all but nothing avails. Is there no hope? Yes, there is abundant and everlasting hope: 'ye must be born again'." (Lloyd-Jones, pgs. 168, 169)

It is the responsibility of every Christian to witness and seek to win men and women to Christ. "Just suppose that there was only one real believer on earth and that during an entire year this one believer made one convert. Then there would be two. Suppose that during the next year these two made one convert a piece, and then there would be four. Suppose that the next year these four made one convert a piece, and then there would be eight. Suppose that they kept that pace of each winning one every year, how long would it take to convert every person in the entire world? It has now been two thousand years since our Lord was on earth. Has that been enough time? Actually, there has been time enough, with just one winning one other per year, to convert sixty-five worlds like this." (God's Psychiatry, pg. 144)

CONCLUSION

Christians are to be just like their Master. Jesus said that He was the Light of the World and His followers are called lights of the World. What an ennobling title to be given to a Christian.

The Christian's light is a borrowed light. The source of his light is Christ Himself. The Christian must let his light shine before men in order that evil might be exposed, and sinners might be awakened. The Christian is to be a guiding light, lighting the pathway to God. A Christian is to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Light the world for Jesus – that is what Christians are called to do.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 14

SUBJECT: **STANDAR OF INWARD PURITY**

TEXT: ***"Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter."*** **(Matthew 23:26a)**

INTRODUCTION

Action is important but the action is only the child of internal thoughts, attitudes, desires, and motives. It is upon the basis of an internal investigation of a man which will determine whether or not a man is righteous.

PROPOSITION

Here we find another example of the internal standard of righteousness.

- **I. FOLLY OF ADULTEROUS ACTIONS**
  - **A. ALLUREMENT OF SIN**
  - **B. FOLLY OF YIELDING**
    1. **Pregnancy**
    2. **Venereal Disease**
    3. **Emotional Disturbance**
    4. **Hatred of Relationships**
- **II. CONDEMNATION OF ADULTEROUS THOUGHTS**
- **III. REMEDY FOR SEDUCTIVE ALLUREMENTS**

CONCLUSION

Considering the seriousness of sin, a Christian must not play around with sin, but must immediately sever from his life anything that seduces or beguiles or hinders.

CHAPTER 14

STANDARD OF INWARD PURITY!

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5 of Matthew there are various examples to illustrate Christ's true interpretation of the Law. Christ is concerned to show us the essence of true religion and the standard by which God judges true religion. Christ shows us that true religion is a religion of the heart from which proceeds all outward actions. Action is important but the action is only the child of internal thoughts, attitudes, desires, and motives. It is upon the basis of an internal investigation of a man which will determine whether or not a man is righteous.

PROPOSITION

Jesus said, *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offends thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."* (Matthew 5:27-30)

Here we find another example of the internal standard of righteousness. Let us note (1) the Folly of Adulterous Actions, (2) the Condemnation of Adulterous Thoughts, (3) the Remedy for Seductive Allurements.

I. FOLLY OF ADULTEROUS ACTIONS

Jesus' standard of inward purity was built upon the standard that was already given, hundreds of years before in the Old Testament – that is, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery."* Jesus needed not comment upon the folly of adulterous action, for his listeners well knew and prided themselves, in keeping this standard. However, because we are living in an age in which moral standards are being lowered every day, there is justification in speaking about the folly of adulterous actions, before directly speaking about the condemnation of adulterous thoughts.

A. ALLUREMENT OF SIN

In Proverbs 7: 6-21, we have a vivid description of the allurements of sin:

> ***For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned***

> ***among the youths, a young man void of understanding, Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: (Object of sin's allurement is 'a young man void of understanding' or 'void of sense') And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart. (Seductive woman sexily dressed and crafty in her approach) (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house)" (Seductive woman loud and self-willed) Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I prayed my vows. (Woman externally religious but, internally rotten.) Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. (Temptation greater when it seems to be innocent) I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come; let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. (Temptation greater when it seems enjoyable) For the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. (Temptation greater when unknown to others) With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.*** **(Temptation greater when it seems justifiable)**

Satan is subtle. Sin is like a chocolate-covered onion – beautiful on the outside but bitter on the inside. Someone said, "Only one-tenth of an ice-berg is visible on the surface...when you're tempted to judge sin by its superficial appearance, remember the ice-berg!" (No. 465, Shoe-Leather Faith)

B. FOLLY OF YIELDING

Proverbs 7:22-27 describes the folly of yielding to temptation.

> ***Young man who goes after sin is like an ox thinking he is going to green pasture when all the time he is going to the slaughter house!*** **(v. 22)*; Young man like bird thinking he is going to get food and instead gets into a snare.*** **(v. 23)*; The destiny for the adulterer is hell and chambers of death.*** **(v. 24-27)**; ***In regards to the adulterous man, the question is asked, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and***

his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" **(Proverbs 6:27, 28)**

In other words, "Can one sin and get away with it without any devastating consequences?" The simple answer is 'No'. Sin always has devastating consequences. One cannot walk upon hot coals without his feet being burned.

But some will say, "Why not experiment a little in sex? It will better prepare me for the adjustments in marriage." Such an argument has no solid basis. As one said, "Successful marriage and sexual adjustment are based more on gradually established confidence, liking and mutual respect than on any premarital trial and error sexual process." (None of These Diseases, 49) Says Landis and Landis, a professional husband-wife team on marital counseling, "A major objection to premarital coitus as preparation for marriage is that it is difficult for a couple to achieve, outside marriage, sexual union that is complete in all its psychic and emotional aspects." (Building a Successful Marriage, p. 220)

What are some of the 'hot coals' that can burn the feet of the sexual experimenter?

1. Pregnancy

Think of the sorrow caused to the young girl and her parents. Think of the shame brought upon the family as the young girl waits in another city away from home to have some boy's illegimate baby. "What are her thoughts every morning when she awakens, lonely and frightened and sick at soul? How does she face the empty, accusing day? What sort of agony will wring her soul when her baby comes and she has to give it away, perhaps without ever holding it or seeing it? This girl is just a statistic, true - every year there are at least a quarter of a million such babies born in our nation, and a million more who are not allowed to be born because abortionists make sure that they are not." (Sin, Sex, and Self-Control, Peale, pg. 54)

2. Venereal Disease

The writer of the Proverbs wrote, *"Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house (house of 'strange woman'): Lest thou give thine honour unto*

others, and thy years unto the cruel...And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed." **(Proverbs 5:7-9, 11)**

Venereal disease is taking its toll. The doctor says that "gonorrhea in the mother is the most common cause of lifelong blindness in the next generation." (None of These Diseases, pg. 40) The doctor goes on to say, "Syphilis is also the cause for many a baby born macerated and dead, if an infected baby lives, it may have various physical or mental deficiencies." (Ibid, p. 40)

"There is a myth extant that venereal disease can be prevented if intelligence is used. A girl who had sexual relations with only one boyfriend thought she was safe. She was terribly shocked when her doctor told her she was infected. A 'venereal tracer' revealed: the boy had consorted with only one other girl. This girl had had relations with five other men, who in turn had been with nineteen women, some of them prostitutes. The girl who thought her relationship had been limited to one person had had contact, through him, with at least ninety-two others." (None of These Diseases, pg. 43)

How true are Paul's words: *"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."* (I Corinthians 6:18)

3. Emotional Disturbance

A sense of deep guilt plagues those who have indulged in the forbidden thing. Have you ever seen on department store merchandise the notice: 'Slightly soiled – greatly reduced in price." With a sense of self-despising that is the way many feel about themselves.

One young college freshman came into my study, greatly disturbed and frightened. He had come from a religious and respectable home, but had, in the moment of great temptation, overstepped the bounds of purity. He now feared that pregnancy was in the picture. He was greatly disturbed and found it difficult to study. With a spirit of true repentance he poured out his heart to me. He acknowledged the folly of going against the grain of God's standards.

Says Dr. J. Irving Sands of the Neurological Institute of New York: "My own experience in dealing with many neurotic and psychotic people...has led me to conclude that premarital sexual

activity by females leaves blight on the emotional part of their personality. Moreover, these activities are a source of emotional conflict." (None of These Diseases, pg. 50)

Another psychiatrist states, "For about fifteen years I have been the confidant of Broadway and Hollywood actors and actresses who have opportunities to live a promiscuous sexual life. And some of them live it to the hilt – eight, ten, twelve 'affairs' a year. But when they trust you and let down their hair, they will confess how frustrating and unsatisfying it all is." (Ibid, 50)

4. Hatred of Relationships

One who indulges in extra-marital relations is asking for trouble: *"Men do not despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; but if he is found out, he must restore seven times (what he stole); he must give the whole substance of his house (if necessary to meet his fine), but whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks heart and understanding – moral principle and prudence; he who does it is destroying his own life. Wounds and disgrace will he get, and his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy makes (the wronged) man furious; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance (upon the detected ones). He will not consider any ransom (offered to buy him off from demanding full punishment), neither will he be satisfied though you offer him many gifts and bribes."* (Proverbs 6:30-35, Amplified)

Sex, without marital love, leads to bitterness and disgust. "It is a well-known phenomenon that sexual intercourse between partners who meet each other only in the animal pleasure of the moment – as, for example, in prostitution – usually changes immediately after the orgasm into aversion and disgust, then, 'repulsion'." (The Ethics of Sex, by Helmut Thielicke, pg. 38)

Sin does have devastating consequences. As McMillan says; "Pathetic indeed that many people are like cows that break through a fence surrounding their lush pasturage and then live on starvation rations in a dessert of cactus." (None of These Diseases, pg. 51)

II. CONDEMNATION OF ADULTEROUS THOUGHTS

Jesus said, *"I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."* (Matthew 5:28)

Physical adultery is out rightly condemned. Many strictly uphold this standard. However, Jesus tears away the masks of respectability and self-righteous piety when he out rightly condemns mental adultery as being as much a sin as physical adultery.

The Pharisees could pride themselves in their pure conduct However, this was not the final standard of righteousness. Jesus says that man can appear righteous on the outside and yet be filled with lust on the inside. Said Jesus; to the scribes and Pharisees, *"What miserable frauds you are, you scribes and Pharisees! You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, while the inside is full of greed and self-indulgence. Can't you see, Pharisee? First wash the inside of a cup, and then you can clean the outside. Alas, for you, you hypocritical scribes and Pharisees! You are like white-washed tombs, which look fine on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and all kinds of rottenness. For you appear like good men on the outside – but inside you are a mass of pretense and wickedness."* (Matthew 23:23-26, Phillips)

Sin is much more serious than most have realized. One might never break a law of society and might be highly respected in religious circles, and yet be condemned before God. It is out of the heart that evil proceeds. God still says to modern-day hypocrites, *"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."* (Luke 16:15)

It must be pointed out, however, that there is a difference between evil thoughts and thinking about evil. Every saint of God has evil thoughts and suggestions. Satan suggests evil thoughts and tries to get the Christian to meditate upon them. It is only when a Christian entertains, enjoys, digests, and begins to delight in the evil thoughts and suggestions that he is thinking evil. There is a difference between temptation and yielding to temptation. No Christian can keep the birds from flying over his head, but he can keep the birds from making a nest in his hair. A Christian cannot help the evil suggestions, but he can keep from yielding to the evil suggestion.

It must be pointed out that it is not the normal sexual desires that Jesus is condemning. The desire for sex fulfillment is wholesome. Sex is a gift of God which was intended to be the creative expression of man within the context of the permanent human relationship of marriage. E. Stanley Jones writes, "It must be acknowledged that a good many ideas in reference to guilt did have to be thrown into the wastebasket. They were false guilt's which needlessly tormented many sincere people. A lot of false guilt's were fastened on people – these needed to be shed. For example, we know now that sex feelings are not sin; they are a part of our normal healthy life – everybody has them, saint and sinner." (Abundant Living, pg. 92) It is when one deliberately seeks those

things that excite, stimulate, and titillate his sexual desires, that he becomes defiled.

"Far too often there have been people who have been smug and glibly satisfied with themselves because they are not guilty of certain things – adultery, for example - and therefore think that they are all right. But they have never examined their heart. Self-satisfaction, smugness and glibness are the very antithesis of the New Testament doctrine of holiness. Here we see holiness as a matter of the heart, and not merely a matter of conduct; it is not only a man's deeds that count but his desires; not only must we not commit stealing, we must not even covet...In other words the teaching here is the characteristic teaching of the Bible everywhere about this subject, namely, that what we must really concentrate upon is not so much sins as sin. Sins are nothing but the symptoms of a disease called sin and it is not the symptoms that matter but the disease, for it is the disease that kills and not the symptoms." (Studies in Sermon on the Mount; Lloyd-Jones, pgs. 236, 237)

Jesus understood the dynamics of man very well. He perfectly analyzed human behavior. He had reason for condemning mental adultery as severely as He condemned physical adultery. Why is this? One man whom I heard speak pointed out well the relationship between thought and action. What we ponder, we will perform. Meditation leads to action. A mental blueprint precedes every invention. Impure thoughts lead to impure acts. A mental landslide goes before a moral landslide.

It is possible to commit adultery by proxy. This can be done by reading licentious novels or looking at indecent pictures and excuse ourselves on the basis of realism.

Jesus needs not any man to tell him what is in the heart of every man, for he knows the heart of every man. He knows what kind of furnishings we have in the home of our hearts and minds. Jesus condemns not only adulterous actions, but he also condemns adulterous thoughts – that is, mental adultery.

III. REMEDY FOR SEDUCTIVE ALLUREMENTS

Jesus said, *"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."* (Matthew 5:29, 30)

It should be quite obvious that Jesus was not speaking here in a crude literalism. There have been those throughout history who have actually

severed one of their limbs, thinking that this would keep them from sinning. Severing a physical limb did not destroy the possibility or the practice of sinning. "It would fail utterly in reaching the cause of evil. When your organ gets out of tune, we do not cure the evil by polishing the pipes. When your watch ceases to keep good time, you will not cure it by treating the hands. When your well is found to be full of thyroid germs, you will not remedy the evil by painting the curb. When your car fails to run, you will not help matters by dusting the fenders or polishing the hood. No more can any operation performed on the body serve as a remedy for sin." (Chappell, pg. 157)

Perhaps a better translation of 'If thy right eye offend thee', is 'If thy right eye proves a stumbling-block to you' (Barclay's translation) Says Barclay, "The word he uses for a stumbling-block is interesting. It is the word skandalon. Skandalon is a form of the word skandalethron, which means the bait-stick in a trap. It was the stick or arm on which the bait was fixed and which operated the trap to catch the animal lured to its own destruction. So the word came to mean anything which causes a man's destruction. Behind it there are two pictures. First, there is the picture of a hidden stone in a path against which a man may stumble, or of a cord stretched across a path, deliberately put there to make a man trip. Second, there is the picture of a pit dug in the ground and deceptively covered over with a thin layer of branches or of turf, and arranged so when the unwary traveler set his foot on it, he was immediately thrown into the pit. The skandalon, the stumbling-block is something which trips a man up, something which sends him crashing to destruction, something which lures him to his own ruin." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 145)

It seems that Jesus is saying that we must get rid of anything in our lives which will cause us to have an impure mind or impure desires. Jesus is telling us drastically and completely to sever from ourselves anything that will cause our ruin. Sin is serious for it was sin that crucified the Son of God and it is sin that has the penalty of eternal death. Therefore, avoid everything that will cause impure desires that issue forth in impure actions.

Christians must avoid any intimacy with seductive places or with seductive people. The Bible tells us to avoid the very appearance of evil. It also tells us that evil companions corrupt good manners. If one who is wearing a white suit goes down into a dark and dirty coal mine, he cannot expect to come out with a white suit. One who buddies around with an immoral company cannot expect to be anything but immoral. The Scripture says, *"Come away from among them and stay away; touch not their evil things."* (II Corinthians 6:17)

Christians must avoid the second look. We can't help the first look, but we don't have to take the second look. To gaze at pornography on newsstands, licentious pictures on billboards, or sexily dressed women, is to commit the

sin of lusting. "The Jewish Rabbis well knew the way in which the eyes can be used to excite and to stimulate the wrong desire. They had their sayings. 'The eyes and the hand are the two brokers of sin.' 'Eye and heart are the two handmaids of sin.' 'Passions lodge only in him who sees.' 'Woe to him who goes after his eyes for they are adulterous.' As someone has said, 'There is an internal desire of which adultery is only the fruit." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 144)

Christians must occupy leisure time with worthwhile pursuits. David got in trouble when he had too many idle moments on his hands. It is still true: 'The idle mind is the devil's workshop'.

One cannot destroy forbidden thoughts by sitting down and determining not to think these things. The hermits and monks attempted to deliver themselves from the desire of the body by going to the Egyptian desert "with the idea of living alone and thinking of nothing but God." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 46) Saint Anthony was the most famous of the hermits. He fasted and did without sleep and tortured his body for thirty-five years in the desert, but instead of his temptations becoming less, they became intensified. His biographer says of Saint Anthony, "First of all the devil tried to lead him away from discipline, whispering to him the remembrance of his wealth, cares for his sister, claims of kindred, love of money, love of glory, the various pleasures of the table, and the other relaxations of life, and, at last, the difficulty of virtue and the labour of it...The one would suggest foul thoughts, and the other counter them with prayers; the one fire him with lust, the other, as one who seemed to blush, fortify his body with prayers, faith and fasting. The devil one night even took upon him the shape of a woman, and imitated all her acts simply to beguile Anthony." (Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 146, 147)

Barclay suggests only two ways to defeat the forbidden thoughts: (1) the way of Christian action, (2) the way of filling the mind with good thoughts.

Christians must guard what kind of books they read, what kind of T.V. programs they watch, what kind of songs they sing and listen to, what kind of activities they engage in, what kind of conversation they use. Concerning this last point, the Scripture says, *"The keynote of your conversation should not be nastiness or silliness or flippancy, but a sense of all that we owe to God."* (Ephesians 5:4, Phillips) Christians must spend much time with God's Word for it is true:

'This Book will keep you from sin;
Sin will keep you from this Book.'

Christians must learn to discipline their lives. Paul said, *"If you cut the nerve of your instinctive actions by obeying the Spirit, you are on the way to real living."* (Romans 8:13, Phillips) *"Let us be Christ's men from head to foot, and*

give no chances to the flesh to have its fling." **(Romans 13:14, Phillips) What can we do to give no chances to the flesh to have its fling? In this lust-filled society two suggestions of practical nature (as given by Billy Graham) are these*: "Be careful how you dress", "Never engage in heavy petting."* Paul was a mastered man. He understood the importance of discipline. *"For my part, I run with a clear goal before me; I am like a boxer who does not beat the air; I bruise my own body and make it know its master, for fear that after preaching to others I should find myself rejected."* (I Corinthians 1:26, 27, NEB)**

CONCLUSION

How wise is Jesus' advice: *'Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter.'* (Matthew 23:26) Man's problem is centered in wrong attitudes, desires, and motives from which will spring wicked acts. Jesus' standard of righteousness is internal purity. Anything less will not pass Christ's scrutinizing examination.

Christ warns every Christian to beware of anything that becomes a stumbling-block in his pursuit of righteousness. Considering the seriousness of sin, a Christian must not play around with sin, but must immediately sever from his life anything that seduces or beguiles or hinders.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 15

SUBJECT: **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

TEXT: ***"Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."*** **(I Corinthians 7:2)**

INTRODUCTION

It seems significant that Christ would have spoken on the subject of divorce and fornication. Can it not be said that many times lust, if not actual fornication, is a contributing cause of divorce?

PROPOSITION

In speaking on divorce, one must also talk about marriage, for divorce is simply the result of a marriage that has somewhere failed.

I. CHRISTIAN IDEAL OF MARRIAGE

A. CAREFUL PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

B. SUCCESSFUL INGREDIENTS IN MARRIAGE
1. **Companionship**
2. **Considerateness**
3. **Carefulness**

II. HUMAN CONCESSION OF DIVORCE

A. BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF DIVORCE
1. **Moses' Concession Regarding Divorce**
2. **Scribes' False Teaching Regarding Divorce**
3. **Jesus' Teaching Regarding Divorce**

B. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING DIVORCE
1. **Jealousy**
2. **Fault-Finding**
3. **Resentments**
4. **Selfishness**

CONCLUSION

What can be said by way of conclusion to the whole matter?

(1) Marriage is instituted by God and is most sacred.

(2) Marriage was intended to be indissoluble and permanent, and was intended by God to be broken only by death.

(3) Divorce is to be properly and Biblically granted only because of unfaithfulness (defined by some very narrowly, and by others, more broadly).

(4) Because the human heart and soul is the object of God's greatest concern, each 'case' must be individually dealt with, seeking what is best for all parties involved.

CHAPTER 15

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE!

INTRODUCTION

It seems significant that Christ would have spoken on the subject of divorce and fornication. Can it not be said that many times lust, if not actual fornication, is a contributing cause of divorce?

Let it be quickly acknowledged that the proper interpretation of our subject is not easily derived. The subject of divorce is surrounded with many difficulties and is many times avoided by preachers in their speaking. Because divorce is a subject discussed by Jesus, and because many marriages today end up in divorce, it is a subject that dare not be avoided or neglected.

PROPOSITION

In speaking on divorce, one must also talk about marriage, for divorce is simply the result of a marriage that has somewhere failed. The message will be divided into two parts: (1) Christian Ideal of Marriage, (2) Human Concession of Divorce.

I. CHRISTIAN IDEAL OF MARRIAGE

In Matthew 19:3-9, Jesus speaks more systematically about marriage and divorce than He does in Matthew 5:31-32. Therefore, we also will use this Scripture for our discussion.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus*: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus replied, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:3-6) Here we have described the Christian ideal of marriage. God meant for man and woman to be one in marriage, indissoluble and for lifetime. Because marriage was instituted by God, let us look more carefully at marriage and the careful preparation for marriage and the ingredients that make up a successful marriage.

A. CAREFUL PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

If marriage is so important it is only logical to think that before any one enters into marriage, he will carefully prepare for it.

Seeking God's will through prayer is of utmost importance. The scripture says that if in all our ways we acknowledge God, He will direct our pathway in life. God knows who is best for us, as a life-time

partner, and will direct us to that one if we wait upon God. Fortunate the man who can say with Isaac of old, that he has a God-sent wife. Abraham expressed confidence in God's leadership and providence, when he said to his servant, *"God will send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."* (Genesis 24:7c)

Association under various circumstances over a reasonable length of time with a marriage potential, is important as intelligent preparation for marriage. To see a person in his routine work is more important than to see him under the light of the moon on a date. Life is filled with a variety of circumstances, and therefore anyone looking for a lifetime mate had better make sure that he sees his potential mate in a variety of circumstances – depressing times as well as joyous times, serious times as well as jovial times. While it is not always true, there is usually a positive correlation between longevity in acquaintance and a successful marriage.

Communication about life's ideals in a realistic setting is also an important step in careful planning toward marriage. If two cannot talk intimately with one another about the really important and serious things of life, before marriage, it is not too likely that they will be able to talk about them after marriage. Discussing one another's philosophy of life may not be the most romantic thing to do in dating and courtship, but it is the thing that makes for understanding and stability in marriage.

Discussion of backgrounds, mannerisms, and attitudes is another step in the careful preparation for marriage. Says Landis, "Before a person is mature enough for marriage he needs to be able to view and understand his own family background and the contribution it has made to his personality and the implications it may have for his marriage." (Building a Successful Marriage, pg. 146)

Research has shown that the following ten circumstances are most predictive of marital happiness: (1) Superior happiness of parents, (2) childhood happiness, (3) Lack of conflict with mother, (4) Home discipline that was firm, not harsh, (5) Strong attachment to mother, (6) Strong attachment to father, (7) Lack of conflict with father, (8) Parental frankness about matters of sex, (9) Infrequency and mildness of childhood punishment, (10) Premarital attitude free from disgust or aversion to sex.

Understanding the true nature of love is of utmost importance in preparing carefully for marriage. Love includes physical attraction. However, "To the degree that eros (physical attraction) is made the criterion of the worth or worthlessness of the marriage it is subjected to phases of unusual instability which can jeopardize the continuance

of the marriage itself." (The Ethics of Sex; by Helmut Thielicke, pg. 187) Physical attraction is too emotional in character and is therefore subject to great fluctuation. If love were based only on physical attraction, that would mean that the older a couple became, the less they would come to love each other. Love is more than skin deep. It is based on something much deeper than physical attraction alone. Physical attraction is very important, but love based on the physical alone is incomplete and unpredictable. Says Norman Vincent Peale, "First of all, you can stop thinking that romantic love is going to keep you from fighting or solve all your difficulties. It won't. The truth is being 'in love' is a far cry from loving another person wholeheartedly and unselfishly. People 'in love' are often more concerned with their own feelings than the welfare or happiness of the person they're 'in love' with. So get your thinking straight on that." (Sin, Sex, and Self-Control, pg. 106)

What is called love today is oftentimes really lust. Lust is selfish gratification and is animalistic in nature. Love is self-giving and is the distinctive quality that sets man apart from the beast.

Love is more concerned about another's happiness than his own happiness. Says Norman Vincent Peal; "In many cases that I see in my counseling work, this lack of inner discipline is incredible. The other day a young woman came to see me, pretty, well-dressed, a bit sulky. She said her husband wasn't making her happy. She was thinking about getting a divorce. 'What's wrong with your husband?' I asked her. 'Does he drink too much?' 'No, he doesn't drink much.' 'Does he beat you?' 'No.' Is he unfaithful?' 'No,' she said, 'He just doesn't make me happy.' I looked at this child-woman sitting there in her elegant clothes. 'Is your husband well educated?' 'Oh, yes' she said. 'He went to a very good college.' I felt my patience end with an almost audible snap. I stood up and looked down at her. 'Young woman', I said, 'do you think that God almighty created this man solely to provide you with happiness? Do you think his parents struggled and sacrificed to educate him just so that he could placate a spoiled little self-centered kitten like you? What are you contributing to life that makes you deserve this happiness you're so concerned about? A person shouldn't marry just for idyllic happiness so much as to be an honest-to-God partner with another human being. You want my advice? All right, here it is. Go away and try to find some humility and unselfishness and responsibility in yourself. When you do, come back and I'll talk to you!'" (Sin, Sex and Self-Control, pg. 103)

B. SUCCESSFUL INGREDIENTS IN MARRIAGE

Among the many ingredients that could be mentioned that make a marriage successful – that make it last – the following can be mentioned.

1. Companionship

Said Jesus, *"For this cause (the cause of marriage) shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh."* (Matthew 19:6) This oneness in marriage is a most important ingredient.

A man and his wife are to be one in raising a family. Physically they become one to create new life. In giving discipline to children, in offering advice and instruction, in providing a happy and religious atmosphere in the home, a man and his wife must be one. This is not to say that a man and woman are to be one in their roles, no, the man is to be the head of the home with his wife in loving subjection. The husband is to provide a strong leadership, but he is not to be domineering. The happy relationship is not one in which there exists an armed neutrality between husband and wife. In a home where there is a resigned acceptance of one another, a husband and wife have either let the flames of love burnout or they have never known the true meaning of love. Husband and wife are to be as one in their home.

A man and his wife are to be one in lifetime goals. The happy wife is the one who shares her husband's work, interests, and goals. A husband must feel that his wife accepts his job as worth. A husband and wife are drawn closer together through involvement in common interests and hobbies. Working hard together towards the accomplishment of noble goals, adds zest and direction to life.

A man and his wife are to be one in religion. An overriding philosophy of life – if that philosophy is centered in a belief in the living God – will carry a couple through the stresses and storms of life. Having differing religions in a home can cause tensions and conflicts. Husband and wife should be of the same religion.

2. Considerateness

Thoughtfulness and consideration is an important ingredient in a successful marriage. Paul wrote, *"Wives, be subject to your*

husband as to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for the Church."

A solid marriage is based on respect, one for the other. There must be give and take – more give then take. Mistakes and flaws must be forgiven and sometimes overlooked. It is said that the love of courtship is blind. Many times the love of marriage must also be blind. In the successful marriage, each partner complements and strengthens the other's personality. "Any love which drags a person down is a false love. Any love which coarsens instead of refining the character, any love which necessitates deceit and love which weakens the moral fiber, any love from which a person emerges a worse person, is not love. Real love is the great cleanser and purifier of all life." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 206)

"Somerset Maughan tells of his own mother who was lovely and charming and beloved by all. His father was not any means handsome, and had few social and surface gifts and graces. Someone once said to his mother, 'When everyone is in love with you, and when you could have anyone you liked, how can you remain faithful to that ugly little man you married?' She answered simply: 'He never hurts my feelings.' There could be no finer tribute." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 2, pg. 226)

3. Carefulness

If there is need for carefulness in preparation for marriage, there is also need for carefulness in living a married life. The love of marriage is one of the most powerful things, but it is also one of the most fragile things. Love cannot be taken for granted, but it must be cultivated and worked at.

When differences arise – and differences will arise in the best of marriages – each must handle the differences and the friction with carefulness. Never strike at the vulnerable area of weakness in one's partner. "Everyone has areas of sensitivity, of vulnerability, and there is always a strong temptation to strike at these weak spots, whether the argument is concerned with them or not. Such trusts can be terribly cruel; they can drive right through the pitifully thin armor that most of us wear, and inflicted hideous wounds." (Sin, Sex and Self-Control, pg. 107)

When differences arise between husband and wife, it is important to discuss these differences – not argue about them. Cool-

headedness and objectivity are important in solving tensions and misunderstandings.

Peale says that good timing is important in achieving marital happiness. Peale states, "How many domestic quarrels could be avoided if husband and wife would make a pact not to discuss explosive issues when either partner is tired or upset? How many marriages could be strengthened by a word of encouragement or affection at the moment when it's really needed?" Ibid, 115

"One elderly farm couple that I heard of worked out a set of signals early in their married life. If he was feeling grim or out of sorts he rolled one pants leg up to his shin. If she was in a blue or vulnerable mood, she put her apron on backwards. It started as a joke, but they kept it up through the years and swore that it saved them from all sorts of unpleasantness." Ibid, 115

II. HUMAN CONCESSION OF DIVORCE

The Christian ideal is marriage – that indissoluble union of man and wife for life.

A. BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF DIVORCE

Let us discuss what the Bible's teaching on divorce is – what Moses said about it, what the Scribes said about it, and what Jesus said about it.

1. Moses' Concession Regarding Divorce

God's original intention was that the marital relationship should be permanent. However, because of man's perversity, deep chaos had developed in marital relationships during the time of Moses. The Mosaic legislation concerning divorce was introduced to curb the widespread perversion and chaos, and to limit divorce only to certain causes. "The various excuses which men had been using and bringing forward were now prohibited." Lloyd-Jones, (pg. 255) Mosaic legislation made it more difficult to obtain a divorce. A man who divorced his wife had to give his wife a bill of divorcement, and could no longer simply dismiss his wife. Mosaic legislation stated that if a man divorced his wife and she became married and divorced by the second husband, that the first husband could not remarry the woman. ("*If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a*

***certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, [2] and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, [3] and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, [4] then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.*"** **(Deuteronomy 24: 1-4) The whole enactment "is to make these people see that marriage is not something you can walk in and out of at will. It tells the first husband that, if he gives his wife a bill of divorcement, it is a permanent enactment." Lloyd-Jones (pg. 255) Thus the object of the Mosaic legislation "was to reduce to a certain amount of order a situation that had become utterly chaotic." Lloyd-Jones (pg. 256)**

2. Scribes' False Teaching Regarding Divorce

The Pharisees and scribes grossly misinterpreted Moses' legislation regarding divorce. They said that Moses commanded and urged a man to divorce his wife under certain conditions. The Pharisees said to Jesus, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her say?" ***"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"*** **(Matthew 19:7) The fact of the matter was that Moses never commanded or encouraged any man to get a divorce. He only set down the qualifications and limitations in getting a divorce.**

Said Moses, ***"When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."*** **(Deuteronomy 24:1)**

There arose two schools of interpretation on regarding what was 'uncleanness'. The strict, severe, austere school defined 'uncleanness' as meaning only unchastety. The liberal, broad-minded, generous school defined 'uncleanness' in a very broad sense. This liberal school believed that a man could divorce his wife if she spoiled his dinner by putting too much salt in his food, or "if she went in public with her head uncovered, if she talked with men in the streets, if she was a brawling woman, if she spoke disrespectfully of her husband's parents in his presence, if

she was troublesome or quarrelsome." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 2, pg. 150)

It is not hard to see which school gained the greater favour among the people – the liberal school which made divorce easy to obtain. Consequently divorce was very widespread during the time of Jesus. In fact, the family structure was crumbling as greatly, as divorce was becoming easier and easier to obtain; girls were actually unwilling to marry.

At the time of Jesus, men handed a bill of divorce to their wife (to keep the legal requirements of the law) but few men had legitimate reason for divorcing their wife.

The Scribes and Pharisees perverted the Mosaic legislation and encouraged the breakdown of home life by allowing divorce for frivolous reasons. It is with these things in consideration that we see the startling significance of Jesus' teaching regarding divorce.

3. Jesus' Teaching Regarding Divorce

Jesus first emphasized the sacredness of marriage. Jesus reminded his listeners that marriage was instituted by God in the very beginning. A woman is the counterpart of men and is to be man's helpmate. *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19: 6)

Jesus acknowledged Moses' concession regarding divorce. He reminded the Pharisees of the reason for Moses' concession: *"Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."* (Matthew 19:8) In this reply it appears that Jesus is indirectly saying that Moses allowed divorces but never commanded divorces. By refuting the idea that Moses commanded divorce, Christ was, by implication, saying that man should exercise forgiveness in his relationships (especially in marriage).

Jesus sets down specific qualification for divorce and remarriage. Jesus says that the only way that the bond of marriage can be broken is by unfaithfulness or unchastety. The man who *"divorces his wife except on the ground of unfaithfulness is making her an adulterous." Jesus goes on to say that "whosoever marries the woman who has been divorced*

also commits adultery." **(Matthew 5:32, Phillips) Jesus says in another place, *"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife on any grounds except her unfaithfulness, and marries some other woman, commits adultery."* (Matthew 19:9, Phillips)**

B. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING DIVORCE

Barclay has some important things to say about the practical application of Jesus' teaching regarding divorce. "What Jesus laid down was a principle and not a law. To fail to remember that, and to turn this saying of Jesus into a law, is gravely to misunderstand it. The Bible does not give us laws; it gives principles which we must prayerfully and intelligently apply to any given situation...A principle can never be quoted as a final law; a principle must always be applied to the individual situation, as God Himself would have it to be applied. We cannot therefore settle the question of divorce simply by quoting the words of Jesus. That would be to be guilty of legalism; we must take the words of Jesus as a principle which we will apply to the individual cases as they meet us." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 2, pg. 230)

When a marriage is heading towards the rocks, every effort should be exerted to keep that marriage from ending upon the rocks. Many are adversely affected from divorce – couple, parents, relative, and friends. The emotional conflict, caused from feelings of loneliness and feelings of failure, is deep and hard to overcome. Many loose ends are left dangling. Children suffer, sometimes irreparably. Bitterness goes deep, and guilt piles up.

Every outside resource of help should be resorted to, and divorce should be resorted to only as the last resort, after every effort to solve the problems has failed. For the marriage that is in danger of failure, there is a medical, psychological and spiritual resource available in the persons of the medical doctors, psychiatrist, and minister, respectively.

The causes of marital tension are many and must be analyzed in each individual case. Norman Vincent Peale lists a few of the sources of marital trouble.

1. Jealousy. One who is jealous of his partner's success may manifest this jealousy because he or she has a sense of insecurity. "If you are the target of it, you have to give your partner the reassurance that he or she needs. If you're the source of it, you have to try to root this insecurity out of yourself." (Sin, Sec, and Self-Control, pg. 116)

2. Fault-Finding. Oftentimes the partner, who is always finding fault with his partner, is himself conscious of frustrating faults and in need of enhancing his ego. To enhance and build up his own ego, he resorts to tearing down his partner's ego. To make his own faults appear smaller, he focuses upon the faults of his partner. Thus, excessive fault-finding could be a cover-up for a sense of worthlessness which the fault-finder feels in himself. The marriage partner, who is the target of the fault-finder, must someway seek to discover why his partner feels unworthy. He must build up the shaky ego of his marriage partner, and someway get his mate to undergo self-examination to discover his motivations.

3. Resentments. A married person may appear calm and friendly in public, but as soon as he arrives at home, he explodes and gives his wife a terrible verbal whipping. Why does he treat his wife so mean when obviously the wife has done nothing to incite her husband's anger? It is a case of taking out the husband's frustrations, fears, guilt, and resentment on the wife. The husband feels that he must have some outlet for his feelings, and so instead of pouring out his pent-up feelings upon a punching bag or some other inanimate object, the husband takes it all out on his poor wife. The wife becomes a scapegoat for the husband's bad feelings. Such a husband would do well to realize the source of his tensions and the proper object for his outlet. The source is the common frustrations of life and the object ought to be something that has no feelings – certainly not his wife who is naturally going to react adversely to such treatment, thus further adding to the husband's tensions and troubles. To kick the car or to speak harshly to your wife is not the way to resolve tensions. A wise husband will find a better avenue of expression. A wise woman will seek to understand her husband if he does react this way and return soft words for the harsh words. *"A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievious words stir up anger."* (Proverbs 15:1)

4. Selfishness. It can doubtless be said that the root cause of every divorce is selfishness on the part of one or both partners. Says Keith Miller, "The soul of a marriage can be trysting place where two people can come together quietly from the struggles of the world and feel safe, accepted, and loved...or it can be a battle ground where two egos are locked in a lifetime struggle for supremacy, a battle which is for the most part invisible to the rest of the world." (<u>The Taste of Wine</u>, pg. 46)

"Another basic need in marriage stems from one of the deepest of all human cravings – the desire to be appreciated. The great psychologist, William James, once remarked ruefully that in his classic works on human personality he had failed to mention this yearning and that it was perhaps the most universal craving of all." (Sin, Sex, and Self-Control, pg. 109)

When there is no appreciation or affection expressed but only selfishness, each of the partners in the marriage contract become dull, listless, and poor. In fact, as one said, "Unmet need for plain simple affection often sends people away to try another man or woman." (Demant, Christian Sex Ethics, pg. 85)

Paul gave important advice: *"The husband should give his wife what is due to her as his wife, and the wife should be as fair to her husband. The wife has no longer full rights over her own person, but shares them with her husband. In the same way the husband shares his personal rights with his wife. Do not cheat each other of normal sexual intercourse, unless of course you both decide to abstain temporarily to make special opportunity for fasting and prayer. But afterward you should resume relations as before, or you will expose yourselves to the obvious temptation of the devil."* (I Corinthians 7:3-5, Phillips)

How can we bring the principle of Jesus' teaching on divorce to the realities of life? That isn't easy. After all outside help has been resorted to, and the trouble is still there, what then? "Suppose the trouble still to be there; suppose one of the partners to the marriage to be so constituted physically, mentally, or spiritually in such a way that he or she is one of these rare persons for whom marriage is an impossibility, and suppose that that discovery could not have been made until the experiment itself had been made – are then these two people to be told that they are forever fettered together in a situation which cannot do other than bring a lifetime of misery to both? It is extremely difficult to see how such reasoning can be called Christian; it is extremely hard to see Jesus legalistically condemning two people to any such situation. This is not to say that divorce should be made easy, but it is to say that when all the physical and mental and spiritual resources have been brought to bear on such a situation, and the situation remains incurable and even dangerous, then the situation should be ended, and the Church, so far from regarding people who have been involved in such a situation as being beyond the pale, should do everything it can in strength and tenderness to help

them. There does not seem to be any other way than that in which to bring the real Spirit of Christ to bear on the situation." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 231)

CONCLUSION

What can be said by way of conclusion to the whole matter?

(1) Marriage is instituted by God and is thus most sacred, and is only to be entered into after careful and prayer preparation.

(2) Marriage was intended to be indissoluble and permanent, and was intended by God to be broken only by death. Thus, marriage is a relationship between two people that is to be 'worked at' to be successful. The ingredients of patience, love, flexibility, optimism, good humor, sharing, and loyalty must be continually cultivated if marriage is to be successful.

(3) Divorce properly granted only because of unfaithfulness, is the principle by which society must be guided.

(4) Because the human heart and soul is the object of God's greatest concern, each 'case' must be individually dealt with, seeking what is best for all parties involved. Forgiveness must be a guiding principle in marriage. When serious difficulty arises in a marriage, all outside help should be resorted to. Only after every source of help has been exhausted, or when no reconciliation between the parties seems possible, should divorce be the answer.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 16

SUBJECT: **SIMPLICITY IN COMMUNICATION**

TEXT: ***"Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay."***

INTRODUCTION

In today's lesson Jesus emphasizes the importance of simple, sincere conversation and communication, especially as relates to oath-taking. Jesus is emphasizing the importance of upright, straightforward speech.

PROPOSITION

In discussing this subject, let us notice the perversion of the Pharisees' interpretation regarding oath-taking, and the subsequent conclusions we can draw from a proper understanding of oath-taking.

I. PERVERSION OF PHARISEES' INTERPRETATION

- **A. FALLACY OF LEGALISM**
- **B. FALLACY OF COMPARTMENTALIZATION**
- **C. FALLACY OF SACRILEGE**

II. PLACE OF OATH-TAKING

- **A. NECESSITY OF OATH-TAKING**
- **B. OCCASION FOR OATH-TAKING**

CONCLUSION

Ordinary speech is to be characterized by simplicity, truthfulness, sincerity, discretion, and clarity, realizing that we are constantly in the presence of God, and that God is a partner in every transaction.

CHAPTER 16

SIMPLICITY IN COMMUNICATION!

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said to his disciples, *"I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20) Jesus then proceeded to illustrate this statement.

He showed that an external appearance of benevolence is not enough; there must not even be any anger towards one's fellowman, only a spirit of love and reconciliation. External morality is not enough; there must not even be the presence of lust in one's life. The marital relationship must be taken seriously, thus eliminating easy divorce.

Today Jesus again illustrates in what way the Christian's righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. In today's lesson Jesus emphasizes the importance of simple, sincere conversation and communication, especially as relates to oath-taking. Jesus is emphasizing the importance of upright, straightforward speech.

PROPOSITION

In discussing this subject, let us notice the perversion of the Pharisees interpretation regarding oath-taking, and then notice the place of oath-taking, the subsequent conclusions we can draw from a proper understanding of oath-taking.

I. PERVERSION OF PHARISEES' INTERPRETATION

To see how the Pharisees perverted the Mosaic legislation regarding oath-taking, let us briefly look at the Mosaic legislation regarding oath-taking.

Deuteronomy 6:13 reads, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." Leviticus 19:12 reads, "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God, I am the Lord."

What was the purpose of these Old Testament regulations? Was it simply to curb man's tendency, because of the Fall, of lying. "One of the greatest problems with which Moses had to deal was the tendency of people to lie to one another and deliberately to say things that were not true. Life was becoming chaotic because men could not rely upon one another's words and statements. So one of the chief purposes of the law at this point was to check that, to control it, and, as it were, to make life possible." "Another object of this Mosaic legislation was to restrict oath-taking to serious and important matters. There was the tendency on the part of the people to take an oath about trivial kinds of matter. On the slightest pretext they would take

an oath in the name of God. The object of the legislation was, therefore, to put an end to this indiscriminate, glib oath–taking, and to show that to take an oath is a very solemn matter, something that must be reserved only for those causes and conditions where a matter of exceptional gravity and unusual concern for the individual or for the nation was involved." (Lloyd-Jones, pgs. 263, 264)

Let us note how the Pharisees perverted the Mosaic legislation, by putting their own interpretation on it.

A. FALLACY OF LEGALISM

The Pharisees were primarily wrong because of their preoccupation with legalism and a disregard for the spirit of the Law. We have already seen this. The Pharisees prided themselves in the observance of external laws, but were filled with evil desires and attitudes. The Pharisees did not kill, but how many could say that they never hated? The Pharisees presented sacrifices and prided themselves in religious ceremony, but failed in being reconciled to fellowmen, and obedient to God. They tried to keep the letter of the law, while failing to keep the spirit of the Law. The Pharisees did not commit physical adultery, but how many could say they had never lusted, or never committed mental adultery?

"They had construed the meaning and so turned and phrased it in a legal form that they allowed themselves ample scope to do many things that were utterly contradictory to the spirit of the law, yet they felt they were free because they had not actually broken the letter. In other words, they had confined the whole purpose of the enactment at this point to the one question of committing perjury. To commit perjury was to them a very serious and solemn matter; it was a terrible sin and they denounced it. You could, however, take all kinds of paths, and do all sorts of things, but as long as you never committed perjury you were not guilty before the law." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 265)

B. FALLACY OF COMPARTMENTALIZATION

"The Jews divided oaths into two classes, those which were absolutely binding and those which were not. Any oath which contained the name of God was absolutely binding; any oath which succeeded in evading the name of God was held not to be binding. The result was that if a man swore by the name of God in any form, he would rigidly keep that oath; but if he swore by heaven, or by earth, or by Jerusalem, or by his head, he felt quite free to break that oath. The result was that evasion had been brought to a fine art. The idea behind this was that, if God's name was used, God became a partner in the transaction; whereas if God's name was not used, God had nothing to do with the transaction.

The principle which Jesus lays down is quite clear. In effect Jesus is saying that, so far from having to make God a partner in any transaction, no man can keep God out of any transaction. God is already there. The heaven is the throne of God; the earth is the footstool of God; Jerusalem is the city of God; a man's head does not belong to him; he cannot even make a hair white or black; his life is God's; there is nothing in the world which does not belong to God; and therefore, whether God is actually named in so many words or not, does not matter. God is there already." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 57)

What the Jews were doing was compartmentalizing life–that is, putting some things (oaths) in the compartment of the sacred and some oaths in the compartment of the ordinary and non-sacred. Jesus is teaching here the fallacy of such compartmentalization.

Jesus is really saying, by implication, that life cannot be compartmentalized – some parts open before God and some parts closed to God – simply because God is everywhere.

The Psalmist wrote, *"O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off...Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend you into heaven thou art there, if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say; surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."* (Psalms 139:1, 2, 7-12) God saturates all things; therefore no transaction can be made independent of God.

God pervades all of nature. As the song writer so well put it:

> **"This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears,**
> **The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.**
> **This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair;**
> **In the rustling grass I hear him pass, He speaks to me everywhere."**
> **(This Is My Father's World)**

God is the:

> **'Unseen Guest at every table;**
> **The Silent Listener to every conversation.'**

He hears the tender voice of mercy and also the harsh voice of wrath. He hears the word of sincerity and also the word of hypocrisy. He knows the truth or falsehood of all oaths. He knows the truth or falsehood of ordinary, casual conversations.

The Pharisees compartmentalized their public religious life from their private life. They appeared very religious in public, standing in the synagogues and at the corners of streets to pray, but inwardly filled with pride and deceit. It is still possible to form a very religious prayer in public and live a deceitful life in private. Our worship and prayers must not be put in a compartment. All of life must be worshipful and prayerful. A true Christian practices the presence of God in all of his life.

"Lord of all pots and pans and things...
Make me a saint by getting meals
And washing up the plates!"
(The Practice of the Presence of God, pg. 6)

George Washington Carver was one who was greatly aware of God's presence in all of nature. Carver was at home with God wherever he was, and in all of his work. Caver's biographer said, "Where other scientists toiled in vain, Colored Carver prayed and succeeded. Prayer was Carver's faith-scope. He saw more through the faith-scope than he did through the microscope. Fellow scientists gazed into the microscope made with hands and were turned away baffled and unrewarded, but the praying Carver fixed his eye to the faith-scope not made with hands and revolutionized the agricultural sphere of the scientific world. Always he resorted to prayer and simple trust in God. When nature's inner doors were locked to the mechanics of science and the prying eyes of scientists Doctor Carver went on his knees humbly before a beneficent Creator who whispered secrets into his ebony ear. Carver was constantly listening for orders and information from above. He was a citizen of two worlds and kept in touch with them both. His experimentations were always to him divine tasks and trusts, and he never wavered in his deportment. When asked how he performed such miracles, he would reply that they were not miracles but divine revelations." (George Washington Carver, by Rothwell pg. 38)

Kagawa, famous Japanese missionary, communed in love with God at all times. Kagawa writes, "Love alone introduces God to me. Love is my sanctuary – in factory, field, and city streets; in bedroom, office, kitchen, or sickroom. I have my sanctuary everywhere I go in the universe. Where Love is, there God is." (Kagawa, Japanese Prophet, by Jessie M. Trout, pg. 28)

So then, one of the fallacies of the Pharisees, in their ideas regarding oath-taking, was compartmentalization of life. The true Christian cannot compartmentalize, God. God must be an active partner in every transaction of life.

C. FALLACY OF SACRILEGE

It had become common practice to take oaths where no oaths were necessary or even proper. "It had become far too common a custom to introduce a statement by saying, 'By thy life,' or, 'By my head,' or, 'May I never see the comfort of Israel if...' The Rabbis laid it down that to use any form of oath in a simple statements like: 'That is an olive tree', was sinful and wrong. 'The yes of the righteous is yes,' they said, 'and their no is no'. There is still need of warning here. Far too often people use the most sacred language in the most meaningless way. They take the sacred names and the sacred things upon their lips in the most thoughtless and irreverent way. The sacred names should be kept for sacred things." (Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 156, 157)

It is still possible to use sacred titles or phrases with sacred ideas behind them, in casual or ordinary conversation. We probably have all been guilty of this at one time or another.

Most of us have been guilty of using a sacred term in very ordinary conversation. How many times do even Christians say 'For goodness' sake', or 'Mercy sakes' alive' or 'For Heaven's sakes: or 'Goodness gracious'. Have you ever heard anyone say, 'Holy Cow, why did he do that?' or 'I bet you on my life, that he will buy that house'. I have also heard references like this: 'In all of God's green earth, I never saw anything like that', or 'From now until doom's day he will probably have that habit', or 'I couldn't have done that, to save my soul.'

Again, let us be reminded of what Jesus said, *"I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne nor by earth for it is his footstool, neither by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay."* (Matthew 5:34-37)

II. PLACE OF OATH-TAKING

A. NECESSITY OF OATH-TAKING

Jesus said, *"Whey you say Yes, let it be yes; and when you say, No, let it be no. Anything which goes beyond that has its source in evil."* (Barclay's Matthew, 5:37)

What did Jesus mean by this last statement? Barclay suggests two possible meanings: (1) "If it is necessary to take an oath from a man that necessity arises from the evil that is in man. If there was no evil in man, no oath would be necessary," (2) "The fact that it is necessary to put men on oath on certain occasions arises from the fact that this is an evil world." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 159)

Our Quaker friends feel that it is not necessary to put themselves under oath on any occasion. They feel that their word is enough without putting themselves under oath. The Essences, an ancient sect of the Jews, also felt this way. Writes Josephus about them; "They are eminent for fidelity and are ministers of people. Whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath. Swearing is avoided by them and they esteem it worse than perjury. For they say that he who cannot be believed without swearing is already condemned." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 158)

The ideal is that man, even in court, would never have to take an oath. However, because we live in a world where falsehood and infidelity are still realities, Courts must exact an oath of honesty from all. Because Christians live in a world that is often godless, a Christian must accept the standards for honesty which the Courts of the world accept. However, this does not release Christians from the responsibility of living in such a way that men will see their transparent goodness, and thus convey to the world the superfluous nature of oaths as they relate to Christians. The world must always know that the word of Christians is enough without oaths, although the world's courts may exact oaths of Christians, simply because Christians are members of the world's systems. Christians are citizens of two worlds and therefore Christians must be willing, even if it seems unnecessary or superfluous, to submit to the world's standards for honesty.

B. OCCASION FOR OATH-TAKING

There are definitely occasions in the Bible when oaths were taken. When Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, Abraham extracted an oath from his servant. *"That holy man Jacob extracted an oath from Joseph, Joseph extracted an oath from his brethren and Jonathan asked an oath from David."* (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 267)

At Jesus' trial, (as recorded in Matthew 26) *"the high priest answered and said unto him (Jesus), I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."* Jesus did not refuse to

answer under oath, but instead, although He had held His peace before this, replied at this time.

Paul took oaths on certain occasions. In Romans 9:1 he says, *"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also baring me witness in the Hoy Ghost."* In II Corinthians 1:23 Paul says, *"I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet into Corinth."*

Oaths however are only to be taken upon solemn occasions and for solemn reasons. Other oaths are a confirmation to man of the truthfulness of something, and put an end to all strife.

As has been thought out already, oaths are not to be used on ordinary occasions or in ordinary conversation. Oaths are sacred and are to be used only at sacred times.

In ordinary conversation, man is to speak with simple veracity. Speech is to be characterized with a simple, straightforward truthfulness and accuracy. That means the exclusion of flattery. Proverbs 26:28b says, *"A flattering mouth works ruin."* That means the exclusion of exaggeration. Truthfulness in every area of life is commanded by Jesus. There is no place for the 'white lie' in international affairs, any more than there is any place for it in personal affairs. Evasion has almost become an art of diplomacy, and is the source of much difficulty in international affairs. It can be said of both the individual and of a nation: *"The words of his mouth were smoother than cream or butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords."* (Psalms 55:21, Amplified)

The Christian man is to speak with discretion, not rashly or quickly. "He who guards his mouth controls himself, but he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin." Berkeley's Proverbs 13:3, *"He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles."* (Proverbs 21:23) *"Among a multitude of words transgression is not missing, but he who restrains his lips is prudent."* (Proverbs 10:19) *"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but the wise man, holding it back, quiets it."* (Proverbs 29:11)

The Psalmist's prayer should be our prayer: *"Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."* (Psalm 19:14, Berkeley) Words that are acceptable in the sight of God are words of thanksgiving. Wrote Paul, *"Nor should there be indecency and foolish talking or low jesting; they do not come up to the mark. Instead, let there rather be thanksgiving."* (Berkeley Ephesians, 5:4)

How seriously we ought to heed Jesus' message: *"I tell you that men will have to answer at the Day of Judgment for every careless word*

they utter – for it is your words that will acquit you, and your words that will condemn you!" **(Matthew 12:37, Phillips) Jesus is our example and of Jesus it is written, *"He committed no sin; no guile (deceit, falsehood) was found on his lips."* (Peter 2:22)**

E. Stanley Jones said "If the outer without the inner is hypocrisy, then we must be converted in our outer works and also in our words which interpret the two." (Conversion, pg. 173) To Peter, the damsel said, *"Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee."* (Matthew 26:73) Put in a different context, but just as true, a man's speech always betrayeth him. Words are the vehicles of expressing the inner climate of man. By a man's words he is found out.

Jesus said that Christians are to answer a simple yes or no. Christians are to be explicit in their answers. Christians are to say what they mean and mean what they say, speaking clearly without obscuring the issues. E. Stanley Jones states, "Much of our vocabulary is not positively evil – it is just weak. We have no deep convictions; hence we say the innocuous. We are always taking refuge into platitudes, into nothingness's, to escape criticism of ourselves for holding positive convictions. We skirt issues, agreeing with everybody – and nothing. We become like our words – weak, ineffective, and like nobody. Preaching has been defined 'as a mild-mannered man speaking to mild—mannered people, in a mild-mannered way in order to make them more mild-mannered.' This has enough truth in it to make it sting." (Conversion, pgs. 174, 175)

CONCLUSION

Jesus commanded simplicity in our conversation. *"Whatever you have to say let your 'yes' be a plain 'yes' and your 'no' be a plain 'no'."* (Matthew 5:37, Phillips) We must not distort the use of oaths – as did the Pharisees – but must realize that they are to be used only on solemn occasions. Ordinary speech is to be characterized by simplicity, truthfulness, sincerity, discretion, and clarity, realizing that we are constantly in the presence of God, and that God is a partner in every transaction.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 17

SUBJECT: **DISCIPLESHIP MEANS SELF-DENIAL!**

TEXT: ***If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."*** **(Matthew 16:24a)**

INTRODUCTION

We must note that this teaching is not for nations or for the world – only for Christians, for Christians alone are given the nature that is required to attain unto this standard.

PROPOSITION

Jesus is teaching self-denial, and to do this Jesus uses four illustrations

I. SELF-DENIAL AND RETALLIATION

A. OLD TESTAMENT STANDARD OF RETALIATION
1. **Individuality of Vengeance**
2. **Legality of Vengeance**
3. **Compensation in Vengeance**

B. NEW TESTAMENT STANDARD OF RETALIATION

II. SELF-DENIAL AND PERSONAL RIGHTS

III. SELF-DENIAL AND COMPELLED SERVICE

IV. SELF-DENIAL AND GIVING

A. "GIVING MUST NOT BE REFUSED."

B. "GIVING MUST BENEFIT THE MAN TO WHOM THE GIFT IS GIVEN."

C. "GIVING MUST BE CARRIED OUT PRIVATELY AND SECRETLY."

D. "THE MANNER OF GIVING MUST BEFIT THE CHARACTER AND THE TEMPERAMENT OF THE RECIPIENT."

E. GIVING WAS AT ONCE a PRIVILEGE AND AN OBLIGATION, FOR IN REALITY ALL GIVING IS NOTHING LESS THAN GIVING TO GOD.

CONCLUSION

Jesus' teaching on self-denial is another example of Jesus' standard of internal righteousness.

CHAPTER 17

DISCIPLESHIP MEANS SELF-DENIAL!

INTRODUCTION

Lloyd-Jones, in regards to this subject says: "We are face to face here with a subject that has often been debated, which has been frequently misunderstood, and which has always been the cause of much confusion. There is possibly no passage in Scripture which has produced as much heat and disputation as this very teaching which tells us not to resist evil and to be loving and forgiving." (pg. 273)

He reminds us of some basic principles to keep in mind when interpreting the Sermon on the Mount: (1) "We must never regard the Sermon on the Mount as a code of ethics, or a set of rules to cover our conduct in detail...These teachings are never to be applied mechanically." (2) "If our interpretation ever makes the teaching appear to be ridiculous or leads us to a ridiculous position, it is patently a wrong interpretation." (3) "If our interpretation makes the teaching appear to be impossible it also is wrong." (4) "We must remember that if our interpretation of any one of these things contradicts the plain and obvious teaching of Scripture at another point, again it is obvious that our interpretation has gone astray." (pg. 274)

Today we discuss the fifth illustration of Jesus' basic premise: *"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20)

Before discussing this Scripture, it is important to understand for whom this Scripture is intended, and in what situation it applies. To whom did Jesus command to offer the other cheek, to give the cloak as well as the coat, to go an extra mile, and to give cheerfully? These exhortations apply to none other than the Christian for the teachings of Matthew 5 are based upon the blessed man – the man of the Beatitudes. We must note that this teaching is not for nations or for the world – only for Christians, for Christians alone are given the nature that is required to attain unto this standard. Also we must note that "this teaching, which concerns the Christian individual and nobody else, applies to him only in his personal relationships and not in his relations as a citizen of his country." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 277) That is to say, that this teaching is personal in application, and is not to be used as a basis for national pacifism, or for neglect of duty in regards to justice, law, or national defense.

PROPOSITION

What is the real essence of this teaching? Jesus is teaching self-denial, and to do this Jesus uses four illustrations: turning the cheek, giving the cloak, going the second mile, giving cheerfully. Let us look at each of these illustrations of self-denial.

I. SELF-DENIAL AND RETALLIATION

In discussing the relationship between self-denial and retaliation, let us discuss first the Old Testament standard of retaliation and then discuss the New Testament standard of retaliation as given by Jesus.

A. OLD TESTAMENT STANDARD OF RETALIATION

Said Jesus, *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."* This standard of retaliation in the Old Testament may be described as the law of tit for tat. "It appears in the earliest known code of laws, the code of Hammurabi, who reigned in Babylon from 2285 to 2242 B.C." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 160)

This law was stated three different times in the Law – Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19, 20, Deuteronomy 19:41. Says Exodus 21:23-25: *"If any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."*

1. Individuality of Vengeance

This law of the Old Testament may seem to be savage and merciless, but in reality it was intended to be the very opposite. Its aim was to limit vengeance and thus to check or hold in bounds the wrath of man. "If a man of one tribe injured a man of another tribe, then at once all the members of the tribe of the injured man were out to take vengeance on all the members of the tribe of the man who committed the injury: and the vengeance desired was nothing less than death." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 161) Thus, this law was for the purpose of individualizing vengeance. Only the man who inflicted the injury could be punished and his punishment could not be greater than the injury he inflicted or the damage he caused.

2. Legality of Vengeance

Never could the private individual exact justice or meet out punishments. Justice, judgment, and law must be the rule of the day and not assessing judgment or punishment outside of the law. "The enactment was not given to the individual, but rather to the judges who were responsible for law and order amongst the individuals." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 272)

3. Compensation in Vengeance

In semi-civilized societies this law was never carried out literally, but "the injury done was assessed at a money value...If a man has injured another, he is liable on five counts – for injury, for pain, for healing, for loss of time, for indignity suffered."

(Barclay's Matthew, pg. 162); There was a carefully worked out system of compensation whereby an assessed amount of money was paid to the man who suffered loss, according to the kind and extent of loss.

B. NEW TESTAMENT STANDARD OF RETALIATION

Said Jesus, *"I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."* (Matthew 5:39) How could a right handed man, standing in front of another, slap that other person on the right cheek? To slap him with any force, he would have to use the back of his hand. "Now according to Jewish Rabbinic law to hit a man with the back of the hand was twice as insulting as to hit him with the flat of the hand." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 164) Thus, it seems that Jesus is saying: "Regardless of how contemptuous or shameful another person treats you, you are not to retaliate or seek his destruction in any way, and you are not to resent his ill treatment of you."

Christians are not only physically mistreated, but many times persecuted with the tongue or by a look.

Wiberforce was a great man in history who worked hard for the freeing of the slaves in England. During the many years he worked to free the slaves, he was bitterly persecuted by some. Boswell was one man who poured out verbal contempt on Wilberforce:

"Go, W_____, with narrow skull,
Go home and preach away at Hull.
No longer to the Senate cackle
In strains that suit the tabernacle.
I hate your little wittling sneer,
Your pert and self-sufficient leer.
Mischief to trade sits on your lip,
Insects will gnaw the noblest ship.
Go, W _____, be gone, for shame,
Thou dwarf with big, resounding name."
(Faith and Freedom, pg. 93)

Wilberforce worked on, despite persecution, and was successful in seeing the slaves freed.

Lloyd-Jones tells an incident out of the life of Hudson Taylor. "Hudson Taylor, standing on a river bank in China one evening, hailed a boat to take him across a river. As the boat was drawing near a wealthy Chinese man came along, who did not recognize Hudson Taylor as a foreigner, because he had affected native dress. So when the boat

came he struck and thrust Hudson Taylor aside with such force that the latter fell into the mud. Hudson Taylor, however, said nothing: but the boatman refused to take his fellow-countryman, saying, 'No, that foreigner called me, and the boat is his, and he must go first.' The Chinese traveler was amazed and astounded when he realized he had blundered. Hudson Taylor did not complain but invited the man into the boat with him and began to tell him what it was in him that made him behave in such a manner. As a foreigner he could have resented such treatment; but he did not do so because of the grace of God in him. A conversation followed which Hudson Taylor had every reason to believe made a deep impression upon that man and upon his soul." (pg. 282)

Someone said to E. Stanley Jones one time, "I don't think you know when you are insulted." He replied, "I am not looking for insults and so I don't see them." (Abundant Living, pg. 63)

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." **(Romans 12:19, RSV) We are to return good for evil.**

II. SELF-DENIAL AND PERSONAL RIGHTS

Says Jesus; "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." (Matthew 5:40) The coat or tunic was the long, sack-like inner garment and the cloak was the great, blanket-like outer garment which was worn in the day as a robe, and used at night as a blanket. By law, a man's tunic (under garment) might be taken as a pledge but by law a man's cloak (outer garment) could never be taken as a pledge. The cloak was often the only covering for night that a Jew owned, and therefore the law said that no man had a right to take that article of clothing.

It seems then that Jesus is saying, "a Christian never disputes about his legal rights, but willingly submits rather than stand on his legal rights."

This is not speaking about a protest when a law is broken. Jesus' legal right was stepped on and the law broken when Jesus was struck on the face at his trial. Jesus protested, not because of personal wrong or injury, but because the law was being broken. When Paul was beaten and imprisoned and finally delivered by an earthquake sent by God, he protested to the magistrate, not because of personal injury but because the law was broken. Said Paul, *"They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they trust us out privily? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out."* (Acts 16:37) The Christian does not protest because of personal dishonor, but he protests because the law is broken.

"The secular standard for being a gentleman differs greatly from the spiritual standard for being a Christian. A gentleman, according to the world, is one

who fights for his honour and his name. Although he no longer challenges to a duel the moment he is insulted because it is prohibited by law, this is what he would do if he could." (Lloyd-Jones, pg. 293)

Pre-occupation with self is the source of all difficulty. Standing up for one's rights instead of concern for one's duties and obligations, is what brings misery and conflict in our world.

Jesus did not stand up for His rights. He had a right to stay in Heaven, but He didn't. Wrote Paul: *"Let Christ Jesus be your example as to what your attitude should be. For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his prerogatives as God's equal, but stripped himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man. And, having become man, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal."* (Philippians 2:5-8, Phillips)

Writes Peter, *"Christ suffered on your behalf and thereby left you an example: it is for you to follow in his steps. He committed no sin, he was convicted of no falsehood; when he was abused he did not retort with abuse, when he suffered he uttered no threats, but committed his cause to the One who judges justly."* (I Peter 2:21-23, NEB)

III. SELF-DENIAL AND COMPELLED SERVICE

Jesus said, "*Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*" (Matthew 5:41) The Greek work which is used for 'compel' comes from a Persian word meaning a courier. "The Persians had an amazing postal system. Each road was divided into stages lasting one day. At each stage there was food for the courier and water and fodder for the horses, and fresh horses for the road. But, if by any chance there was anything lacking, any private person could be impressed, compelled into giving food, lodging, horses, assistance, and even into carrying the message himself for a stage. The word for such compulsion was aggareuein. In the end the word became to signify any kind of forced impressments into the service of the occupying power. In an occupied country citizens could be compelled to supply food, to provide billets, to carry baggage. Sometimes the occupying power exercised this right of compulsion in the most tyrannical and unsympathetic way. Always this threat of compulsion hung over the citizens. Palestine was an occupied country. At any moment a Jew might feel the touch of the flat of a Roman spear on his shoulder, and know that he was compelled to serve the Romans, it might be in the most menial way." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 166)

Jesus is saying that every Christian must go beyond the call of duty, and to go beyond that call of duty with a spirit of cheerfulness, not resentment or bitterness. The Christian is to go beyond what is expected of him. If more is asked of him than is fair, he is to do it. What better world this would be if all

employees worked, not to be seen of men, but to bring honour to God. Jesus went beyond the call of duty and toiled long hours to help the needy, sometimes performing the most menial of tasks.

There are Christians today who are prisoners for Christ and who are constantly demanded to go beyond the limit of endurance and work. Jesus is saying that in such a situation, go the second mile with cheerfulness, even when you are persecuted. The day could come when a foreign nation would put the flat of the spear on our shoulder and compel us to serve it in the most menial tasks. How are we to react? As Jesus commanded, "Go the second mile." (Illustration, Stanley Jones, pg. 319)

IV. SELF-DENIAL AND GIVING

Said Jesus, *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."* (Matthew 5:42) Jesus here is suggesting that there is a right way to give and a wrong way to give. The following are the five principles which the Rabbis laid down to govern giving.

A. "GIVING MUST NOT BE REFUSED." BARCLAY'S MATTHEW (pg. 168)

If it is within the power of a man to help another, then it is his moral responsibility to help. Money is not to be stored up selfishly, but it is to be shared gladly. *"Whose hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."* (I John 3:17, 18)

"One day a certain old, rich man of a miserly disposition visited a rabbi, who took the rich man by the hand and led him to a window, and told him to look out and tell him what he saw. 'I see men, women, and little children', replied the rich man. Again the rabbi took him by the hand, and this time led him to a mirror. 'What do you see now?" 'Now I see myself', the rich man replied. Then the rabbi said, 'Behold in the window there is glass, and in the mirror there is glass. But the glass of the mirror is covered with a little silver, and no sooner is silver added than you ceased to see others, but can see only yourself!" (Shoe-LEATHER FAITH, PG. 512)

B. "GIVING MUST BENEFIT THE MAN TO WHOM THE GIFT IS GIVEN."

The law of Deuteronomy had said that a man must be given whatever he lacks. That is to say, a man must not be given that bare sufficiency which will keep body and soul together; he must be given enough to

enable him to retain at least something of the standard and the comfort which once he came." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 168)

C. "GIVING MUST BE CARRIED OUT PRIVATELY AND SECRETLY."

"In fact the Rabbis went the length of saying that in the highest kind of giving, the giver must not know to whom he was giving, and the receiver must not know from whom he was receiving." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 169) (Illustration – Dad giving to my needy friend whom Dad had never seen, simply because he knew him to be in need – Sent gift at Christmas to him and put on it 'From Santa'. To give gift in any other way would have caused embarrassment.)

D. "THE MANNER OF GIVING MUST BEFIT THE CHARACTER AND THE TEMPERAMENT OF THE RECIPIENT."

"Giving was to be carried out in such a way that the manner of the giving was to help as much as the gift." It is possible to give to a person and cause that person to feel that he is being treated as charity case. The manner of giving is as important as the gift itself.

E. GIVING WAS AT ONCE A PRIVILEGE AND AN OBLIGATION, FOR IN REALITY ALL GIVING IS NOTHING LESS THAN GIVING TO GOD.

Money is a trust from God and is to be used for God's glory. What can be said in regards to the relationship between tithes and offerings? Says E. Stanley Jones, "While you are lifting your economic level to the level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn. The tithe is a token – a token that you are not owner, but ower. Just as you pay rent as a token of acknowledgement of the ownership to another, so you pay a tithe to acknowledge the ownership of God over the nine tenths. When the level of your needs has been reached, then all you earn belongs to the needs of others, not as charity, but as right and justice." (Abundant Living, pg. 301)

CONCLUSION

We have noted various examples of self-denial. The self-denial of discipleship means non-retaliation. Self-denial means that the disciple does not contend for his rights, but rather faithfully discharges his duties and obligations. The disciple cheerfully goes the second mile. The disciple also gives unselfishly and graciously. The very essence of Christianity, looked at negatively, is self-denial. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Said George Miller, "There was a day

when I died, utterly died, died to George Muller and his opinions, preferences, tastes and will; died to the world, it's approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God." (Lloyd-Jones, pgs. 291-292) Jesus' teaching on self-denial is another example of Jesus' standard of internal righteousness.

OUTLINE

SUBJECT: THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW WAY!

TEXT: ***"Enter ye in at the strait gate."*** **(Matthew 7:13a)**

Without exception, the most important choice is the choice of which road one will travel in life. Every person must chose to take the "high road" or the "low road" in life, the road of righteousness which leads to eternal life, or the road of godlessness which leads finally to eternal destruction.

Let us have courage to look at Jesus' words regarding the "straight and narrow way", and investigate ourselves in the light of His teachings.

I. THE NARROW WAY

- **A. ENTERING THE NARROW GATE**
- **B. WALKING THE NARROW WAY**

II. THE BROAD WAY

- **A. ENTERING THE BROAD GATE**
- **B. WALKING THE BROAD WAY**

CONCLUSION

Choose the Narrow Road! It is the road that leads to the eternal presence of God.

CHAPTER 23

THE STRAIT AND NARROW WAY!

INTRODUCTION

Life is made up of many choices – some important choices and some rather insignificant choices. Without exception, the most important choice is the choice of which road one will travel in life. Each man comes to the crossroads of life, where he is forced to take one road or the other. One way leads ever upward and upward, while the other way leads ever downward and downward. One road is broad and well travelled, while the other road appears narrow and sparsely travelled. Each road bids for the attention of every man. Every man must make his decision as the road he will travel. Moses said to Israel, *"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil...Therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live."* (Deuteronomy 30:15-29) Joshua presented Israel with the same choice: *"Choose you this day whom you will serve".* (Joshua 24:15) Jeremiah heard God say, *"Unto this people shalt thou say, Thus saith the Lord: Behold I have set before you the way of life and the way of death."* (Jeremiah 21:8)

PROPOSITION

Jesus talked about the two ways – the broad way and the narrow way. Let us have courage to look at his words, and investigate ourselves in the light of them.

I. THE NARROW WAY

How sobering are Jesus' words*: "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* (Matthew 7:14) Let us seek to understand why there are few who enter the narrow gate, and few who walk the narrow way.

A. ENTERING THE NARROW GATE

It is hard to enter the narrow gate because man is by nature a sinner. There is a natural inclination to do wrong, to be disobedient and rebellious. There is a natural bent to sinning. When a rod of iron has been twisted and bent, it is difficult to bend it back in good shape. It is hard for man to do good and easy for him to do wickedness, because he has been twisted by the Fall. Man has a strike against him when he comes into the world. He is a sinner by nature. Man feels the gravitational pull of sin downward, and it is hard for him to overcome this downward pull.

To become a Christian involves breaking away from the world's crowd and the world's philosophy. Saith the Scripture*: "What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what path hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the*

temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." **(II Corinthians 6:15-18)**

To become a son of God, one must repent of sin, and repentance involves renunciation of the world's sin. Repentance is accompanied with sorrow and humility. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon the poor in spirit and those who mourn and are meek. Jesus said that those who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, in place of their own self-righteousness, shall be filled.

Repentance strikes against pride and man is naturally proud. It is hard to acknowledge that you are wrong, and it is even harder to turn your back upon your old way of life and begin to form new thought patterns and behavioral patterns.

Entering the narrow gate involves personal choice and repentance, and it involves going against the crowd. It is not easy to take the way of God when it involves being different or standing all alone against evil. Man naturally hates to be different or unusual. His tendency is to conform to society's norms, even when those norms are unChristian. It is hard "to be a Daniel", to enter the narrow gate all alone.

B. WALKING THE NARROW WAY

Few have entered the narrow gate, and fewer yet have successfully walked the narrow way. Why is this? There are several reasons.

It is hard to walk the narrow way because it involves separation from self. Self too oftentimes gets in the way of successfully living the Christian life. Jesus said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart,"* and heart purity means singleness in devotion, affection, and allegiance. Jesus declared that to be His disciple, one must deny self and follow Christ wholeheartedly. It is hard to die to self and selfish, carnal interests, but Self must be crucified if Christ is to reign supreme. The man who is not dead to self is unstable in all his ways, and he will sooner or later drift off the narrow road onto a side road, whether that side road is marked 'fanaticism' or 'liberalism'.

It is hard to walk the narrow way because it is patterned after the greatest of all lives. Wrote Peter, *"For Christ suffered for you and left you a personal example, and wants you to follow in his steps. He was guilty of no sin nor of the slightest prevarication. Yet when he was insulted he offered no insult in return. When he suffered he made no*

threats of revenge. He simply committed his cause to the one who judges fairly." **(I Peter 2:21-23) To walk the narrow way one must walk like Christ. Christ loved his enemies and the Christian too must love His enemies. Said Jesus, *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."* (Matthew 5:44) Said Jesus:, *"Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."* (Matthew 5:39-41) The Christian life is not easy because it is patterned after the greatest of all lives. The Christian is to follow in Christ's footsteps.**

It is hard to walk the narrow way because it involves persecution and suffering. Jesus never said that to be His disciple would be easy. Jesus said to His disciples, *"If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you...Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you"* (John 15:18, 20*) "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33*) "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my names sake."* (Matthew 24:9) In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said there is great glory in being persecuted for Christ's sake. *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."* (Matthew 5:10-12)

It is hard to walk the narrow way, because it many times involves separations. Barclay points out various types of separations that Christianity introduced to people, especially in the days of early Christianity. "(1) Often it must have meant that a man had to give up his trade. Suppose a man was a stone mason. What was to happen if his firm received a contract to build a heathen shrine? Suppose a man was a tailor. What was to happen if he was instructed to cut and sew garments for priests of the heathen gods? Suppose a man was a soldier. At the gate of every camp there burned the light upon the altar that was sacred to the godhead of Caesar. What was to happen if he had to fling his pinch of incense on that altar in token of his worship? Time and time again in the early Church the choice must have come to a man between the safety and the security of his job and his loyalty to Jesus Christ...In the early Church a man's Christianity often meant that he had to get out from his job.... (2) Often it meant that a man had to

give up social life. In the ancient world, as we saw when we were studying the section on meat offered to idols, many a heathen feast was held in the temple of a god. The invitation would run, 'I invite you to dine with me at the table of our Lord Serapis.' Even if that were not so a heathen feast would begin and end with the pouring of a libation, a cup of wine, to the gods. Could a Christian share in that? Or must he get out and say good-bye to the social fellowship which used to mean so much to him? (3) Often it meant that a man had to give up family ties. The pain of Christianity in the early years was the way in which it split families. A wife might become a Christian and her husband might drive her from his house. A husband might become Christian and his wife might leave him. A son or a daughter might become Christian and then find the door of the home shut and barred in his or her face. It was literally true that Christ came not to send peace but a dividing sword upon earth, that men and women had literally to be prepared to love Him more than their nearest and dearest. They had to be prepared to get out even from their homes." (Barclay's Corinthians, pgs. 247, 248)

II. THE BROAD WAY

Listen to Jesus' frightening statement: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at." (Matthew 7:13) Why are there many who enter the broad gate and many who are travelling the broad way?

A. ENTERING THE BROAD GATE

We have already pointed out that man is born in sin and therefore it is easy for him to enter the Broad Gate which is the Gate of Sin. Says Wesley "Sin is the gate of hell, and wickedness the way to destruction. And how wide a gate is that of sin! How broad is the way of wickedness! The 'commandment' of God 'is exceeding broad', as extending not only to all our actions, but to every word which goeth out of our lips, yea, every thought that rises in our heart. And sin is equally broad with the commandment, seeing any breach of the commandment is sin. Yea, rather, it is a thousand times broader; since there is only one way of keeping the commandment; for we do not properly keep it, unless both the thing done, the manner of doing it, and all the other circumstances are right, but there are a thousand ways of breaking every commandment; so that this gate is wide indeed." (Wesley's Sermons, v.1, pg. 287)

The Broad Gate is the same as the Gate of Sin, and there are many ways of sinning. The act of sin and the attitude of sin are both gates to destruction. Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. In other words, our righteousness must go beyond the outward appearance of

respectability and religiosity. The act of killing is sinful, but the attitude of hate and anger is also sinful. The act of adultery is sinful, but the attitude of lust is also sinful. Words of profanity are sinful, but the profane attitude is also sinful. Seeking vengeance is sinful, but the desire to seek vengeance is also sinful. Refraining to give alms or refraining to pray or fast is sinful, but giving alms or praying or fasting to display piety is also sinful. There are many ways of entering the broad gate. Few there are who escape from entering the broad gate which leads to destruction. Says Wesley, "How few are there that do nothing to another which they would not another should do unto them! How few that is clear before God, from acts either of injustice or unkindness! How few that do not 'offend with their tongue; that speak nothing unkind, nothing untrue! What a small proportion of mankind are innocent, even of outward transgressions! And how much smaller a proportion has their hearts right before God, - clear and holy in his sight!" (Wesley's Sermons, v. 1, pg. 289)

B. WALKING THE BROAD WAY

We have in one form or another answered the question, "Why are there so many on the broad way and so few on the narrow way?" However, let us try explicitly to answer this. Barclay points out the following points. (Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 283, 284)

Many are on the broad way because the narrow way is hard. It has often been said that a dead fish can easily float down stream, but that it takes a live strong fish to swim upstream. It is relatively easy to go with the current of secular society, but it takes strength and courage to go against the popular mood of worldliness. The secular standard for success is to lay up treasures upon earth, but the Christian must avoid this temptation. In fact, in the midst of a grasping, materialistic society, the Christian is not even to worry about material provisions, but is to trust God completely. The Christian constantly guards against letting the good seed of the Word become choked out by the cares of this life. The Christian does not avoid this world but he does not live for this world. Work and toil are not easy, but it is precisely this that is necessary in walking the Christian way.

Many are on the broad way because the narrow way is long. Many want quick results, but there are no quick returns in the Christian life. There are many who can run and not become weary, but there are few who can patiently walk and not faint. In the hour of great crisis many can manifest great courage, but far too few are faithful in the normal and unexciting routine. Jesus said: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." What is endurance? "It is that which refuses to be deflected. Obstacles will not daunt it; delays will not depress it, discouragements will not take its hope away. It will halt neither for

discouragement from within not for opposition from without." (Barclay's Hebrews pg. 196) The Christian is one whose life stands the test of time.

Many are on the broad way because the narrow way involves discipline. "No one ever reached any eminence, and no one having reached it ever maintained it, without discipline." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 285) Discipline is regulating one's life in such a way that he will reach a certain goal. Clovis Chappell has several interesting examples on this point. When one goes bird–hunting, he does not aim at the whole covey of quails if he intends to get a kill. Rather he picks out one quail and shoots at that particular bird in order to get a kill. Discipline is needed to reach the goal. It is easier to carelessly to aim at the whole covey of quails than it is to focus on one particular bird. When an architect plans a skyscraper he does not make random calculations and drawings, but he makes very exact calculations and drawings. There can be no approximations; there must be exactness. This takes discipline. "A ship is leaving New York for Europe. What shall we say to this great vessel" 'Narrow is the way.' For it does not sail for the whole continent of Europe; it sails for one little speck upon the map." That involves discipline. (Sermon on the Mount, pgs. 208-209)

So it is with the Christian walk. It involves discipline. One cannot go about it haphazardly or randomly. One must exercise diligence, carefulness, prayerfulness, and much planning. The Christian must ever keep his eye on the goal which is Christ, and he must strain and strive to reach the goal of knowing God's eternal presence. Discipline is made up of the ingredients of simplicity, single-mindedness, and sincerity.

CONCLUSION

Walking the narrow way involves repentance, separation from self, persecution and suffering. It is the hard, long road that requires much daily discipline but the dividends of walking the narrow way are great. Few there are who find the narrow road, but to each man is given the choice – the broad way or the narrow way, the way of life or the way of death.

Wrote John Oxenham:

"To every man there openeth
A way and ways and a way;
And the high soul treads the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low;
And in between on the misty flats
The rest drift to and fro;
But to every man there openeth

A high way and a low;
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go."
(Barclay's Matthew, pg. 282)

Choose the Narrow Road! It is the road that leads to the eternal presence of God.

OUTLINE

SUBJECT: **BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS!**

TEXT: ***"Try the spirits...because many false prophets are gone out into the world."*** **(I John 4:1)**

INTRODUCTION

One of the signs of the Last Time is a great falling away in the Church, with a consequent increase of sects, cults, and false prophets.

PROPOSITION

Jesus often warned against false prophets. It is important to listen carefully to His teachings (warnings) regarding false prophets.

I. CHARACTERISTICES OF FALSE PROPHETS

- **A. SUPERFICIAL RESEMBLANCE**
- **B. SELFISHNESS AND SELF-DECEPTION**

II. TEACHINGS OF THE FALSE PROPHETS

- **A. DENIAL OF THE INCARNATION**
- **B. DENIAL OF PERFECT SACRIFICE**
- **C. DENIAL OF ALL-INCLUSIVE GOSPEL**
- **D. DENIAL OF TRANSFORMATION**
- **E. DENIAL OF HEART RELIGION**

CONCLUSION

Ask God to give you a spirit of discernment, and be always on your guard against falsehood.

CHAPTER 25

BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS!

INTRODUCTION

One of the signs of the Last Time is a great falling away in the Church, with a consequent increase of sects, cults, and false prophets. Wrote Paul, "*Now 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.*" (I Timothy 4:1, 2a) "*For 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.*" (II Timothy 4:3, 4)

Observes Billy Graham: "Thousands of uninstructed Christians are being deceived today. False teachers use high-sounding words that seem like the height of logic, scholarship, and culture. They are intellectually clever and crafty in their sophistry. They are adept at beguiling thoughtless, untaught men and woman." (Christianity Today, Jan 19, 1968, pgs. 3, 4)

PROPOSITION

Jesus often warned against false prophets. In our Scripture for today, He says a considerable amount about false prophets. It is important to listen carefully to His teachings (warnings) regarding false prophets.

I. CHARACTERISTICES OF FALSE PROPHETS

A. SUPERFICIAL RESEMBLANCE

Said Jesus, "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but who within are rapacious wolves.*" (Matthew 7:15, Barclay) "*He said that the false prophets were like wolves in sheep's' clothing. When the shepherd watched his flocks upon the hillside, his garment was a sheepskin, worn with the skin outside and the fleece inside. But a man might wear a shepherd's dress and still not be a shepherd. The prophets had acquired a conventional dress. Elijah had a mantle* (I Kings 19:13, 19), *and that mantle had been a hairy cloak* (2 Kings 1:8). That sheepskin mantle had become the uniform of the prophets, just as the Greek philosophers had worn the philosopher's robe. It was by that mantle that the prophet could be distinguished from other men. But sometimes that garb was worn by those who had no right to wear it, for Zechariah in his picture of the great days to come says, '*Neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive*' (Zechariah 13:4). There were those who wore a prophet's cloak, but who lived anything but a prophet's life." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 286)

Lloyd-Jones makes a very perceptive comment: "the false prophet is a man who comes to us, and who at first has the appearance of being everything that could be desired. He is nice and pleasing and pleasant; he appears to be thoroughly Christian, and seems to say the right things. His teaching in general is quite all right and he uses many terms that should be used and employed by a true Christian teacher. He talks about God, he talks about Jesus Christ, he talks about the cross, he emphasizes the love of God, and he seems to be saying everything that a Christian should say. He is obviously in sheep's clothing, and his way of living seems to correspond. So you do not suspect that there is anything wrong at all, there is nothing that at once attracts your attention or arouse your suspicion, nothing glaringly wrong." (Sermon on the Mount, pg. 243)

Jesus gives another illustration of the way in which false prophets have a superficial resemblance. *"Do men', asked Jesus, 'gather grapes off thorns?'* There was a certain thorn, the buckthorn, which had little black berries which closely resembled little grapes. *'Do men', asked Jesus, 'gather figs off thistles?'* There was a certain thistle, which had a flower, which, at least at a distance, might well be taken for a fig. The point is real, and relevant, and salutary. There may be a superficial resemblance between the true and the false prophet. The false prophet may wear the right clothes and use the right language but you cannot sustain life with the berries of a buckthorn or the flowers of a thistle, and the life of the soul can never be sustained with the food which a false prophet offers." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 288)

Wesley notes that false prophets come with the appearance of harmlessness and usefulness, with the appearance of religion and of love, but they are inwardly like ravening wolves who will devour. Christians must look beyond the appearance to the heart. These false prophets have an appearance and form of godliness, but they deny God's transforming power.

B. Selfishness and Self-Deception

In Jesus' discussion of the Good Shepherd He said, *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."* (John 10:10-13)

Paul warned against selfish, deceiving prophets. *"We are not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching and*

the jockeying of men who are expert in the crafty presentation of lies." **(Ephesians 4:14, Phillips)**

Paul gives a vivid description of the selfishness in his letter to Jude. ***"These men are a menace to the good fellowship of your feasts, for they eat in your company without a qualm yet they care for no one their own advantage...These are the men who split communities, for they are led by human emotions and never by the Spirit of God."*** **(Jude 23, 26, 29, Phillips) The false prophets seek selfish gain from churches, and are not in the least concerned about the souls of men. Exploiting religion and the Church, they are experts, but their judgment lingereth not. Wrote Peter,** ***"And many will follow their licentiousness, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words; from of old their condemnation has not been idle, and their destruction has not been asleep."*** **(II Peter 2:2, 3, RSV) Greedy and grasping, they are masters of deception.**

They have become so adept at deceiving others that eventually they themselves become the victims of self-deception. Wrote Paul about the deceptiveness of evil: ***"The lawless man is produced by the spirit of evil and armed with all the force, wonders, and signs that falsehood can devise. To those involved in this dying world he will come with evil's undiluted power to deceive, for they have refused to love the truth which could have saved them. God sends upon them, therefore, the full force of evil's delusion, so that they put their faith in an utter fraud and meet the inevitable judgment of all who have refused to believe the truth and who have made evil their playfellow."*** **(II Thessalonians 2:9-13, Phillips)**

There are several ways to fall into the trap of self-deception. One way is the way of what can be called 'easy believism' – that is, mere intellectual assent to Christian doctrine without a real, personal, and vital contact with God that results in transformation. Simply to say 'Lord, Lord' with the intellect without a corresponding commitment of one's will to God, results in self-deception. Many think they are Christians simply because they consent unto a certain creed or make a weekly confession. Such have never felt the agony of mind and soul that repentance of sin creates.

Another way for one to fall into the trap of self-deception is to refuse self-examination. Every Christian is exhorted to examine himself to see that he is in the faith. However, there are those who strangely feel that to be a Christian means to never look at one's own behavior but only to look unto Jesus whose righteousness is reckoned to the Christian. One who refuses to examine one's own behavior tends to fall in to antinomianism. "Antinomianism holds that the moment you begin to concentrate on behavior, you are putting yourself back under the law.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, it says, and all is well." (Lloyd-Jones, Sermon on the Mount, pg. 276) Falling into this trap, many are living a life that is not worthy of the name Christian and yet right along claiming that Christ's righteousness covers their unrighteousness. They have failed to realize that he that doeth righteousness is righteous and he that doeth unrighteousness is of the devil. Those who are deceived have finally called black white. Jesus said *"a good tree cannot produce bad fruit, not can a rotten tree produce fine fruit. Every tree which does not produce fine fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then you will recognize them from their fruits."* (Matthew 7:19, Barclay)

Some fall into the trap of self—deception because they depend upon their own good works. *"Not everyone that says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name did we not cast out devils, and in your name did we not do many deeds of power?' Then will I publicly announce to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me you doers of iniquity.'"* (Matthew 7:21-23, Barclay)

Many false prophets are working great wonders and miracles. Many are using the name of Jesus to perform cures and to promote great religious excitement. However, those who use the name of Jesus are not necessarily the friend of Jesus. Those who use His name on false pretense will surely receive their punishment.

This then briefly describes the characteristics of false prophets - superficial resemblance, selfishness and self-deception.

Let us turn to the teaching of the false prophet – which is in large part a teaching of denials or a teaching that at least neglects the truth.

II. TEACHINGS OF THE FALSE PROPHETS

The heretic or false prophet denies the central tenets of Christian faith.

A. DENIAL OF THE INCARNATION

The false prophet denies the Incarnation – that God became a man. Wrote John, *"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world."* (I John 4:2, 3)

If one denies the Incarnation, he is forced to deny the resurrection; for it is the belief that Jesus was God Incarnate that gives grounds for the resurrection. In denying the resurrection, one has cut the very nerve of

faith. Said Paul, *"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."* (I Corinthians 15:17) As Barclay points out, to deny the Incarnation is to deny that He ever became a man, and if He never became a man then He cannot be man's example, or man's High Priest, or man's Saviour. Further, if the Incarnation is denied then, by implication, human flesh is considered evil and a union between God and man is rendered impossible. The Incarnation is central to Christian belief and anyone who denies that God became man, cannot possibly be considered Christian.

B. DENIAL OF PERFECT SACRIFICE

The false prophet denies Jesus' Sacrifice on the Cross as the only means of salvation. The false prophet denies that there is none other name under heaven except the name of Christ whereby a man can be saved. He goes about to establish his own standards for salvation – Church membership, baptism, performance of certain works, acceptance of certain standards.

There are those who deny that Christ's death on the Cross was a final and complete sacrifice for all sin, and therefore they impose conditions for salvation other than the sole Biblical condition of faith in Christ's atonement. Instead of picturing God reaching down in grace to save man, they have pictured man climbing upwards on the ladder of his own works of righteousness to God.

C. DENIAL OF ALL-INCLUSIVE GOSPEL

The false prophet preaches an exclusive message rather than an inclusive message. "Any teaching which encourages a man to withdraw into a narrow sect, and to regard the rest of the world as sinners, is false teaching." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 292) The false prophet is arrogant, separatist, and overbearing. He claims to be the special mouthpiece of God and he claims that any who is outside of his organization is outside of God's favor and is therefore in falsehood and is probably hell-bound. The false prophet does not accept God's Word, as it stands, but claims, in addition to the Bible, some additional sacred book or "scriptures". The false prophet claims to be tolerant and all-inclusive in his concern for men's salvation, but in reality he is sectarian, narrow, bigoted, and very exclusive both in his message and in his concern for people. People must fit exactly into his religious framework or they are coldly rejected. Fosdick's lines of doggerel well describe the arrogant and separatist spirit of the false prophet.

"We are God's chosen few,
All others will be damned,
There is no room in heaven for you;

We can't have heaven crammed.'
(Barclay's Matthew, pg. 292)

One good question to ask any religious group is this: "Does it preach a message that is able to save anyone – the ignorant, the discriminated, the vile, the derelict, the moral, and the immoral?"

D. DENIAL OF TRANSFORMATION

The false prophet preaches a message of reformation rather than a message of transformation. The false prophet denies the existence of sin. Man is not different from animals in kind but only in degree. Man is on a high rung of the evolutionary ladder and is increasingly becoming more perfect. Sin "is just that stage of immaturity where the child has not yet become the man, or where the animal has not yet become entirely human." (Lloyd-Jones, The Plight of Man and the Power of God, pg. 43)

If sin is denied, then there is no need for repentance. Man is not a rebel away from God. He has no need for confession. He is responsible to no one ultimately but to himself. Admittedly, says the false prophet, "man is not yet perfect and must continually progress towards that goal of perfection. Remove man from his bad environment, educate his mind, cultivate his spirit through refined cultural contacts, and man will progressively reform his behavior to reach an ever higher level of achievement."

The false prophet sentimentalizes God's love and denies God's wrath. If man is not a sinner in rebellion against God and if man, as one of God's own creation, is using his God-created facilities to improve himself, then why should we need the idea of a God who is wrathful? "Wrath", says the false prophet "is a deplorable quality in man." How dare we attribute to the perfect God 'a quality which is considered so deplorable in man! Thus, the false prophets has obliterated from the Holy Scriptures God's attributes of justice, judgment, holiness, and wrath, and have chosen to look at God as a senior buddy or as an indulgent old grandfather who pampers and loves his children. They have forgotten all mention of God's wrath such as Matthew 7:10, *"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire"*, or as Matthew 25:11, *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"*, or as Hebrews 12:29, *"For our God is a consuming fire."*

The false prophet denies judgment and hell. "To think that a God of love could send a person to hell! How ridiculous! reasons the false prophet. Thus, the false prophet tells the people what they want to hear. They sooth the mind, tickly the ear, sear the conscience, and

harden the heart. They are masters of deceit, and blind leaders of the blind. The pit of darkness is reserved for them.

What is the result of their denial of the wrath of God? Ironically, when the churches gave up the doctrine of the wrath of God in their preaching, a decline in attendance at places of worship became evident. When wrath, judgment, justice, and wrath of God are preached, people are put under conviction and feel compelled to find an altar of prayer, many times in a Church.

When the wrath of God was discarded from preaching, a decline in morals and conduct became evident. It stands to reason that if one believes that God is "a white-bearded grandfather in heaven looking down upon his darling little children", reverence and fear are going to be destroyed and laxity and immoral conduct are going to be on the increase. To carry the result further, "a man who does not live a life of obedience himself soon ceases to be concerned about the fact that his own children should obey him. The result is that discipline in the home has been sadly neglected, children no longer respect their parents as they should, and quite frequently these children have become the tyrants of the home." (Lloyd-Jones, <u>The Plight of Man and the Power of God</u>, pg. 65)

E. DENIAL OF HEART RELIGION

The religion of the false prophet is a religion that centers in externals, and in prohibitions. The false prophet takes great pride in his pious acts and in his religious ceremony. Religious procedure and religious observance are a matter of life and death to the false prophet. The false prophet is more concerned in paying his dues to the Church than he is in paying his duties to God. The false prophet is more concerned to pray polished prayers than he is to live a clean life, and a holy life. The false prophet is more concerned in repeating his creeds regularly than in loving his fellowmen continually. He has failed to realize that Christianity is a heart religion and that it is the motives and thoughts that are judged. Jesus' words apply to them, *"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."* (Luke 16:15)

The false religion is not only a religion of externals but also a religion of prohibitions. Listen to William Barclay's words: "Any religion which is based on a series of 'thou shalt not's' is a false religion. There is a type of teacher who says to a person who has set out on the Christian way: 'From now on you will no longer go to the cinema, from now on you will no longer dance, from now on you will no longer smoke or use make-up, from now on you will no longer read a novel or a Sunday newspaper,

> **from now on you will never enter a theatre.' If a man could become a Christian simply by abstaining from doing things, Christianity would be a much easier religion than it is. But the whole essence of Christianity is that it does not consist in not doing things, it consists in doing things. A negative Christianity on our part can never answer the positive love of God." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 291)**

CONCLUSION

Said Jesus, *"Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many."* (Matthew 24:11*) Then, beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing."* (Matthew 7:15a) Ask God to give you a spirit of discernment, and be always on your guard against falsehood. Earnestly contend for the truth, and above all live in the Spirit and you shall not become the prey of the wolves. Vigilance is the price of freedom from falsehood. *"Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance."* (Ephesians 6:18, RSV)

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 25

SUBJECT: **What Are Your Building Materials?**

TEXT: ***"Let every man take heed how he buildeth."*** **(I Corinthians 3:10)**

INTRODUCTION

The storms of life (troubles, trials and tests) come to every person, for we all live in a "fallen world" caused by sin. Depending upon what kind of foundation we have built our lives, we will either stand strong during troubles, or we will succumb to the pressures (storms) of life and finally crumble and be destroyed. The choice is ours – to build on the rocky foundation of Christ, or to build on the sandy foundation of the world (with all its folly and sin). The storms that come to us will reveal the kind of foundation we have built our lives upon.

PROPOSITION

Let us look at this story of the wise and foolish man, and seek to understand the lessons for life that should be drawn from it.

- **I. BUILDING THE HOUSE**
  - **A. THE SUPERSTRUCTURE**
  - **B. THE FOUNDATION**
    - **1. The Wise Man**
    - **2. The Foolish Man**

- **II. FACING THE STORM**
  - **A. IN TIME**
  - **B. IN ETERNITY**

CONCLUSION

"Make quite sure that you are able to say honestly that your supreme desire is to know Him better, to keep His commandments, to live for His glory."

CHAPTER 25

WHAT ARE YOUR BUILDING MATERIALS?

INTRODUCTION

All of us remember the story of the three pigs, one of whom built his house out of straw, another out of sticks, and the third out of brick. The first and second pigs got their houses quickly built, but the third took great time and effort in building his house. The wolf came and destroyed the house which was made out of straw and the one made out of sticks, but the wolf was unable to move the house made out of bricks. There are many wolves that come to test our lives. Jesus tells a story which reminds me so much of the story of the three pigs. The story of the wise and the foolish man is very interesting.

It is important to understand the geographical circumstances from which this story was drawn. "In Palestine, in summer many of the rivers dried up altogether and left a sandy river bed empty of water. But in winter, after the September rains had come, the empty river bed became a raging torrent. Now many a man, looking for a site for a house, found an inviting stretch of sand and built there only to discover when the winter came that he had built his house in the middle of a raging river which swept the house away. But the wise man reached for rock, where it was much more difficult to build and where it was hard labour to cut out the foundations. But when the wild winter weather came his toil was amply repaid, for his house stood strong and firm and secure." (Barclay's Luke, pg. 81)

PROPOSITION

Let us look at this story of the wise and foolish man, and seek to understand the lessons for life that should be drawn from it, especially considering all that has gone before in the Sermon on the Mount.

I. BUILDING THE HOUSE

In considering the building of a house, there are two main things to be considered – superstructure and the foundation. Let us look at the ways in which the two men in our story took these into consideration in their building pursuit.

A. THE SUPERSTRUCTURE

The superstructure is that part of the house which is above ground and which is most obviously and easily seen in a house. There is no mention made in the story that there was any difference in the superstructures of the two houses. A superficial investigation of the two houses would say that the houses were alike.

We can deduce from this that oftentimes the outward appearance of a Christian and a pseudo-Christian is about the same. Both appear in Church, both wear the same clothes, both perform nice deeds, both use religious terminology, both are respectable and clean, both give money to the Church and to charitable organizations. Oftentimes, the pseudo-Christian has the same general desires as the genuine Christian. Both want peace and security and forgiveness. Both want happiness and satisfaction and fulfillment. Both seek consolation and rest from earth's trials. Both like to sit in the quiet atmosphere of a Church, and both like social involvements within the Church. Both have the community's welfare at heart. Both want guidance in the difficult decisions of life. The pseudo–Christian wants a better life, the same as does the genuine Christian. Many times the pseudo-Christian even wants to see religious demonstrations and excitement. Think of Simon the sorcerer in Samaria (Acts 9) who wanted to perform miracles and have the same spiritual power as Peter and John. So we see that on the outside there is many times little difference between the true Christian and the nominal Christian. (Lloyd-Jones, Sermon on the Mount, pgs. 301, 302)

It is like two fruit trees growing side by side, alike in appearance. Yet one tree is fertile and the other is sterile. One bears fruit, the other doesn't. Regardless of how much they look alike, it is only the fertile, fruit-bearing tree that is worthy of continued existence. The infertile tree will be destroyed. Jesus said that the wheat and the tares grow up together, but when the harvest comes, only the wheat will be saved. The tares will be destroyed, because, however much they look like wheat, they are useless.

The nominal and the genuine Christian have much in common, but there is one thing they don't have in common – a good foundation. On the surface all may appear the same, but under the surface there is a great difference. One is built on a solid foundation and will last; the other is built on the shifting sand and will collapse in the storm.

Let us then look more carefully at their houses and see what constitutes the great difference between these two builders.

B. THE FOUNDATION

1. The Wise Man

The wise man built his house upon a solid, rock foundation. Who is the man who builds his house upon a solid, rock foundation? He is the man who both listens and who transforms what he hears into action. He both hears and does.

The wise man seriously contemplates the serious demands of Christianity. The one who builds on the solid foundation is one who counts and accepts the cost of being a disciple of Christ. Jesus illustrated this: *"Which of you, if he wishes to build a tower, does not first sit down and reckon up the expense, to see whether he has enough to finish it? This he does lest, when he has laid the foundation and is unable to complete the work, all who see him begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was unable to finish the job'. Or, what king when he is going to engage battle with another king, does not first sit down and take counsel, whether he is able with the thousand men to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he finds he cannot, while he is still distant, he sends an embassy and asks for terms for peace."* (Luke 14:28-33) The wise man is not hasty or compulsive. He does not leap before he looks. He looks seriously at the demands of Christ and then he takes the leap of faith.

The wise man not only hears but he transfers what he hears into action. A doctor's orders are only valuable as they are obeyed. The test of good preaching is in terms of what changes it produces. The test of man's stability is determined by the man's obedience or lack of obedience to God's Word.

The wise man is one who puts the Sermon on the Mount into practice, not by his own effort alone, but by realizing his own weakness and sin and thus turning to God in repentance and faith. He not only listens to the beatitudes which bless the poor in spirit and those that mourn, but he actually humbles himself in repentance and sorrow before God and hungers for God's righteousness. He daily and patiently seeks God's guidance in living the Christian life. He searches God's Word and applies it to his life. He works out his salvation with fear and trembling and does not give up when the Word is hard to understand and hard to apply. Rather, he keeps on trying and trusting, and he accepts God's chastening, knowing that it is for his own good and spiritual development.

What is life like which is built upon the solid foundation? It is the life that considers the attitude and the motive just as important as the act. It is the life that considers eternal values primarily and temporal values secondarily. It is the life whose pattern is Christ. The building blocks of the foundation are 'righteousness', 'holiness', and 'compassion'.

2. The Foolish Man

The foolish man built his house upon the sand. He was impatient and hasty. He saw things in the light of the moment instead of in the light of eternity. He failed to realize that the long view is the right view.

The foolish man was complacent and self-sufficient. He took things into his own hands and refused to consult an expert architect. To consult an architect would cause him much inconvenience and expense, for a good architect would demand that a solid foundation be laid before the house could be built.

The pseudo-Christian does not want to go to the inconvenience and expense of digging a foundation. He is self-sufficient and complacent, not really consulting the Bible in its entirety, but only choosing from it what sounds appealing to him. To obey the Biblical message in its entirety would cause conviction and would lead to the humiliating process of repentance. He does not want to change his life pattern, although he does want a form of religion and respectability. Says Charles Allen: "Today we want God's blessings without the pain of God's purging. We want sermons on how to win friends, how to have peace of mind, and how to forget our fears. But we must remember that Christ came to make men good rather than merely to make men feel good." (<u>God's Psychiatry</u>, pg. 134)

The pseudo-Christian is very ready to build a superstructure for the world to see – display his piety and right the social injustices about him and be a great humanitarian – but he fails to realize that only as he builds a solid foundation on faith and repentance, can his superstructure of good works last. His superstructure is made up of a variety of pleasing materials – culture, intellect, appearance, success, riches, and honour, but these five materials will be swept away and perish because they have no solid foundation upon which to rest. The foolish man fails to realize that only as he goes down, can he go up. He ignores Peter's advice: *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."* (I Peter 5:6)

The foolish man is short-sighted, building only for the present, not for the future storms of life! He has only the short view, not the long view. Building only for the moment, not for eternity, when the storm of death and the judgment comes!

II. FACING THE STORM

Every man must ultimately face the storm, all in time and some in eternity.

A. IN TIME

God sends the rain upon the just and the unjust, and God also permits the storm to come to the righteous as well as to the unrighteous. The storm may come sooner or later, but the storm will surely come. The storm may be different for every man, but each man must face the storm. Our attention then is not whether or not there shall be storms, but how a man faces the storms.

There is the storm of temptations. Jesus faced the temptation of using His supernatural powers in an illegitimate and selfish manner. We too face the temptation to use our powers, abilities, and influences in a selfish way. The temptation is a storm because the temptation is alluring. It is easy to yield to it; it is hard to resist it. "We are brought suddenly face to face with an inducement to evil that we feel, if we accept, must line our pathway with roses. If we refuse, life will become a desert." (Chappell's Sermon on the Mount, pgs. 222, 223) *All are tempted and thus all face the storm, but only those whose foundation is laid on Christ, can pass through the storm.* (Ephesians 6:13)

The storm that faces a man may be in the form of a bitter loss. All lose loved ones, but the way a man faces this storm is the important thing. Some become bitter and blame God. Others say along with Job: " the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." The loss may be a loss of one's health. Some become hardened by extended illness. Others become sweeter and reflect their love more beautifully than ever before. Extended illness and physical pain is one of the severest storms that a man can face, but the severer the test the greater the opportunity to prove the strength of one's foundation. The man whose foundation is laid on Christ can say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

The storm that faces a man may not even appear as a storm. Prosperity is the downfall of many. Israel became prosperous and this led to decline and decay and final destruction. There is so much truth in the saying, "When a Christian begins to make money, God gains a fortune or loses a man." The greedy and grasping hand is the opposite of the open and giving hand. Money is the test to determine what kind of hand you will have. "There are two ways to be wealthy – one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in fewness of your wants." (E. Stanley Jones, Abundant Living, pg. 300) The tragedy of so many is that they consider the abundance of things the worth of a man, and in their getting to the top materially, they have brought themselves to the bottom spiritually.

The sand beds of time upon which men build their life are many, but all of these sand beds have one common characteristic – none stands the storms of life. The world's sand beds are unstable, temporary, passing. They are subject to the changes of life and to the chances of life. If our foundation is health, the storm of disease can rob us of that. If our foundation is stocks, the storm of depression can dissolve them. If our foundation is beauty, the erosion of time will slowly fade it away. If our foundation is fame, the whining winds of man's whim will suddenly show it to be an illusion. If our foundation is intellect, the slow but sure deteriorating storm of time will let it rot away. *For "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God (or builds on the foundation of Christ) abideth forever."* The ungodly who builds on the sand beds of time *is "like the chaff which the wind driveth away", but the godly who builds on the rock of righteousness is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water"* – strong, useful, permanent.

B. IN ETERNITY

The storms of life will surely cause distress and wreckage to the man who builds on the shifting sands of time, but the worst and more devastating storm of all is the storm of Final Judgment. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this comes the judgment. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked for they fall into the arms of a wrathful God. Whosoever is not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelations 20:15) "He will bring the people of the world before Him in judgment, to receive just punishment." (Jude 15, Living Bible)

The pseudo-Christian, who has had a superficial resemblance to the Christian, and who, as a tare has grown up side by side with the wheat, will in the end be harvested with the wheat. Then the Righteous Judge will say, *"Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn."* (Matthew 13:30b) To the pseudo-Christian, the false prophet, the disobedient, Christ will let the storm of his wrath and judgment come upon them*: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:23) The fury of that storm will last.

Is there any way to pass through that storm? Yes, by building your foundation upon Solid Rock – Christ Jesus. Those who hear and who do what Christ commands will find safety and security and eternal life. They will hear the Master say, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matthew 25:24)

Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,

Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel
To strike the blow.

Knowledge we ask not, knowledge Thou hast lent,
But Lord, the will – there lies our bitter need,
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed.
(Quoted by Barclay in 'And Jesus Said', pg. 222)

CONCLUSION

What can be said by the way of conclusion to this message and by way of conclusion to our long study of the Sermon on the Mount? Perhaps the advice given by Lloyd-Jones in his concluding remarks to his study of the Sermon on the Mount, are very appropriate: "Ask yourself if you are living the Sermon on the Mount, or really trying to do so. We do not talk to ourselves sufficiently; that is our trouble. We talk too much to other people and not enough to ourselves. We must talk to ourselves, and say 'Our Lord said, in effect, I preach this Sermon to you, but it will be of no value to you if you do not do what I say.' Test yourself by the Sermon on the Mount. Remember these pictures at the end of the Sermon. Say to yourself: 'Yes, I am here now; I am young. But I have to die sometime, and am I ready for it?' What would happen to you if you suddenly lost your health, or lost your good looks, or your money or your possessions? What would happen to you if you became disfigured by some disease? Where are you, what are you going to rest upon. Have you faced the inevitability of judgment beyond death? That is the only safe way. It is not really enough just to be reading the bible and praying; we have to apply what we learn; we have to face ourselves with it, and hold it before us...Just face these things one after another, and test your life by them and then make certain that you are really keeping this teaching in the forefront and at the very centre of your life. Make quite sure that you are able to say honestly that your supreme desire is to know Him better, to keep His commandments, to live for His glory." (Lloyd-Jones' Sermon on the Mount; pgs. 324, 325)

PART II

JESUS'

LIFE-CHANGING PARABLES

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 26

SUBJECT: **BIG THINGS HAVE SMALL BEGINNINGS!**

SCRIPTURE: **He told them another parable: *"the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard `seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."* (Matthew 13:31-32)**

INTRODUCTION

If bigness is worshipped in our society, we can also say that bigness is vulnerable. Why? Because bigness depends upon the labors of individuals. There is nothing inherently wrong with bigness. Many things are big because they were first good, and because they were good they became big.

PROPOSITION

Most big things have a small beginning. Also, weak things many times have powerful potentials.

I. BIG THINGS HAVE SMALL BEGINNINGS

II. WEAK THINGS HAVE POWERFUL POTENTIALS

CONCLUSION

The future is brimming with possibilities for the person who plants a mustard seed in the soil of God's love and power. Before you give up, remember the Parable of the Mustard Seed!

CHAPTER 26

BIG THINGS HAVE SMALL BEGINNINGS!

INTRODUCTION

Bigness is worshipped in our society. "We live in an age which worships size and numbers." (Barclay's 'And Jesus Said', pg. 54) Big universities are considered better than small private colleges, although in reality small schools many times have a better academic atmosphere. Large supermarkets are considered to be better than the small corner grocery store. Large churches with impressive facilities are considered superior to small churches, although the latter may have as high quality of education, worship, and fellowship. Large cars are considered as more elite than small cars, although the energy crisis is making the American public have second thoughts about big cars. Big corporations are considered better than small businesses, and large ranches are considered superior to the small farms and ranches.

If bigness is worshipped in our society, we can also say that bigness is vulnerable. Why? Because bigness depends upon the labors of individuals. A big corporation is dependent upon a lonely man in a laboratory, doing research. A big supermarket is dependent upon the satisfaction of its individual customers. A big Church is dependent upon the faithfulness and love of its individual members, many of whom must fill volunteer positions. A big nation depends upon the strength of its individuals families. It is still true that a big chain is dependent upon the strength of its individual small links.

There is nothing inherently wrong with bigness. Many things are big because they were first good, and because they were good they became big.

PROPOSITION

But neither is a small thing automatically inferior. Usually something must be small before it can be big. In fact, most big things have a small beginning. Also, weak things many times have powerful potentials! Jesus taught these simple truths through the simple parable of the small mustard seed.

I. BIG THINGS HAVE SMALL BEGINNINGS

This principle is illustrated in countless ways. "On December 11th, 1620, a ship called 'The Mayflower' set sail from England to America because the people in her could not find the religious liberty they desired. On that ship there were only 101 people, and she herself was but a tiny thing. Yet the plain fact of history is that that voyage from Plymouth in 1620 by that little ship and that little group did more to change the world than any of the voyages of the great liners in the centuries to come." (Barclay's 'And He Said', pg. 54)

The nation of Israel started with one individual – Abraham, who was faithful and obedient to God's call. *"By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. So from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore."* (Hebrews 11:11, 12)

The Christian Church started with single individuals who responded to Christ's call to follow Him. "It is all personal and individual. 'Follow me', "Follow me', and Matthew leaves his tax-table standing in the street; and the sons of Zebedee pull hastily in over the blue water to give themselves to the Master, who was called them from the shore. And what came next? Why, the most natural thing in the entire world, - that which must always come when single men believe the same truth, or are driven on by the same impulse. When did a host of scholars ever sit at the same teacher's feet and not become a school? When did a host of separate soldiers go each to fight the same enemy and not be drawn into an army? All the individual believers in and followers of Christ, become one in their common loyalty and love. And so out of the crowd of disciples comes the Church." (The Light of the World, Phillips Brooks, pgs 178, 179)

As tiny mustard seek which grows into the biggest of herbs, big enough to have birds nest in the tree-like bush, so with Christianity. It started small and has now encircled the globe!

"He (Jesus) was born in 6 B.C., of a young woman not married, in an out-of-the-way place called Bethlehem; He grew up in an insanitary village named Nazareth. With no known distinction of birth, belonging to a despised people, denied the best education of His day and race, He was trained as a carpenter. At about thirty years of age, He laid aside the tools of His trade and began to teach and preach and heal. Although the common people heard him gladly, He never touched world affairs in any obvious way. His whole life was lived in one obscure province of the Roman Empire, and His travels were limited to an area half the size of Wales. After three years of ministry, He was arrested on suspicion of leading a popular revolt, and was executed by crucifixion. The life which began in shadowed obscurity ended in public shame. But not very public as the whole matter seemed beneath the interest of 'people of quality'. His name was so unimportant that it wasn't even mentioned in any official document which has ever come to light.

"Two thousand years have passed by. Nearly a third of the world worships Him. It is a safe guess to say that another third holds Him (as Mr. Gandhi did) in enormous respect. He has inspired the mightiest music and the greatest art the world has ever known. People have died for Him in every generation since He himself suffered. Multitudes would die for Him today. Indeed, some who deny belief in all religion consider that His rule of love would save the world.

"Who was this strange peerless Person? The Christian Church is built on the conviction that He was God Himself." (Sangster's Daily Readings, pg. 54)

Christianity was a despised group of people bitterly persecuted and killed by Rome. But "there was a day when Christianity overcame its rivals and invaded the Empire itself. The mustard seed becomes a tree!" (James Kennedy, The Parables, pg. 87)

The Kingdom of God started with a lowly Nazarene – Jesus. The Kingdom of God, which started like a small mustard seed is now a growing tree, spreading its branches around the world! The Kingdom of God shall someday be universal and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

Never despise little things. "For, little is much if God is in it!" Like mustard seed, the little will become much. Big things have small beginnings!

"A great blow is struck against slavery when a man named Paul writes to a Christian friend (Philemon) concerning his runaway slave (Onesimus) and refers to the slave as a Christian brother." (Kennedy, pg. 81)

"On the one hundredth anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth, John T. McCutcheon drew a famous cartoon. He showed two Kentucky backwoods men standing at the edge of a wood in the winter. The snow was on the ground and the trees were bare. One of the men asked the other, 'Anything new?' The other man replies, 'Nothing much, Oh, there's a new baby over at Tom Lincoln's.'" Nothing ever happens around here, nothing except the birth of America's greatest man! (Ibid, pg. 82)

II. WEAK THINGS HAVE POWERFUL POTENTIALS

The smallest of herb seeds grows into the largest of herbs. Mustard seed "was universally used as the type of anything that was infinitesimally small." (Barclay, Ibid, pg. 52)

We dare not judge anything by its size.

Never forget that weak things have powerful potential! "There is an experiment which shows the effect of small forces on great masses. It can be performed in two ways. One is to suspend from the ceiling a block of iron weighing more than a hundredweight and to suspend beside it a cork which weighs less than an ounce. The cork is then swung against the iron in little blows. It seems impossible that the gentle tap of the cork will ever have any effect on the mass of iron and indeed at first nothing seems to happen. But after a while the iron begins to tremble; then to move; and finally it is swinging in a wide arc as a result of the continuous tapping of the cork." (Barclay, pg. 55)

Says the great preacher William Sangster, "the power of even one man or woman with God is immensely potent." (Daily Readings, pg. 50)

In Taiwan, there is the Church of the Lepers, a work among rejected people which was begun by a great lady named Lillian Dixon. "It's called the Mustard Seed Ministry. An infinitesimally small seed of trust has unleashed the infinite power of God. Lillian believed that God had called her to begin the work. She trusted Him completely. Money began coming in from all over the world. The work expanded. Now the results tower like a great mustard tree. She was tempted often to give up. The Lord wanted to amaze the world with what He could do with a little lady who had a grain of faith. The glory is now given to Him." (Ogilvie, Autobiography of God, pg. 92)

Throughout history, God has chosen weak men through whom He performed mighty works! *"For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."* (I Corinthians 1:26-29)

"Christianity (in its early days) made people who were things into real men and women, more, into sons and daughters of God; it gave those who had no respect, their self-respect; it gave those who had no life, life eternal; it told men that, even if they did not matter to other men, they still mattered intensely to God. It told men who, in the eyes of the world were worthless, that, in the eyes of God they were worth the death of his only Son. Christianity was, and still is, the most uplifting thing in the whole universe." (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 22)

God chose what seemed weak to the world – a little Jewish maid – to be the mother of the Christ!

God chose a slow student, one who on one occasion was called a very slow student, to become one of the world's greatest Bible commentators – Adam Clarke!

God today chooses weak, faltering people to be His children. Through these ordinary people – people who have no special credentials like the disciples – to do a mighty work of love in His world. Some of God's greatest people, saints, have had weak beginnings. There is no limit to what God's power, released into weak people, can do!

The weakest Christian on his knees is stronger than the strongest man on his feet without God! Remember, "The earnest prayer of a righteous man has

great power and wonderful results." (James 5:16, Living Bible) 'More is wrought through prayer, than the world dreams of!'

"He (God) begins with the smallest of mustard seed beginnings. Our faltering confession of belief in Him starts a recreative, regenerating process that never stops. We look back on that first prayer of commitment and are amazed at what the Lord has done with our character and personality." (Ogilvie, pg. 92)

Our spiritual growth seems slow, and many times we are very conscious of our weaknesses. But remember, a little mustard seed has great potential. And a little faith in a great God works great miracles. "The issue is not the size of your faith any more than the light switch is electricity. Our only task is to flip the switch." (Ogilvie, pg. 92)

What makes the little mustard seed so powerful is the fact that it is placed in the soil, which nourishes it into a great bush. What makes our little faith valuable is the fact that it is placed in God, the soil of our faith which nourishes our faith into a life of great love and fruitful works. The object of one's faith determines the value of one's faith. It is not the greatness of the faith, but the greatness of the one in whom we place our faith. A little mustard seed of faith is sufficient to produce a great life, a life that is like a tree, with many branches and much fruit.

"When we are tempted to be discouraged, we need to remember that it's not the size of our faith, but the immensity of God's power that makes the difference." (Ogilvie, pg. 91*) "And I am sure that he (God) who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* (Philippians 1:6, RSV)

Jesus gave this parable to encourage people who were tempted to 'throw in the towel'. Jesus' disciples were discouraged. The disciples were bewildered and discouraged. "They had hoped for so much and so little had happened. It seemed in fact that even the little that had happened was in serious danger of being engulfed by the growing waves of opposition to Jesus...The crowds abandoned Him (Christ), and it was already clear that the mission of Jesus which had stated with such promise was likely to issue in failure and disaster. They had begun with such high hopes and these hopes were now apparently to be disappointed. So Jesus told this parable to help them see that the beginning might seem small but no man knew to what they would yet grow." (Barclay, pg. 53)

CONCLUSION

The future is brimming with possibilities for the person who plants a mustard seed in the soil of God's love and power. Before you give up, remember the Parable of the Mustard Seed! Remember, big things have small beginnings and also remember, weak things have powerful potentials!

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 27

SUBJECT: PLAYING RELIGION!

SCRIPTURE: ***"I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.) "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:***

'We played the flute for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not cry.'

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." 'But wisdom is proved right by all her children." **(Luke 7:28-35)**

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus said, "Except you become as a little child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God," He was thinking about the honest, enthusiastic response of faith which children in their best moments express towards adults and other children.

PROPOSITION

But in this parable of the children at play in the marketplace, Jesus is depicting, not childlike faith, but childish trifling and fickleness. The bored, spoiled child is like the person who has never found his purpose for living, the person who is playing religion.

I. WHY PEOPLE PLAY RELIGION

II. HOW PEOPLE PLAY RELIGION

A. INDECISIVE (Don't Know What Game They Want To Play)
B. UNCOOPERATIVE (Don't Want To Play Someone Else's Game)
C. CRITICAL (Read Luke 7:33-35)

CONCLUSION

Why was this parable given to us? To teach us the folly of playing religion and the importance of being earnest about God.

CHAPTER 27

PLAYING RELIGION!

INTRODUCTION

Four children are together on a hot summer afternoon. They are bored. The mother of the household suggests that they play a game.

> **"But what game?" one of the children asks.**
>
> **"I want to play 'Old Maid', says one of the children. "Never", replies another. "That game is old-fashioned, and besides it is too simple."**
>
> **"I want to play 'Chess'", says another child. "No!" replies one of the children. "That game is too complicated, and besides, four can't play that game!"**
>
> **"Let's play 'Monopoly'", says another child. "I don't like 'Monopoly' because it takes too long to play, and I usually get beat!" replies another child.**
>
> **"Let's go outside and 'play house'", says the fourth child. "No", replies the boys in the group. "That's too sissy, and besides it's too hot outside!"**

So, we have a problem on our hands. All games suggested are too simple, or too complicated, too long, or too sissy! Four children, each one suggests a different game to play, but none of whom are willing to cooperate. Sulking, bored, argumentative, fickle children!

These are the immature characteristics of childhood which Jesus depicts in this parable.

Jesus made a distinction between childlikeness and childishness. When Jesus said, "Except you become as a little child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God," He was thinking about the honest, enthusiastic response of faith which children in their best moments express towards adults and other children.

PROPOSITION

But in this parable of the children at p lay in the marketplace, Jesus is depicting, not childlike faith, but childish trifling and fickleness. The bored, spoiled child is like the person who has never found his purpose for living, the person who is playing religion.

I. WHY PEOPLE PLAY RELIGION

Look at Luke 7:28-30: *"I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."* All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's

purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John. This tells us that the religious leaders of Jesus' day failed to find the purpose of God for them. Instead of living purposeful and productive lives, they were playing at religion. They had a form of religion, but they had no power in their religion.

Why didn't they find the purpose for their lives? They had not received the baptism of John the Baptist. What did the baptism of John the Baptist symbolize? It symbolized repentance. The baptism of John was the baptism of repentance.

The Pharisees refused to repent, and because they refused to repent, they failed to find God's purpose for their lives! Repentance is always the condition for healing and life.

Repentance assumes that there is an honest recognition of sin in one's life. Sin is not only breaking God's laws (the Ten Commandments), but sin is also breaking God's heart. Sin is not only a violation of a law, but it is also the breaking of a relationship. To break laws is to break the heart of the Lawgiver.

There can be no repentance without first recognizing the fact of sin and the seriousness of sin. There can be no treatment of a disease without diagnosis of the disease. There can be no healing without acknowledgment of the hurt. There can be no conversation without conviction of sin. No treating of sin as a plaything, but as a serious problem. Then Jesus told him, *"I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind." Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, "Are you saying we're blind?" "If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty," Jesus replied. "But you remain guilty because you claim you can see."* (John 9:39-41, Living Bible)

Repentance is not only recognizing the fact of sin and the seriousness of sin, but repentance is also recognizing one's inability to save himself from the consequences of sin.

The consequences of sin is death, both spiritual death and eternal death. The Bible talks about being *"dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.* (Ephesians 2:1, 2) Sin causes one to be dead to life's purpose and plan. Sin blinds one to the meaning of life. As long as one practices sin in his life, he cannot understand the purpose for which he was created.

The consequences of sin are not only spiritual death but also eternal death. Eternal death is separation from God forever.

To have a true spirit of repentance is to recognize that one cannot save himself from sin's consequence which is spiritual and eternal death. One must acknowledge his personal helplessness before he is ready to receive God's help. One must realize he is a great sinner before he is ready to receive a great Savior.

"Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill thy law's demands.
Thou must save,
And thou alone."

Next, repentance involves confession of sin to God. Confession means "Agree with". One must agree with God's evaluation of sin and God's provision for sin. Repentance means rejecting man-made solutions for salvation, and acceptance of God's sole solution for salvation. One must "Agree with" God's viewpoints and disagree with his own self-centered attitudes. One must agree that God is right and just, and that man is wrong and unjust.

"If we confess (agree with God regarding) our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." **(I John 1:9) Repentance means a moral 'U-turn' – Turning your back on your old way of life and turning your face towards God and determining, with God's help, to follow the way of righteousness.**

Repentance involves a change of mind, from an attitude of embracing sin to an attitude of forsaking sin.

Repentance also involves a change in actions, from a life of practicing sin to a life of practicing righteousness. Repentance does not mean perfection in performance, but rather a new direction of life.

Repentance should always be inseparably coupled with faith. Repentance and faith are two sides of one coin, or two halves of one whole. Repentance is forsaking sin, and faith is turning to the Savior. The moment one forsakes sin, he must turn to the Saviour, for sin can only lose its grip on one's life when one surrenders himself to the stronger hold of the Saviour.

One is saved by faith. Faith is a transfer of trust from one's self to one's Saviour. Saving faith is always accompanied by genuine repentance. Repentance is a change of attitude toward sin. Faith is a change of attitude toward the Saviour, from one of rejection to one of acceptance.

He who experiences saving faith is he who finds life's purpose. He who fails to repent of his sin is he who is living a shallow life, devoid of purpose and power. And because man is incurably religious, man, without repentance, will play religion!

The Pharisees of Jesus' day failed to repent of their sins, and they failed to accept the Saviour. So their religion became a thing of play-acting. Jesus called them hypocrites, for they were experts of religious role-playing. They played religion. Like trifling, fickle, bored children, playing in the marketplace, the Pharisees lacked the loving, cooperative spirit of the honest child.

II. HOW PEOPLE PLAY RELIGION

Why do people play religion? Because they have never had a real and personal experience of God. They have never discovered the purpose for their existence. Without repentance, people don't take God seriously. Those who take God seriously repent of their sins and discover the meaning of life!

What traits characterize children in the marketplace? The children Jesus describes in this parable are indecisive, uncooperative, and critical. People who have no sense of ultimate or unique purpose for their lives are also indecisive, uncooperative, and critical.

Let us now in turn, look at each of these three childish, immature traits.

A. INDECISIVE (DON'T KNOW WHAT GAME THEY WANT TO PLAY)

Said Jesus, *"To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another, 'we piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.'"* (Luke 7:31, 32)

"Every one of His listeners had observed children restlessly trying to find a game to play on a long, hot afternoon. Some wanted to play 'Weddings' and others wanted to play 'funerals' – The division of desires separated the group in the marketplace. They taunted each other with pique and petulance. One group cried, 'We wanted to play wedding and you wouldn't play our game!' The other responded with the chant, 'But we wanted to play funeral and you wouldn't do what we wanted.' They couldn't get together to enjoy a make-believe drama. Each wanted his own way. The children didn't know what they wanted. They ended up enjoying neither game." (Ogilvie, Autobiography of God, pgs. 128-129)

The person who lacks repentance in life also lacks commitment to Christ. Indecision is characteristic of the person who is living on the surface.
Joshua said to indecisive Israelites, *"Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve. As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!"*

Jesus said, *"He that is not with me is against me!"*

"I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back!"

The three Hebrew children whose lives were threatened by the Chaldean king, replied, *"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."* (Daniel 3:17, 18) Unconditional commitment, even if that commitment means death!

God's purpose for us is to *"become full-grown in the Lord – yes, to the point of being filled full with Christ. Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different, or has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth."* (Ephesians 4:13, 14, Living Bible)

The immature and childish are never firmly established in doctrine, but, like the changing wind, are constantly changing their ideas.

The Pharisees and Lawyers refused to accept the preaching of John the Baptist, for his preaching called for repentance and serious life commitment. John aimed at the whole man; mind, emotions, and will. John called for nothing less than total life commitment, total reverse in the direction and pattern of life.

This was too much for the Pharisees and Lawyers, and so they refused. Their refusal resulted in the rejection of God's purpose for their lives. (Luke 7:30)

It is God's purpose that every man's life be changed and transformed. This change is brought about by genuine repentance and earnest commitment to God. This change involves the whole of man – change of mind (rational), change of heart (emotional), change of will (volitional).

There are still those who are like the Pharisees and Lawyers – experts in religious theories and conversers of religious speculations and moralisms – but failing to respond to the Gospel of repentance. If they respond at all to the Gospel, it is merely an emotional response. There is a lack of serious and total commitment to God.
What are these people like who make only an emotional response to the Gospel? They are like flighty children playing at one game after

another, complaining over every game and not seriously committed to any one game. Indecisive people! "In the old days, such people were always getting saved every time a new evangelist came to town, but today they drift from one Church to another or from one strange sect to an even stranger one." (Kennedy's Parables, pg. 63)

Jesus likened those who responded only emotionally to seed which fell on stony ground *"who when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended."* (Mark 4:16, 17) Those who respond with mere emotions have no deep roots. They are unstable, unsure, wavering, unfaithful, flighty, and often unpredictable. They base all on feelings and because feelings are sporadic and changing, they are sporadic and changing.

There are those who lack a serious commitment of the mind and the will to Christ. They are those who, like the Pharisees, consider real Gospel preaching to be too narrow, too confining, too exacting, too strict, too personal, too drastic, and too intolerant. They are those who don't want the confinements and the discipline of a Church, but who skip around from Church to Church, shopping for religion like one would shop for meat. They get a big game out of comparing services, speakers, and weighing the assets of the various churches. They are those who want a 'tolerant' Church with no demands and no standards. They quickly leave a Church if it offends them. As I was preaching one morning several years ago, I noticed one man in the congregation who was fidgety and nervous, looking at the clock periodically as if he could hardly wait for the service to be over. As I greeted him at the door after the service, I sought to find out a little bit about him, but he coldly replied, "We are just making the rounds." Obviously there was no serious life commitment to God or to a particular Church.

How different is the truly committed person. Such a person attends all the Church services, if at all possible. He always accepts his responsibilities of service within the Church, and works for the Lord and the Church independently outside of the Church without being told. He regularly, sacrificially, and cheerfully gives of his time, ability, and money to help his fellowmen. He is optimistic, adaptable, and cooperative and yet individualistic. He is able to disagree when necessary and yet he doesn't take personal offense when he disagrees with the decision that was made. He is like a cooperative, happy child who throws himself into a game and plays fairly. The thought of leaving the game (in this case, the local Church) never enters his mind.

B. UNCOOPERATIVE (DON'T WANT TO PLAY SOMEONE ELSE'S GAME)

Jesus depicts a child at his worst, while he is playing in the marketplace. None of the children wanted to play that game that someone else suggested. Self-centered, unyielding, stubborn – these are traits of the immature child in the marketplace.

People can be the same way today – even adults. "If it's my idea, great, but if it's someone else's idea, no go!" Even when someone else's idea is a good idea! The childish attitude of the sulky, self-centered child in the marketplace! There are too many such people in the marketplace of life today.

As there are children who stubbornly refuse to cooperate in playing someone else's game, so there are childish persons who refuse to cooperate with others whose ideas differ from theirs. Says one minister: "the issue is our relationship to Christ and our surrender to His guidance, and his direction. Church boards can be like a marketplace with opposing factions childishly complaining. 'You weren't for my motion, so I won't be for yours.' All because the Lord was disregarded and denied complete control." (Ogilvie, pgs. 133, 134)

To play someone else's game (or to accept someone else's ideas, plans, and suggestions) means that one must be willing to surrender and to receive.

The cooperative spirit is the teachable spirit, the spirit which is willing to receive as well as to give. The disciple of Jesus disciplines his own personal desires to conform to the higher desires of the group. The cooperative spirit is the servant spirit, willing to serve the needs of others, willing to 'give in' to the wishes of others (that is, willing to play their game).

There is too often an uncooperative spirit among Christians in various churches. Recently I talked to a Christian gentleman, a member of an independent Baptist Church. He jokingly referred to the lack of a bapistry in our Church. I replied, "Yes, we need a bapistry in our Church. We Methodists have a lot to learn from our good Baptist friends." And then he replied, "We independent Baptists are beginning to wake up to the fact that we have been too independent. We have a lot to learn from others too!"

I enjoyed this warm exchange, a mutual acknowledgement that there is much to learn from other churches, and always a need for a cooperative spirit.

There is a sectarian spirit among some Christians, an attitude of uncooperativeness. It is possible for even a Church to be childish, refusing to cooperate with any other Church. Some churches, like individual Christians, will only be involved in that which they have originated or organized or planned. What a pity and how childish! Like children in a marketplace who refuse to play someone else's game!

As a Church, let's have our distinctive programs and ideas and let us always be willing to share our 'games' with others. But let us also be willing to play the 'games' which we have not originated. Personally, I have gained much from other Christians and other churches and organizations – organizations like Child Evangelism, Campus Crusade, Youth For Christ, Navigators, etc., etc..

C. CRITICAL

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, *'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."' But wisdom is proved right by all her children."* (Luke 7:33-35)

The Pharisees rejected Jesus because He was too positive: they rejected John the Baptist because he was too negative. (Note the Humorous Illustration of "the Ideal Preacher", on the page following this message.

Resistance of spiritual leaders is really a concealed but determined resistance of God!

"A religion of rules and regulations had become their diminutive God." (Ogilvie, pg. 133)

The Pharisees were law-oriented, not love-oriented. They became rigid in their external observance of man-made laws. Their criticism became judgmentalism, and their judgmentalism became ostracism. The Pharisees and scribes prided themselves in observance of rituals and participation in religious ceremonies, while all the time despising the common people of the land, whom they considered untouchable. They became preoccupied with minor details and failed to show compassion and love.

There is the power of the positive focus in the life, and there is also the destructive power of the critical focus in life. The Pharisees destroyed people in the name of religion because of their negative and critical attitudes. All law and no love! All criticism and no praise! Pride and no humility! All external force and no internal compassion*! "They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger...Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in."* (Matthew 23:4, 13)

Says Lloyd Ogilvie: "I talked with a Church officer in a Midwest Church recently who had drifted from earnestness to equivocation. He said 'I am sure about what I don't want, but I don't know what I want. I'm against about everything that's proposed, but I am at a loss when challenged to make a positive suggestion for what we should be doing. I fuss over insignificant details of Church administration and have become critical of almost everyone and everything.' What a pitiful condition. Be sure of this: if we don't know where we are going, we will be negative and critical of where others want to go." (Ibid, pg. 133)

CONCLUSION

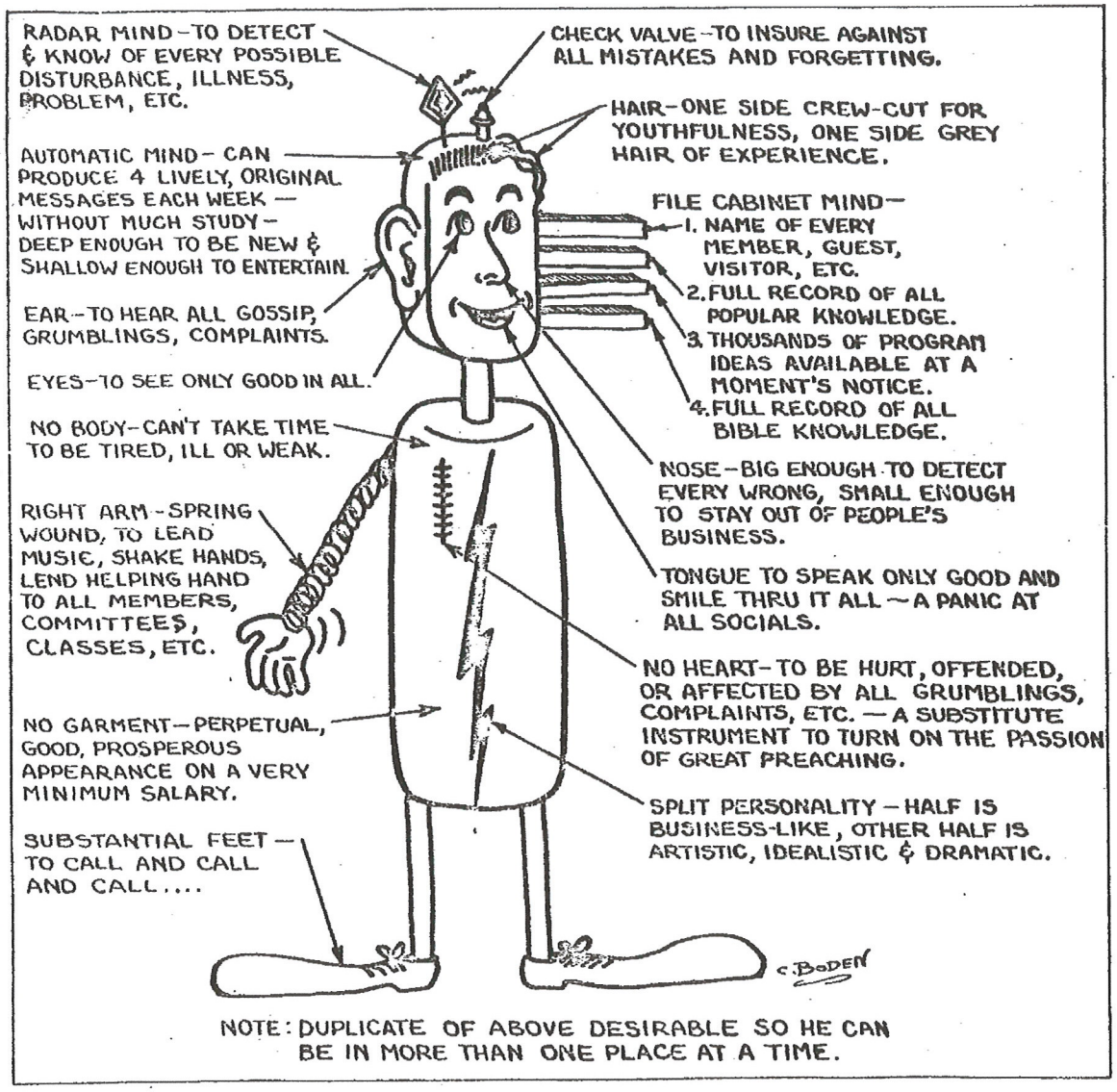
Why was this parable given to us? To teach us the folly of playing religion and the importance of being earnest about God.

Are you an earnest Christian? Said one man to his minister, "Lloyd, something happened to me in Church last week. I felt the presence of the Lord as I sat in the pew. When you said, 'the living Lord is here!' I said to myself, 'That's really true.' I had come to worship not really expecting to either meet Him or sense His special touch on my life. But as the service proceeded, I was made aware of all the areas of my life that had never been brought under the guidance and control of the Lord. That's why I'm here today. I want to take the Lord seriously.'"

Are you taking the Lord seriously? Or are you playing religion?

God is earnest. Jesus was earnest. And you and I must be earnest about life and about God! The earnest Lord of all says, *"For I know the plans that I have for you...plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."* (Jeremiah 29:11-13) God is not a plaything, so don't play with religion! Be serious about God. Don't be like shallow children in a marketplace.

BLUEPRINT* FOR
THE IDEAL PREACHER



*AVAILABLE TO CHURCHES WHO PREFER TO BUILD THEIR OWN PREACHER, ALTHOUGH AT THE PRESENT TIME, IT SEEMS TO BE DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN NECESSARY PARTS.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 28

SUBJECT: BE SURE TO COUNT THE COST!

Scripture: ***Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand. If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*** **(Luke 14:25-33)**

INTRODUCTION

Jesus taught that to be His follower meant serious life commitment – commitment to a way that spelled death to self and selfish interests.

PROPOSITION

Don't start following Christ until you realize the seriousness of your commitment.

I. COUNT THE COST IN TERMS OF PERSONAL SACRIFICE

II. COUNT THE COST IN TERMS OF STEADFASTNESS

CONCLUSION

Be sure to count the cost. Realize the cost of following Christ in terms of personal sacrifice, and in terms of steadfastness and faithfulness and earnest follow-through. The cost of following Christ is high – total self-surrender, but can anyone afford not to follow Christ?

CHAPTER 28

BE SURE TO COUNT THE COST!

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus told this parable, He was on His way to Jerusalem to suffer on the Cross. The multitudes thought He was on His way to establish an empire – a kingdom on the rubble heap of defeated Roman armies. Jesus realized how very wrong the Jewish multitudes were in their conception of the Messianic kingdom. Jesus must show them that His way was the way of sacrifice, suffering, and death! The glory of Jesus' way was found in a cross, not in an earthly crown. The sentimental, emotional followers of Jesus must be set straight. They must realize that to be a follower of Jesus meant serious life commitment – commitment to a Way that spelled death to self-centered and selfish interest.

Jesus used the picture of a tower builder who emotionally involved himself in a building project without figuring out beforehand the expense of the project. Realize the cost of building materials before starting to build, or if you don't, you will have a half-built building and thus become the object of ridicule and mockery. Jesus also used the picture of an army which is facing an enemy whose army is twice its size. It is mere folly to go out into battle against an enemy twice your size without considering seriously the strength of your manpower and the effectiveness of your plans and strategy. To go out unprepared and uncommitted would merely spell utter defeat.

PROPOSITION

Through these stories, Jesus is warning the zealous, patriotic, emotional followers of Himself to count the cost of true discipleship. Not to count the cost is to begin to follow Jesus but never to carry through. It is to become the object of the world's mockery. Don't start following Christ until you realize the seriousness of your commitment. Jesus is telling us, just as He told the multitudes in His day, "Count the cost of discipleship in terms of personal sacrifice and in terms of steadfastness."

I. COUNT THE COST IN TERMS OF PERSONAL SACRIFICE

A. What did Jesus mean when he said, "If any man comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and even his own life too, he cannot be my disciple"? Of course He did not mean literal hate of relatives. "He means that no love in life can compare with the love we must bear to him." (Barclay's Luke, pg. 203)

On another occasion, Jesus was confronted with a would-be follower who said, "Lord, I will follow you; but let me first say good-bye to the folk at home." Jesus said to him, "No man who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is the right kind of man for the Kingdom of God."

There is nothing wrong with having close family ties, but when these rob the loyalty of one's heart from God, then it becomes sin. He who looks over his shoulder to the tender ties of former relationships and wishes to retreat from God's work to re-establish these ties, is not worthy of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is saying, "I want those who are willing to renounce home-ties, who will not be distracted by sentimental relatives, who will put me above everyone else in their lives." (McDonald, True Discipleship, pg. 19)

Spurgeon one time wrote the following noble message to his son: "I should not like you, if meant by God to be a missionary, to die a millionaire. I should not like it, were you fitted to be a missionary, that you should drivel down to a king. What are all your kings, all your nobles, all you diadems, when you put them together, compared with the dignity of winning souls to Christ, with the special honor of building for Christ, not on another man's foundation, but preaching Christ's gospel in regions far beyond?" (True Discipleship, pgs. 45, 46)

B. Jesus continued to lay down the terms of personal sacrifice: *"Whoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."* (Luke 14:27) The cross reminds one of death, and that is what Jesus meant when He said we must bear our cross – death to self-centeredness and selfish interests.

The follower of Christ must be willing to make any sacrifice, in light of the supreme sacrifice which Jesus made. One would-be disciple said to Jesus, rather light-heartedly: "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "the foxes have dens; the birds of the air have places to roost; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." To follow Jesus may mean a surrender of personal comforts and conveniences.

One, who is crucified with Christ, has died to greed and has come alive to the Christ-like spirit of giving and sharing. This includes the use of our money. Can a true disciple of Christ selfishly hold on to surplus funds when souls are perishing for physical bread and spiritual bread? The true disciple must stretch out his hand to be crucified with Christ. Only then can he be effectively used. Jim Elliot, who was one of the martyred missionaries to the Auca Indians in South America, wrote in his diary at one time: "Father, let me be weak that I might lose my clutch on everything temporal. My life, my reputation, my possessions, Lord, let me loose the tensions of the grasping hand. Even, Father, would I lose the love of fondling. How often I have released a grasp only to retain what I prized by 'harmless' longing, the fondling touch. Rather, open my hand to receive the nail of Calvary, as Christ's was opened - that I, releasing all, might be released, unleashed from all that binds me now. He thought Heaven, yea, equality with God, not a thing to be clutched at. So let me release my grasp. (Ibid: pg. 11)

Do you have a grasping hand or a giving hand? If you are a true disciple, you will have a giving hand. He who gives all to God and man, will receive all. He who loses his life will find it. "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose," wrote Jim Elliot.

A true disciple is not detracted by the glitter of gold, for he is committed to the glory of God. When President Coolidge asked the well-known missionary statesman, John Mott, if he would serve as ambassador to Japan, Mott replied, "Mr. President, since God called me to be an ambassador of His, my ears have been deaf to all other calls." (Ibid, 46)

"When Standard Oil Company was looking in the Far East for a man, they chose a missionary to be their representative. They offered him ten thousand, and he turned it down; twenty-five thousand, and he turned it down; fifty thousand, and he turned it down. They said, 'what's wrong?' He said, 'Your price is all right, but your job is too small. God has called me to be a missionary." (Ibid, 46)

Before Jesus died on the cross, he cried, "Let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." The cross means a surrender of one's all to do God's will: a surrender of one's time, talents, possessions, and influence. I have been redeemed, therefore I am not my own. I belong to another. I belong to the one who purchased me - Christ. Therefore, my most important discovery is God's will for my life. He who accepts God's will for his life, shall abide forever. He who squanders his life in self-centered pursuits shall be sadly disappointed.

"There were two boys in the Taylor family. The older said he must make a name for the family, and so turned his face toward Parliament and fame. The younger decided to give his life to the service of Christ and so turned his face toward China and duty. Hudson Taylor, the missionary, died, beloved and known on every continent. 'but when I looked in the Encyclopedia to see what the other son had done, said one, 'I found these words, " the brother of Hudson Taylor."" (Rosell, pg. 235)

The cross is a sign of death, and to follow Christ may mean surrendering our physical lives for His cause. At one time Jim Elliot wrote, "Father, take my life, yea, my blood if Thou wilt, and consume it with Thine enveloping fire. I would not save it for it is not mine to save. Have it, Lord, have it all. Pour out my life as an oblation for the world. Blood is only of value as it flows before Thine altar." (True Discipleship, pg. 59) Jim Eliot literally poured out his life's blood for the cause of Christ. He died a martyr's death because he took the way of the cross, but he shall abide forever. His tower was not half-built but completed,

for he first counted the cost, then committed his all to Christ, and accepted the consequences of his commitment – in this case, physical martyrdom for the sake of Christ.

Jesus is still saying through this parable: count the cost in terms of personal sacrifice.

II. COUNT THE COST IN TERMS OF STEADFASTNESS

Jesus teaches in this parable the importance of counting the cost in terms of steadfastness or continuing with the job. The builder of the tower was mocked because he went only part way. He didn't complete the job.

"A critical world is watching. By some strange instinct, it realizes that the Christian life deserves everything or nothing. When it sees an out-and-out Christian, it may sneer, and scoff and ridicule – yet inwardly, it has deep respect for the man who recklessly abandons himself to Christ. But when it sees a half-hearted Christian, it has nothing but contempt. It begins to mock him, saying 'this man began to build, and was not able to finish. He made a big commotion when he was converted, but now he's very much like the rest of us. He started out at high speed, but now he's spinning his wheels'." (True Discipleship, pg. 56)

The price of discipleship is persistence, perseverance, commitment. Jesus warns us against starting to build the Christian life and failing to complete it. There are many good starts but too few finishes. Paul wrote, *"Don't be weary in well-doing, for in due season, if we faint not, we shall reap."* Jesus set the example of consistent dedication when he declared, "I must always be about my Father's business." God's business – God's way of Life – was Jesus' meat and drink, His life sustenance. Of Jesus it was said, *"the zeal for thine House hath eaten me up."* God's cause was Jesus' passion; Jesus was consumed in God's work. No half-heartedness with Him. No consideration of turning back from going to the cross to fulfill the plan of God through Him.

Apathy (indifference) is a terrible sin: *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. [15]I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!"* (Revelations 3:1, 15) Solution to apathy: *"those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent."* (Revelations 3:19). Apathy is shown by lack of consistent Church attendance, Bible Reading, Witnessing, etc. (giving). Remember: *"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."* (Corinthians 15:58)

There were those who were followers, but not disciples. They followed Christ for personal advantage – for bread, etc. When they saw the full demands of discipleship, many turned away and left Christ. It was then that Jesus turned to his disciples and said, "Will you also go away and leave me?" They answered, "To whom else can we go, thou hast the words of eternal life!" How very true! The tower cannot be built – the Christian way cannot be walked – without the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The unfinished tower is the produce of self-effort without tapping God's resources. "For the achievements which matter are beyond our human ability to attain." (Kennedy, Parables, pg. 159)

Some say, "I will not become a Christian because I'm afraid I could not live the life that a Christian should live." The person who says that is right concerning his inability to live the Christian life on his own. He can't! But he can if God lives His own life through a frail human. Said Hudson Taylor, that great missionary, "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them." (True Discipleship, ph. 30) The Scripture says "It is God who works in you, inspiring both the will and the deed, for his own chosen purpose." (Philippians 2:13, NEB) God works within us to bring to completion what he has begun in us – that is, if we trust and obey God daily. If we don't continue to trust God, then the tower will never be completely built. The world will mock us as quitters, cowards, and hypocrites.

Building the tower cannot be completed over night; it takes much time and patience. Neither can the Christian life be built overnight. It usually takes much time and effort. The Scriptures speak much about growth in grace: *"Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience and to patience godliness; to virtue and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."* (II Peter 1:5, 6, 7)

Adding means progress, and progress means going forward. Have you ever noticed that there is no Christian armor for the back regions of the body as described in Ephesians 6? Perhaps this suggests that there is no place for retreating from the Enemy. There is only one direction the Christian must go – forward. He must build until his tower is completed!

To go forward means dedication – dedication of all to Christ. Only then can the tower of life be completed.

CONCLUSION

Be sure to count the cost. Realize the cost of following Christ in terms of personal sacrifice, and in terms of steadfastness and faithfulness and earnest follow-through. The cost of following Christ is high – total self-surrender, but can anyone afford not to follow Christ?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 29

SUBJECT: THE LEAVEN OF CHRISTIANITY!

Scripture: ***He told them still another parable: "the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."*** **(Matthew 13:33)**

INTRODUCTION

Jesus probably is making this point in this parable! "Just as unleavened bread is transformed when leaven is put in it, so all of life is transformed by Christianity."

PROPOSITION

Let us note several ways in which Christianity has transformed life.

I. CHRISTIANY HAS TRANSFORMED THE DEAD LUMP OF RELIGIOUS JUDAISM
   - A. JUDAISM WAS FORMALISTIC AND LEGAL; CHRISTIANITY IS PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL
   - B. JUDAISM WAS TERRIBLY EXCLUSIVE; CHRISTIANITY IS UNIVERSAL

II. CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED THE COLD LUMP OF GREEK INTELLECTUALISM.
   - A. THE GREEKS BELIEVED GOD TO BE a PURE DETACHED SPIRIT; CHRISTIANITY BELIEVED GOD TO BE MANIFEST IN HUMAN FLESH
   - B. THE GREEKS BELIEVED GOD TO BE INDIFFERENT AND UNFEELING TOWARDS MAN; CHRISTIANITY BELIEVES GOD TO BE INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN MAN'S FEELINGS AND PROBLEMS

III. CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED THE HARD LUMP OF SOCIAL COMPLACENCY
   - A. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMS LIFE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL MAN"
   - B. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR WOMEN"
   - C. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR THE WEAK AND THE ILL"
   - D. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR THE AGED"
   - E. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR THE CHILD"

CONCLUSION

The leaven of Christianity drastically changed society!

CHAPTER 29

THE LEAVEN OF CHRISTIANITY!

INTRODUCTION

"This is an illustration which Jesus took from His own home. In those days bread was baked at home. Leaven was a little piece of fermented dough which had been kept over from the last baking and had fermented in the keeping." (Barclay's Luke, pg. 186) We make yogurt in a similar fashion today. We keep back a starter to make a new batch.

Leaven, we know, has the power to transform whatever it is in. Unleavened bread is not very appetizing, but if one puts leaven in the bread, it is transformed and becomes tasty.

Jesus probably is making this point in this parable! "Just as unleavened bread is transformed when leaven is put in it, so all of life is transformed by Christianity."

PROPOSITION

Let us note several ways in which Christianity has transformed life.

I. CHRISTIANY HAS TRANSFORMED THE DEAD LUMP OF RELIGIOUS JUDAISM.

Christ's message seemed to have little effect upon the world at first, just like leaven at first, seems to have little effect upon dough. Give the leaven long enough and there will be a great swelling, bubbling, and disturbance. So it is with Christianity. At first, Christ's relatively solitary life seemed to have so little affect upon the world as a whole, and yet, that one solitary life not only changed Judaism, but it changed the whole world! The following brings out this truth:

> **"He was born in an obscure village.**
> **He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty.**
> **He then became an itinerant preacher.**
> **He never held an office.**
> **He never had a family or owned a house.**
> **He didn't go to college.**
> **He had no credentials but himself..."**
>
> **"Nineteen centuries have come and gone,**
> **And today he is the central figure of the human race.**
> **All the armies that ever marched,**
> **And all the navies that ever sailed,**
> **All the parliaments that ever sat,**
> **And all the kings that ever reigned**

Have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that...One Solitary Life."

The leaven of Christianity transformed the dead lump of religious Judaism. Judaism was changed from a cold, ritualistic, legalistic, exclusive religion, to a warm, personal, universal religion that appealed to all men. It was changed from a tasteless, unappealing religion of loftiness, to a seasoned, attractive religion of universal appeal. Let us briefly look at Judaism and see the great contrast between it and Christianity.

A. JUDAISM WAS FORMALISTIC AND LEGALISTIC; CHRISTIANITY IS PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL.

Form and ritual was of utmost importance in Judaism. An example of this can be seen in the Temple ritual. The priests must meticulously observe form. Before the "continual' burnt offering was presented every morning at 9:00 a.m. and every afternoon at 3:00 p.m., the priests must bath and robe and draw lots to determine their jobs, "such as removing the ashes from the altar of burnt offering, preparing the wood for burning the sacrifice, the slaying of the lamb, the throwing of the blood against the altar, the cleaning of the lamp stand, and the preparing of the meal offering of fine flour and drink offering." (The New Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content, pg. 55) The several offerings were to be made with exactness and carefulness.

Added to the legalism in form, was the legalism of the Oral Law. The Oral Law was the man-made commentaries based on the Old Testament Mosaic Law. The scribes wrote thousands of petty rules and regulations to control every conceivable situation in life. "As for 'Thou shalt do not work on the Sabbath – the lawyers asked, 'What is work?' and they then laid down thirty-nine different 'fathers of work' – classifications of work: reaping, spinning, winnowing, hoeing, threshing, beating the corn, carrying a burden, lighting a fire – all kinds of things. Then they took these and subdivided them, with a great passion for definition...Let us see what they did. One thing that was forbidden was tying a knot. To tie a knot on the Sabbath day was to work. Now we know the questions which follow: 'What is a knot?' The answer was – anything you can tie with two hands. If you can tie it with one hand, all is well – it is not a sin. Then of course, in the old days, there were no such things as zip fasteners, and a woman simply could not dress herself on the Sabbath with the cap she wore on her hair, or anything like that. Now what happens? It is the Sabbath – they forgot to draw water and they have to lower a bucket down into the well. They cannot tie a knot in the rope - it is the Sabbath. But they can take a woman's girdle and tie a knot in it and let the bucket down in the well

- that is absolutely all right!...on and on it goes." (William Barclay, The Life of Jesus for Everyman, pgs. 32, 33)

This exclusive ritualism and rigid legalism oftentimes led to hypocracy. It was this which the Old Testament prophets denounce. Through Isaiah, the Lord said, *"This people draw near me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts and minds far from Me...Oh, your perversity! – You turn things upside down!! Shall the potter be considered of no more account than the clay? Shall the thing that is made say of its maker, He did not make me; or the thing that is formed say of him who formed it, He has no understanding?"* (Isaiah 29:13, 16) All pretense and perversity is known to God.

How different is Christianity from Judaism with all its formalism and legalism! Christianity is not based on form but on a warm personal relationship with God. Form is important only inasmuch as it helps one to know God better. There is no rigid formula for worship; therefore, some worship God with much form and ritual and others worship God with little form and ritual. It matters not, as long as the worshipper is worshipping God in the spirit and with the whole heart. Wrote Paul, *"But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit."* (Romans 7:6, RSV) Paul was able to write that because of the transforming introduction of Christianity into man's life. Wrote Paul to the Corinthians, *"Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life."* (II Corinthians 3:5, RSV) Christianity is based on a powerful, dynamic, personal relationship with God. It is guided by big, overriding principles instead of petty, minute rules, and regulations. Christianity liberates one from the bondage of Judaism. *"In view of these tremendous facts, don't let anyone worry you by criticizing what you eat or drink, or what holy days you ought to observe, or bothering you over new moons or Sabbaths – all these things have at most only a symbolic value: the solid fact is Christ."* (Colossians 2:16, 17) Christianity is not formalistic, ritualistic, rigid, and legalistic, but instead, it is personal, practical, dynamic, and adaptable.

B. JUDAISM WAS TERRIBLY EXCLUSIVE; CHRISTIANITY IS UNIVERSAL.

The exclusiveness of Judaism is seen in the warning notices to Gentiles, posted on the wall surrounding the Temple: "Let no man of another nation enter inside the barrier and the fence around the Temple. And whoever is caught will have only himself to blame, that

his death ensues." (The New Testament, Its background, Growth, and Content; pg. 54) To the Jews, Gentiles were considered the refuse of the world, fuel for hell... the devout Jew thanked God every morning that he was not born a Gentile.

The Jewish leaders even looked down upon the great majority of Palestinian Jews who were considered common and inferior because they did not observe all the Mosaic Law with its ramifications. "So deep-seated was the Pharisees' disdain for the people of the land, whom he regarded as immoral and irreligious, that he avoided as far as possible all contact with them. According to rabbinical law they were not to be summoned as witnesses, nor their testimony admitted in court. No secret was to be entrusted to them, nor should one of them be appointed guardian of an orphan...And marriage between the two classes was condemned in terms of abhorrence (the Pharisees' judgment was that 'their women are unclean vermin')." (Ibid, 45, 46)

In contrast to the exclusiveness of Judaism, we see Jesus' concern for all men - Jews, Samaritan, and Gentile. The Gospel is 'Good News' to all men – whosoever will, may come. God so loved the world – black and white, moral and immoral, literate and illiterate, elite and common, young and old – that he gave His Son to die in order that all might be saved. God is not willing that any perish but that all be saved. God exacts no rules or regulations for salvation – only faith in the Christ. Christianity transformed the dead lump of religious Judaism into a dynamic religion that includes all people.

II. CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED THE COLD LUMP OF GREEK INTELLECTUALISM.

The Greek philosophies during the time of the New Testament entertained a vastly different concept of God than did Christianity. Christianity introduced something totally and startlingly new.

A. THE GREEKS BELIEVED GOD TO BE A PURE DETACHED SPIRIT; CHRISTIANITY BELIEVED GOD TO BE MANIFEST IN HUMAN FLESH.

Perhaps the greatest single verse of the New Testament is this: "So the Word of God became a person, and took up his abode in our being, full of grace and truth; and w looked with our eyes upon His glory, glory like the glory which an only son received from a father." (Barclay's John, 1:14) The idea of God becoming a real man was altogether new and unthought-of. None of the Greek philosophies had room for such a thought. "Augustine afterwards said that in his pre-Christian days, he

had never read that the Word became flesh. To a Greek this was the impossible thing. The one thing that no Greek would ever have dreamed of was that God would take a body. To the Greek the body was an evil, a prison-house in which the soul was shackled, a tomb in which the spirit was confined. Plutarch, the wise old Greek, did not even believe that God would control the happenings of this world directly; He had to do it by deputies and intermediaries, for, as Plutarch saw it, it was nothing less than blasphemy to involve God in the affairs of the world. Philo could never have said it. He said: ' the life of God has not descended to us; nor has it come as far as the necessities of the body!' The great Roman Stoic Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, despised the body in comparison with the spirit. 'Therefore despise the flesh – blood and bones and a net-work, a twisted skein of nerves and veins and arteries.' 'The composition of the whole body is under corruption.' Here was the shatteringly new thing – that God could and would become a human person, that God could enter into this life that we live, that eternity could appear in time, that somehow the Creator could appear in creation in such a way that man's eyes could actually see Him." (Barclay's John, v. 1, pgs. 44, 45)

The leaven of Christianity brought about a great transformation in man's conception of God as shown in Greek philosophy.

B. THE GREEKS BELIEVED GOD TO BE INDIFFERENT AND UNFEELING TOWARDS MAN; CHRISTIANITY BELIEVES GOD TO BE INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN MAN'S FEELINGS AND PROBLEMS.

"The Stoics, the highest Greek thinkers, said the primary attribute of God is apatheia. By apatheia they meant essential inability to feel anything at all. They argued that if a person can feel sorrow or joy it means that some other person is able to influence that person. The other person can make him happy or glad, can affect him. Now if he can affect him, it must mean that, at least for that moment, he is greater than he is. He has been able to do something to him. So the Greeks argued no one must be able to do anything to God; no one must be able in any sense to affect God; no one can ever be greater than God therefore God must be completely and essentially incapable of feeling joy or sorrow, gladness or grief. The Stoics argued that the very essence of God's being and nature was that God was beyond all feeling. The other great Greek school was the Epicureans. The Epicureans held that the gods lived in perfect happiness and blessedness. They lived out in what they called the intermundia, the spaces between the worlds; and there in complete detachment they were not even aware of the world." (Barclay's Hebrews, pgs. 39, 40)

The leaven of Christianity introduced something new and transforming into man's conception of God. Far from God being unconcerned about man's feelings and problems, God actually identifies with human suffering and sorrows. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. *"For we have not a high priest who is such that He cannot feel with us in our weaknesses; but one who has gone through very temptation, just in the same way as we have, and who is without sin."* (Barclay's Hebrews 4:15) God, in the person of Christ, has entered the arena of human activity and sees through human eyes and feels through human feelings. He perfectly understands and sympathizes and lends help to man.

"Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.

Our fellow suff'rer yet retains
A fellow-feeling of our pain;
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, His agonies and cries.

In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of sorrows has a part;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the suff'rer sends relief."
(Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 170)

III. CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED THE HARD LUMP OF SOCIAL COMPLACENCY.

It is true that Christianity called for a change of the heart before it called for a change of the social structure. Slavery existed during the time of Jesus and Paul, but neither advocated abolition of slavery. Why? Simply because the revolution caused by a quick reform of an established social structure would be so violent, that this violence would doubtless be worse than the existing institution of slavery itself. The leaven of Christianity would work slowly but surely to bring about this reformation. Jesus and Paul did not advocate a quick change in the social structures of their day, but they did advocate an immediate and drastic change of heart among men. Leaven must get inside the dough to do its work. God must get inside men's hearts if society is to be changed. Leaven must be introduced from outside. If man is to be transformed, he must have help from outside himself. Man is not self-sufficient. Man has long tried to live independently and to produce changes in society by his own strength. Man at his best has produced only partial and

temporary cures in society. At his worst, man has been indifferent towards society or outrightly hostile to it. Man needs the transforming leaven in his heart, which shall in turn produce changes in society.

Christianity has produced radical changes in society. Barclay notes the following. (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 89)

A. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL MAN"

The Scripture says, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."* (II Corinthians 5:17) Christianity makes bad men good.

B. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR WOMEN"

To the Jew a woman was a mere possession. The devout Jewish men thanked God every morning that he was not born a woman. In Greek civilization, the woman was put in seclusion to perform household duties. In Roman civilization the woman could be easily divorced, and it was very common for Roman men to have a mistress for his sensual pleasure, in addition to his wife whose job was household work. Christianity liberated the woman from her inferior role and life of servitude and drudgery.

C. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR THE WEAK AND THE ILL"

"In heathen life the weak and the ill were considered a nuisance. In Sparta a child, when he was born, was submitted to the examiners; if he was fit, he was allowed to live; if he was weakly or deformed, he was exposed to death on the mountain side. Dr. A. Rendle Short points out that the first blind asylum was founded by Thalasius, a Christian monk; the first free dispensary was founded by Apollonius, a Christian merchant; the first hospital of which there is any record was found by Fabiola, a Christian lady. Christianity was the first faith to be interested in the broken things of life." (Ibid, pg. 90)

D. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR THE AGED"

To one who is taking over a farm, Cato, the Roman writer on agriculture, gives the following advice: "Look over the livestock and hold a sale. Sell your oil, if the price is satisfactory, and sell the surplus of your wine and grain. Sell worn-out oxen, blemished cattle, blemished sheep, wool, hides, an old wagon, old tools, an old slave, a sickly slave,

and whatever else is superfluous." Christianity treats people as people, not as things to be exploited.

E. "CHRISTIANITY TRANSFORMED LIFE FOR THE CHILD"

Divorce, which was so common, made the life of a child most disastrous. The common practice of child exposure resulted in many children dying. Oftentimes girl babies were thrown out and only the male babies kept. A man in the ancient world, who was away from home, wrote to his expectant wife: "If – good luck to you – you bear a child, if it is a boy let it live, if it is a girl, throw it out." Christianity reformed this cruelty until today children play a central role in our society.

CONCLUSION

The leaven of Christianity drastically changed society! It changed the dead lump of religious Judaism with its legalism and exclusiveness into a world religion that appeals to all men. The leaven of Christianity transformed the conception of God from a God that was unfeeling and detached to a God that was involved and sympathetic. The leaven of Christianity changed man's inhumanity to man to a vital concern with social and personal problems. The leaven of Christianity transformed the dead lump of Judaism, transformed the cold lump of Greek intellectualism, and transformed the hard lump of social complacency. The leaven of Christianity is powerful, penetrating, and permanent in its affects upon men and movements and mentality.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 30

SUBJECT: THE GREAT DISCOVERY!

Scripture: ***"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."*** **(Matthew 13:44)**

INTRODUCTION

Great discoveries are made here on earth, like the discovery of oil in Alaska. But the greatest discovery is a spiritual discovery – the discovery of Christ!

PROPOSITION

Jesus told two different parables concerning a great discovery. In the first parable, the man discovered a treasure which lay hidden in a field. In the second parable, a man was searching hard for a precious pearl.

In looking at these two parables, there stands out two common characteristics in both – great joy in the discovery, and complete sacrifice to purchase the coveted prize.

- **I. INEXPRESSIBLE JOY IN FINDING TREATURES**
  - **A. SOME FIND GOD IN A MOMENT AND UNEXPECTEDLY**
  - **B. SOME FIND GOD AFTER A HARD AND LONG SEARCH**
- **II. SACRIFICE OF ALL TO PURCHASE THE TREASURE**

CONCLUSION

You will be wise if you surrender everything in order to find life's Greatest Treasure – the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 30

THE GREAT DISCOVERY!

INTRODUCTION

We have been hearing a lot about the great oil discovery in Alaska. Millions of dollars worth of oil has been discovered. Those who have invested in the land where the oil is being found are gaining thousands and thousands of dollars from their investments. To some, this discovery is the greatest discovery of their lives. But the greatest discovery is a spiritual discovery – the discovery of Christ!

PROPOSITION

Jesus told two different parables concerning a great discovery. Let us look at the great discovery each man made in the parables.

The first man discovered a treasure which lay hidden in a field. "In the ancient world there were banks, but not banks such as ordinary people could use. People in ordinary everyday practice used the ground as the safest place to keep their most cherished belongings...Although Palestine in the time of Jesus was under the Romans and under Roman law, in the ordinary, small, day to day things it was traditional Jewish law which was used; and in regard to hidden treasure Jewish Rabbinic law is quite clear: 'What finds belong to the finder, and what finds must one cause to be proclaimed? These finds belong to the finder – if a man finds scattered fruit, scattered money...these belong to the finder." (Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 94, 95)

The second man was searching hard for a precious pearl. "People desired to possess a lovely pearl, not only for its money value, but for its beauty. They found a pleasure in simply handling it and contemplating it. They found an aesthetic joy in simply possessing and looking at a pearl. The main sources of pearls in those days were the shores of the Red Sea and far off Britain itself; but a merchant would scour the markets of the world to find a pearl which was of surpassing beauty". (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 96)

In looking at these two parables, there stands out two common characteristics in both – great joy in the discovery, and complete sacrifice to purchase the coveted prize. Let us look at these two points from a spiritual viewpoint.

I. INEXPRESSIBLE JOY IN FINDING TREASURES

Just as the two experienced inexpressible joy in discovering their treasures, so there will be inexpressible joy in discovering God. "It might well be claimed that the discovery of the use of chloroform saved the world more pain than any other single medical discovery. Once someone asked Sir James Simpson, its discoverer, 'What do you regard as your greatest discovery?' The questioner naturally expected the answer, ' the discovery of chloroform.' But

Simpson answered, 'My greatest discovery was when I discovered that Jesus Christ is my Saviour.'" (Barclay's Luke, pg. 138)

In the discovery of the two men, we find this one main difference. The man who found the hidden treasure found it all unaware and unexpectantly. The man who found the pearl found it after an intense and long search.

A. SOME FIND GOD IN A MOMENT AND UNEXPECTEDLY

The joy from this type of discovery is just as real as the joy resulting from finding God after a long, hard search. Some have had no background in Christian training and would not know how to conduct a long, intense search for truth. Some are so entangled in falsehood, that truth seems far removed from them, and such may not be able to recognize truth unless someone confronts them directly with it.

Richard Wurmbrand gives the following account of the conversion of Communists. "In a shop, I met a Russian captain with a lady officer. They were buying all kinds of things and had difficulties speaking to the salesman who did not understand Russian. I offered to translate for them and we made acquaintance. I invited them to lunch to our house. Before beginning to eat, I told them: 'You are in a Christian house and we have the habit to pray.' I said the prayer in Russian. They put down forks and knives and were not interested in food any more. They began to ask questions after questions about God, Christ, and the Bible. They knew nothing". After answering many basic questions regarding the Christian faith, Richard Wurmbrand says that "the Captain and the lady officer were converted on that same day. Afterwards, they helped us very much in our underground ministry to the Russians." (Tortured For Christ, pgs. 9, 10)

Kagawa, the great missionary to Japan, tells the following story of a boy whom he knew in his own childhood. "When I was in the fifth grade of the High School, Dr. Myers took me to the slums in the city of Tokushima. I found there a boy, just my age, helping a beggar whose legs and arms were all paralyzed. Dr. Myers told me the boy's story. He stole from a timber merchant – five yen – came to Tokyo from Osaka where he was serving as an apprentice. While passing the preaching place of a missionary, he entered and listened to the Gospel of Christ. He repented, became a labourer and earned five yen, went back to Osaka on a steamer, paid back the money he had stolen and then started on his own humble philanthropic work...He was truly an angel in my eyes." (Kagawa by Jessie Trout, pg. 68) No long, drawn out intellectual search or debate, just a simple matter-of-fact surrender to truth as unexpectantly revealed to them.

B. Some Find God After a Hard and Long Search

There are those who theoretically know the truth, but who have never personally experienced God in a vital relationship. There are those who know much about religion, but who have no personal knowledge of God. Some are spiritually blinded by their own notions and misconceptions about religion and God.

Martin Luther stands out as a classic example of one who sought hard and long for the truth before he found it. In his childhood, he was haunted with the idea of a God who was wrathful and revengeful. As a child, he was filled with horror when he thought of God and was fearful that God would send him to hell. He was raised in a devoutly religious home but he had no peace with God, only fear and trembling.

Luther went into the monastery, thinking that as a monk surely he could gain favor with God. As a monk Luther was still filled with terror as he thought of God. Said Luther, later in life, "I thought to myself, 'With what tongue shall I address such Majesty, seeing that all men ought to tremble in the presence of even an earthly prince? Who am I that I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine Majesty? The angels surround him. At his nod the earth trembles. And shall I, a miserable little pygmy, say 'I want this, I ask for that'? For I am dust and ashes, and full of sin and I am speaking to the living, eternal and the true God." (Roland Bainton, Here I Stand, pg. 30)

For nineteen years Luther sought for peace. He rigidly disciplined himself, thinking that through his religious sacrifice and activity that he could find peace with God. Roland Bainton gives a description of Luther's stringent discipline: "He fasted, sometimes three days on end without a crumb. The seasons of fasting were more consoling to him than those of feasting. Lent was more comforting than Easter. He laid upon himself vigils and prayers in excess of those stipulated by the rule. He cast off the blankets permitted him and well-nigh froze himself to death. At times he was proud of his sanctity and would say, 'I have done nothing wrong today.' Then misgivings would arise. 'Have you fasted enough? Are you poor enough?' He would then strip himself of all save that which decency required. He believed in later life that his austerities had done permanent damage to his digestion." (Ibid, 34)

Said Luther later in life, "I was a good monk and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I might say: that if ever a monk got to heaven by his mockery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other works." (Ibid, 34)

Luther also attempted to purchase indulgences. Behind the belief in indulgences was the belief that the goodness of the saints could be pooled and used by those who were less worthy to help merit their salvation.

When Luther discovered, through the study of Scripture, that God identified with man's sin through the suffering of Christ on the Cross, and that Christ took man's alienation and hell for him, Luther's mind became enlightened with a new conception of God – a God who justifies the ungodly through faith. This discovery, which resulted in inexpressible joy, is recorded by Luther: "I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and shear mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven...If you have a true faith that Christ is your Saviour, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God's heart and will, that you should see pure grace and overflowing love. This it is to behold God in faith that you should look upon his fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is neither anger nor ungraciousness. He who sees God as angry does not see him rightly but looks only on a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across his face." (Ibid; 49, 50)

II. SACRIFICE OF ALL TO PURCHASE THE TREASURE

Spiritually speaking, when man discovers God, he must be willing to sacrifice everything to fulfill God's will in life. Wrote Paul, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."* (Romans 12:1) Jesus spoke of denying self, and taking up the cross to follow him. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he sought eternal life. But because he was unwilling to surrender all, the young ruler went away sorrowful.

In the parables, the men sacrificed all in order to purchase the treasure. *"A man found it, and hid it; and, as a result of his joy, away he goes, and sells everything that he has, and buys the field."* (Matthew 13:44) *"When he had found a very valuable pearl, he went away and sold everything he had, and bought it."* (Matthew 13:46) The man who desires to purchase the treasure of God's will must throw caution to the wind, and invest all in God. As C.H. Dodd has pointed out, to follow Christ may "mean leaving home and friends, property, and business; it may mean a vagrant life of hardship, with an ignominious death at the end." (The Parables of the Kingdom, pg. 87) Recall the thousands of missionaries throughout the ages who have met death at the

hand of persecutors. Sacrifice in life and in death is required in order to gain the treasure of God's will here and heaven hereafter.

A one-legged school teacher from Scotland came to J. Hudson Taylor to offer himself for service in China. 'Why do you, with only one leg, think of going as a missionary?' asked Taylor. 'I do not see those with two legs going, so I must,' replied George Scott. He was accepted." (Rosell, No. 31)

The paradox is this: the greater the sacrifice for God – even when it causes hardship – the greater the joy. "A rich businessman and a prominent attorney were traveling around the world. They saw many impressive sights, but agreed that something they saw in Korea was most impressive of all. One morning as they walked along a country road in Korea, they saw a boy pulling a plow which was steered by an old man. It amused the attorney so much that he insisted on taking a picture of the scene with his little pocket camera. Later he showed the picture to a missionary in the next village, remarking about the peculiar spectacle. 'Yes,' said the missionary, 'it seems a very strange way to plow a field, but I happen to know the boy and the old man well. They are very poor. However, when the little Church was built here in the village, they wanted to contribute something. They had no money. They had no grain to spare and winter was coming on, so they sold their ox and gave the money to the Church building fund, and now, minus the valuable animal they have to pull the plow themselves.' The man looked at each other for a moment, and then the attorney said, 'But what a stupendous sacrifice! Why did you allow it?' 'They did not feel that way about it. They regarded it as a great joy that they had an ox to give to the Lord's work.'" (Rosell, No. 230)

God has not promised ease, but He has promised grace and strength for each task, however difficult. Kagawa wrote the following poem which speaks about dedication and sacrifice to Christ's work in a difficult area – a slum.

Why Go To the Slums?

He cannot save himself-
Long ago
The crowds
Reviled a Man
Who Came
To save them.

And I,
Who fain would follow Him,
Am spent.
For I can see

No hope
For the slums
Because that,
First of all,
This thing
Is wrong –
That man
Should crowd
Thus in the dearth,
And dark,
And dirt –
Should crowd and throng...

But oh,
The pity, the pity!
My people
Must stay
In the city;
So this six-foot shack
That shelters me
Is the only place
Where I want to be."
(Jessie Trout, Kagawa, pgs. 24, 25)

Wrote Paul to the Corinthian Church for which Paul sacrificed so much. *"I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls."* (II Corinthians 12:15) What is the reward of sacrifice? Satisfaction, but that is not all. "When the late Dr. Henry Morrison came home from one of his many travels, he arrived in New York at the same time and on the same ship that brought Teddy Roosevelt from his hunting trip to Africa. Literally thousands swarmed the docks to greet the noted hunter, but not a soul was there to welcome Dr. Morrison. Satan whispered to him, 'Aha, see how they greet the man of the world, and you, one of God's preachers, without a single soul to greet you.' In the loneliness of his heart there could have been place for hurt, but the Spirit sweetly whispered, 'Yes, but Henry, you are not home yet!'" (Entire Sanctification: Studies in Christian Holiness, pg. 100)

CONCLUSION

What is the greatest discovery of all? To discover God: as a personal Friend and your Guide in life; to find God's will here, and heaven hereafter (the Treasure) involves lifetime sacrifice, which, in its turn, brings joy. Are you willing to sacrifice anything to find and to do the will of God? Paul counted all things as loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ! You, too, will be wise if you surrender everything in order to find Life's Greatest Treasure – the Lord Jesus Christ!

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 31

SUBJECT: THE DRAGNET AND THE FISH!

Scripture: *47"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* **(Matthew 13:47-50)**

INTRODUCTION

Two things stand out about this parable: Indiscriminate gathering of the fish, and the final separation of the good and bad fish.

PROPOSITION

Let us then look at this parable in terms of two main ideas – Indiscriminate Appeal of the Gospel, Final Separation of Humanity.

I. INDISCRIIMINATE APPEAL OF THE GOSPEL
   - A. CHRISTIANITY DESTROYS THE BARRIER BETWEEN RACE AND RACE
   - B. CHRISTIANITY DESTROYS THE BARRIER BETWEEN THE CULTURED AND UNCULTURED
   - C. CHRISTIANITY DESTROYS THE BARRIER BETWEEN CLASS AND CLASS
   - D. CHRISTIANITY DESTROYS THE BARRIER BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR

II. FINAL SEPARATION OF HUMANITY
   - A. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO A BIGOT
   - B. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO A MAN OF GREAT FORM OR RITUALS
   - C. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO A SECULAR MORALIST OR A HUMANIST
   - D. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO THE RICH
   - E. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO MEN OF CAUTION AND EASE
   - F. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO MEN OF WORLDLY CARE
   - G. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO THE MAN WHO WANTS TO REVERT TO THE PAST

CONCLUSION

Jesus wills to save all men, but those who refuse to follow Christ, brings judgment upon themselves. Prepare to meet thy God! Repent of your sins, confess them to God, and seek forgiveness.

CHAPTER 31

THE DRAGNET AND THE FISH!

INTRODUCTION

Barclay clearly explains the manner of fishing described in this parable, which obviously had an appeal to the fishermen of Jesus' day. "The seine net was a great square net with cords at each corner, and weighted so that, at rest, it hung, as it were, upright in the water. Then when the boat began to move the net was drawn into the shape of a great cone and into the cone, all kinds of fish were swept. The net was then drawn to land, and the catch was separated. The useless material was flung away; the good material was put into containers." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 99)

Two things stand out about this parable: Indiscriminate gathering of the fish, and the final separation of the good and bad fish. We may see a spiritual application in this parable. The net stands for the Kingdom's influence as represented by the Church; the sea represents restless, moving humanity; the fish represent all sorts and kinds of humanity which have come under the influence of the Gospel; and then final separation of the fish represents the Final Judgment in which God will separate good men from wicked men.

PROPOSITION

Let us then look at this parable in terms of two main ideas – Indiscriminate appeal of the Gospel, Final Separation of Humanity.

I. INDISCRIMINATE APPEAL OF THE GOSPEL.

One thing is very clear in the parable: No discrimination is made in the fish that are gathered into the drag-net. Likewise, there is to be no discrimination in presenting the Gospel of the Kingdom to mankind. The Gospel is good news because it breaks down all dividing walls of hostilities between groups of humanity. The Gospel has an universal appeal to all men. In Christ, *"there is no distinction between Greek and Hebrew, Jew or Gentile, foreigner or savage, slave or free man. Christ is all that matters, for Christ lives in them all."* (Colossians 3:11, Phillips) Barclay points out, "the ancient world was full of barriers. The Greek looked down on the barbarian; and to the Greek any man who did not speak Greek was a barbarian, which literally means a man who says 'bar-bar'. The Greek was the aristocrat of the ancient world and he knew it. The Jew looked down on every other nation. He belonged to God's chosen people, and the other nations were fit only to be fuel for the fires of hell. The Scythian was notorious as the lowest of the barbarians, more barbarian than the barbarians, the Greeks called him; little short of being a wild beast, Josephus calls him. He was proverbially the savage, who terrorized the civilized world with his bestial atrocities. The slave was not even classified in ancient law as a human being; he was merely a human and

a living tool, with no rights of his own. His master could thrash or brand or main or even kill him at his caprice. There could be no fellowship in the ancient world between a slave and a free man." (Barclay's Colossians, pg. 186)

A. CHRISTIANITY DESTROYS THE BARRIER BETWEEN RACE AND RACE.

True Christianity does not look upon one race of people as being superior to another race of people. The idea, for instance, that the Negro race is an inferior race has no place in Christian theology, and anyone who claims it does is only displaying his ignorance and prejudice. It is believed that Moses married an Ethiopian woman who would obviously be dark-skinned. There is no place for discrimination, snobbery or rejection in the eyes of Christianity, when it comes to races.

I am a 5th generation Free Methodist (a descendant of the Biblical teachings of the great John Wesley.) The Free Methodist Church from the beginning was against slavery, and, while slavery as such is no longer a live issue in America, discrimination is a live issue. The members of the Free Methodist Church pledge to cleanse themselves of all prejudice, and they claim the dignity of all men as something to be cherished. Men of all races are welcomed on an equal basis in this Church. The Gospel excludes none, and neither can the Church, which preaches that Gospel, exclude any. Red and Yellow, Black and White and Brown – they are all welcome!

B. CHRISTIANITY DESTROYS THE BARRIER BETWEEN THE CULTURED AND UNCULTURED.

In the early days, Christianity destroyed the barrier between the sophisticated, aristocratic Greek and the despised, pagan barbarian. So Christianity must always extend its arms of love to cultured and uncultured, literate and illiterate, honored and despised. Methodism in its earliest days ministered to both the honored and to the outcast, to the learned and to the ignorant. While many churches were appealing only to the learned and elite, Methodism ministered much to the despised and outcast. One who was a member of the Holy Club with Wesley wrote that "nothing was so much disliked as their charitable work." (Blueprint For a Christian World, pg. 35) This charitable work included ministry to the prisoners. They were "friends of publicans and sinners" and sat "down upon the level with them." (Ibid, 35) As a result the members of the Holy Club were despised. Wesley was even excluded from many pulpits because he preached a gospel of love which included all men. Mary Alice Tenney spoke about the early Methodists: "Early Methodists really loved men. They did not sign a

check for Community Chest Drives; they went into dirty garrets and nursed sick old women. Even noblemen did that sort of thing, denying themselves luxuries in order to do it. It got right down among the needy, the evil, even the criminals, and showed them what real friendship and compassion are." (Living In Two Worlds, pg. 112)

C. CHRISTIANITY DESTROYS THE BARRIER BETWEEN CLASS AND CLASS

Christianity has no sympathy whatever for putting class labels on men. There is no lower, middle, and upper classes among true Christians. In the early Church it was not uncommon for the slave to lead the Church service while the master sat humbly in the congregation listening and learning. The Wesleyan revival was out to destroy all class discrimination and to create one new man in Christ Jesus. "Wesley proposed to bring all classes together in the common cause of Kingdom-building. He found no provisions in the Kingdom plan for social or economic distinctions and he made none in his plan for the Societies. A class leader was as likely to be a blacksmith as a banker. A local preacher was chosen more for his natural gifts of spiritual insight than for his degree of education, and never for his bank account." (Blueprint For a Christian World, pg. 235) All men kneel on level ground before the cross.

Methodism lost its power as a movement when it began to develop class distinctions and favor the middle and upper classes. Fashionable dress and beautiful pews became the signs of the elite to which the Church bowed. It was because class distinctions were made in the Church, that the Salvation Army movement was started. "One day William Booth arrived at the door of a fine, newly built London Church with a group of ragged people from the slums and was told to take them to their proper place at the back. The very people to whom Methodism had first come were thus discriminated against. As a consequence, Booth, driven by the same compassion as had stirred Wesley, organized the East London Revival Society, and later became known as the Salvation Army." (Living In Two Worlds, pgs. 104, 105)

D. CHRISTIANITY DESTROYS THE BARRIER BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR.

Wrote James: *" the brother who is poor may be glad because God has called him to the true riches. The rich may be glad that God has shown him his spiritual poverty."* (James 1:9, 10, Phillips) There is a leveling off process in Christianity, which results in making no distinctions between the rich and the poor. The Gospel appeals to the king and also to the pauper. Again, many churches have bowed to the rich and noble and have neglected the poor. The genius of early Methodism was its

care for both the rich and the poor. "In Wesley's correspondence with Miss March, one of the well-to-do Methodists, he advises her not to confine her 'conversation to genteel and elegant people.' He urges her to 'converse more, abundantly more, with the poorest of the people.' 'Creep in among these in spite of dirt and a hundred disgusting circumstances, and thus put off the gentlewoman.'" (Blueprint, pg. 234)

Originally, Methodism appealed strongly to the Poor, in much part due to the emphasis on Perfect Love which leveled all distinctions. However, the Methodist Church lost this appeal to the Poor when it began to bow to convention for the sake of incorporating wealth into its treasuries. Notes William Sweet, the great historian of American Methodism: "Once it was proud to be called the poor man's Church; now it boasts of its colleges and universities, its great endowments and tremendous corporate owner. As their churches tended to become increasingly costly and luxurious, the inevitable result was that the people no longer felt at ease I worshiping with their more fortunate brethren. Nor did the college and seminary trained minister stress the poor man's doctrines, such as 'holiness' and 'second blessing'...for the stressing of these doctrines caused the prosperous to feel uncomfortable.

From its beginning, the Free Methodist Church has sought to be indiscriminatory in regards to the rich and the poor. The church has sought to reach the man on both the right and the wrong sides of the track. In providing free pews to both rich and poor on an equal basis, the Free Methodist Church has sought to obey James' injunction: *"Don't ever attempt, my brothers, to combine snobbery with faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ! Suppose one man comes into your meeting well dressed and with a gold ring on his finger, and another man's, obviously poor, arrives in shabby clothes. If you pay special attention to the well dressed man by say, "Please sit here – it's an excellent seat,' and say to the poor man, 'you stand over there, please, or if you must sit, sit on the floor, doesn't that prove that you are making class distinctions in you remind, and setting yourselves up to assess a man's quality? – a very bad thing. For do notice, my brothers, that God chose poor men, whose only wealth was their faith, and made them heirs to the kingdom promised to those who love him. And if you behave as I have suggested, it is the poor man that you are insulting."* (James 2:1-5, Phillips)

Thus, we have seen that the Gospel is Good News because it appeals to all men – black and white, cultured and uncultured, elite and despised, rich and poor. Just as the drag-net takes in all sorts of fish, so the appeal of the Gospel is indiscriminate. Its influence goes out to all sorts and kinds of men.

II. FINAL SEPARATION OF HUMANITY

What happened to the drag-net when it was pulled to shore? *"When it was full, they hauled it up on to the shore, and sat down, and collected the good contents into containers, but threw the useless contents away."* (Matthew 13:48) Then the spiritual application of the parable is given: *"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come, and they will separate the evil from the righteous, and they will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there."* (Matthew 13:49, 50) That is the sobering picture of the destiny of the good and bad fish – of good and wicked men. As Jesus said many times: *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

It is true that the Gospel indiscriminately appeals to all men in its message. It leaves out no man or group of men. It universally offers salvation to all men. God is not willing that any should perish. No race, or class, or culture of people. However, inevitably there will be discrimination – at the end time, at the Great Judgment. The basis for discrimination will not be race, color, culture, or class, but it will be on the basis of acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ. He is the great Divider of all men. He divides all men into one of two classes – good men or bad men, God-lovers or God-haters. To some, Jesus will be a source of great offense. To others, Jesus will be a source of great comfort.

Let us note specific ones to whom Jesus is a great offense, and, by implication, ones to whom Jesus is a great comfort.

A. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO A BIGOT

A bigot is simply one who is extremely opinionated, one who thinks his opinion is right and all other opinions are wrong. Jesus comes as an offense, for Jesus said, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."* He has gumption enough to say in the face of the bigot, *"Your opinion is wrong, I am the only Way."*

B. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO A MAN OF GREAT FORM OR RITUALS

A ritualist is one who puts excessive importance upon religious externals and form. Christ knows the hearts of all men, even the religious hypocrite. Attitudes of the heart and the motive itself are more important than external form. To the religious Pharisee of Jesus' day, He said, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."* (Matthew 23:27) To the same group of ritualist and legalists, Jesus said, *"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men;*

but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." **(Luke 16:15)**

C. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO A SECULAR MORALIST OR a HUMANIST.

Secular morality is human attainment; Christian morality is God-given attainment. There are many who value the ethical teachings of Christianity and seek to cultivate respectable traits within their lives. There are those – humanists – who sentimentally talk about the great value of serving humanity. Many social movements have their rootage in the vague and general ideal of serving humanity, and yet many who advocate such service do not personally have the power of love described in 1 Corinthians 13. The secular moralist fails to see that it is God's will to have new men, not simply better men. "Know thyself accept thyself, develop thyself – that is pagan. Surrender thyself, discipline thyself, and obey Another Self – the Spirit of God – that is Christian." (E.S. Jones; quoted by Dr. Tenney in Blueprint, pg. 60). The way to become a new man is through repentance and faith. Said Jesus: *"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."* (Luke 13:3) Repentance – that is a hard word. It means confession of sin, a moral U-turn in life from self to Christ. That is not satisfying to the ego of the moral secularist who wants to credit himself for moral development. Jesus did not preach reformation–self-improvement – but transformation - God-wrought change.

D. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO THE RICH.

Who are the rich? Those who have made things their god. Men are more expert in gadgets than they are of God. The greedy and grasping hand has replaced the open and giving hand. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life", calls for the expenditure of extravagant sums of money, only to leave man's soul dulled and nagging. Said Jesus, *"Watch and guard yourself against the spirit which is always wanting more; for even if a man has an abundance his life does not come from his possessions."* (Luke 12:15, Barclay) The rich young ruler went away sorrowfully because he was not willing completely to release his grip on things.

E. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO MEN OF CAUTION AND EASE.

Jesus did not trick any man into following Him. He made it clear that total self-denial and cross-bearing were essential in following Him. He did not promise ease and fortune. Jesus said to one who told Christ that he would follow Him wherever Christ would go: *" the foxes have dens, the birds of the air have places to roost, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."* (Luke 9:68, Barclay) Jesus wanted a

potential follower seriously to consider the high cost of discipleship. After considering the high cost and choosing to follow Christ, he must throw caution and comfort to the winds.

F. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO MAN OF WORLDLY CARE.

"He (Jesus) said to another man, '*Follow Me!*' "*Lord', I he said, 'let me go first and bury my father.' He said to him, 'Let the dead bury the dead. Bit do you go and tell abroad the news of the Kingdom of God.'*" (Luke 9:59, 60) What the answer of the man probably means is this; "I will not follow you until my father is dead." It was oftentimes the custom for a young man to remain at home to care for his father and eventually bury his father. Jesus is an offense to many because He calls for immediate decision which involves an inconvenient break with one's present circumstances and seeming commitments. Many want someday to follow Christ – at a more convenient season – but not now. "The point that Jesus was making is that in everything there is a crucial moment; if that moment is missed the thing most likely will never be done at all." (Barclay's Luke, pg. 133) It is said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Decisions are hard to make. It is easy to procrastinate. Christ demands a decision, and therefore He offends.

G. JESUS IS A GREAT OFFENSE TO THE MAN WHO WANTS TO REVERT TO THE PAST.

Jesus' command is an Upward – Onward command. One man said to Jesus, "Lord, I will follow you, but let me first say good-bye to the folk at home." Jesus said to him, *"No man who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is the right kind of man for the Kingdom of God."* (Luke 9:61, 62) Jesus demands that we live ever in the present – in our testimonies, in our hope, in our methods. No ploughman can plow a straight furrow unless he keeps his eyes on the goal. So, a Christian must keep his eyes on the future goal. He dare not look over his shoulder or live in the past or sit upon the laurels of past achievements. Jesus' call is not to complacency but to greater commitment.

CONCLUSION

Jesus made it clear that those fish which are useless, offensive, and bad will be cast out. Jesus wills to save all men, but those who refuse to follow Christ, bring judgment upon themselves. *"He that believeth on him (Christ) is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."* (John 3:18) Not only as a God-rejecter condemned in this life because of his refusal of Life, but h e will be eternally rejected – separated from the presence of God hereafter. *"The angels will come, and they will*

separate the evil from the righteous, and they will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there." **(Matthew 13:50)**

Prepare to meet thy God! Repent of your sins, confess them to God, and seek forgiveness. Believe from your heart in Christ, which means commitment to Him. Receive Him into your heart and let Him become the Lord of your life!

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 32

SUBJECT: **GOD'S EQUAL REWARDS TO LABORERS!**

TEXT: ***"By grace are ye saved."*** **(Ephesians 2:8a)**

SCRIPTURE: ***"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. [2]He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. "About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' "'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. [11]When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? [14]Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."*** **(Matthew 20:1-16)**

INTRODUCTION

The story of the labourers in the vineyard teaches some important lessons about God, man, and rewards.

PROPOSITION

This parable especially teaches us lessons regarding rewards.

I. GOD'S REWARD IS BASED ON GRACE, NOT ON WORKS

II. GOD'S REWARD IS BASED ON FAITHFULNESS TO OPPORTUNITY

CONCLUSION

Salvation is by grace, based on God's mercy and love. All who accept God's grace will live together in heaven, equally and forever.

CHAPTER 32

INTRODUCTION

The story of the labourers in the vineyard teaches some important lessons about God, man, and rewards. According to strict justice, the man who worked twelve hours should have gotten more money than the man who worked only one hour. However, Jesus used this rather shocking story to cause men to listen to the real lessons which the parable seeks to teach.

PROPOSITION

This parable especially teaches us lessons regarding rewards. (1) God's reward is based on grace, not on works; (2) God's reward is based on faithfulness to opportunity.

I. GOD'S REWARD IS BASED ON GRACE, NOT ON WORKS

Both the man who worked one hour and the man, who worked twelve hours, got one penny. And so it is in the spiritual realm. The man who has labored for an entire lifetime for God, and the man who is a death-bed repentant, each gets heaven as his reward. To each man, heaven will be a place of unsurpassed joy and uncompetitive fellowship. The Scripture does not speak of levels of heaven, with one level given to one man and another level given to another man. All Christians will dwell in blessed fellowship together and forever.

The scripture says, *"For my grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast."* (Ephesians 2:8, 9, RSV) Striving to earn God's favor and merit one's salvation leads to pride, and pride and boasting is the root of all sin. Man cannot save himself, for God's favor can only be gained by presenting a perfect life to Him. The only perfect life is Christ; therefore only as man is hid in Christ and clothed with Christ's garments of righteousness, can man gain God's favor and salvation. Furthermore, sin is not ultimately a transgression against law, but a transgression against love. Theoretically speaking, when one breaks a law, he can pay for his transgression by accepting the law's penalty. However, one can never pay for a transgression against love. One who transgresses against love must simply seek the forgiveness of the one against whose love he has sinned. No amount of work can pay the penalty of the sin against love. Grace alone can forgive. And so it is with God. No amount of works can merit God's forgiveness, for it is love that has been sinned against. Grace alone can meet man's need for forgiveness. So man is not saved on the basis of how long he has served God, but on the basis of God's grace. Therefore, the thief on the cross who repented in his dying hour is just as saved as any of Christ's apostles who served him many years. Said Billy Graham, "When I get to the gates of heaven, I am not going to say 'Let

me in for I have preached to large crowds of people,' but I will say, 'Let me in for I have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.'"

John Wesley trod several roads before he found the road that led to peace with God. He tried the road of mysticism and withdrawal. He felt he could find peace with God if he found a place of seclusion from men and society. He therefore went to the American wilderness of Georgia, but he finally came back to England still filled with inner turmoil. John Wesley trod the road of legalism but found no peace. He sought to gain God's favor through a rigorous discipline of his time, money, and interests. He carefully divided his time, gave liberally, and engaged in religious activities such as prayer, reading, and fasting with great zeal. Wesley did not find peace with God through legalism. Wesley also failed to find peace in the ways of ritualism; careful observance of Church rituals and ceremonies or ordinances. Wesley's great mind of reason did not give his questing heart peace either. The ways of reason, as well as the ways of withdrawal, legalism, and ritualism were all ways of human effort – works instead of grace. Wesley learned that it was not by works of righteousness which man performs, but by the sheer grace and mercy of God, that man is saved. He understood well the relationship between faith and works as preached by Paul and James. Man is not saved by works, but only by grace, but the saved man will perform works of love as a demonstration of his faith and as an expression of gratitude to God for salvation.

Paul's letter to Titus (Titus 3:3-7) is a clear description of salvation by grace. ***"For we too were once senseless, disobedient, misguided, slaves to all kinds of desires and pleasures, living in maliciousness and envy, detestable ourselves, and hating each other. But when the goodness and the love to men of God our Saviour appeared, it was not by works wrought in righteousness, which we ourselves had done, but by His own mercy that He saved us. That saving act was made effective to us through that washing, through which there comes to us the rebirth and the renewal which are the work of the Holy Spirit, whom He richly poured out upon us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And the aim of all this was that we might be put into a right relationship with God through His grace, and so enter into possession of eternal life, for which we have been taught to hope."*** **(Barclay, Titus 3:3-7)**

We see in this passage that it is God's initiative – His mercy, goodness, and love – that produces man's salvation. Salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit – not man's work – and heaven is God's reward, given on an equal basis to all who accept God's grace.

II. GOD'S REWARD IS BASED ON FAITHFULNESS TO OPPORTUNITY

This parable may also be looked at in terms of reward for service to God. If so it had a special meaning to Jesus' apostles when it was first spoken. "Is is in one sense a warning to the disciples. It is as if Jesus said to them, 'You have received the great privilege of coming into the Christian Church and fellowship very early and very

soon, right at the beginning. The time will come when, in the later days, others will come in. You must not claim a special honour and a special place because you were Christians before they were. All men, no matter when they come are equally precious and valuable to God.'" (Barclay's Matthew, v. 2, pgs. 246, 247) God has no respect to persons. God has no favorites and does not base honour upon seniority. All who come to Christ – be they early-comers or latecomers – are precious to Christ. In fact, the new and latecomers may well have many lessons to teach the early-comers. There is so many times a freshness, vitality, and radiance about new Christians which can give life to older Christians who sometimes become too satisfied with status quo. New methods and new ideas oftentimes come from new Christians. The Christian of the eleventh hour has just as great of a reward as the Christian of the first hour if each used his opportunity to the fullest. Reward is based on faithfulness to opportunity. The worker of the eleventh hour did not have the same opportunity that the man of the first hour had. However, the eleventh-hour worker used his opportunity to the full just as the first-hour worker. Both received reward according to their faithfulness in opportunity – a penny, equal reward.

This same principle can be applied to the reward received by a short life lived for Christ in comparison to the reward received by a long life lived for Christ. Should not the person who lives many years for Christ receive a greater reward than the person who lives a few years for Christ? It is true that the Bible teaches a judgment of rewards and evaluation of works. However, this judgment of rewards will be based on faithfulness to opportunity. John and Betty Stam were a young missionary couple who were martyred for Christ by the Communists, only a short time after they had arrived for missionary service in China. After receiving word of the martyrdom, John's younger brother wrote this comforting letter: "Many people would call our loss of Betty and John a terrible tragedy that should fill us with misery and despair. But I do not see it in this way, because I am a Christian and can see God's hand behind it all. Instead of throwing us into despondency, it fills us with greater trust in God, and greater determination to serve Him with our lives. We do not see the meaning of it all, now, but some day we shall understand. In God's work the value of a life lived for Him is measured not by length but by quality of service, and by the fulfillment of His purposes for that life. Surely His purposes were fulfilled in Betty and John, and are being fulfilled: so their service was completed." (Mrs. Howard Taylor, The Triumph of John and Betty Stam, pg. 115)

This same principle – reward based on faithfulness to opportunity – can be applied in another way. Complete faithfulness in a small context is rewarded just as much as faithfulness in a large context. "He (God) gave to D.L. Moody the opportunity of a waiting nation, of two nations, and when his day's work was done, he had his penny, because he was gloriously faithful to his opportunity. There is a woman somewhere among the hills and mountains, poor, struggling, striving, but she has two children, and she puts her life into the business of training them for God. We do not know her. We never heard of her, not even in the columns of the religious press, but she has gone. Her children have grown up; she has gone on. She got her penny!" (G. C. Morgan, Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord, pg. 115)

Unto whom much is given, much will be required. Unto whom little is given, little will be required. But both, if they have used their opportunities, will receive the same reward. "If I were doing something that I felt was worthwhile, I might feel like going ahead', said a boy who was doing routine work on a small job. An older fellow workman laughed at him. 'Listen, boy', he said, 'in the days when wagons were as common a sight as cars are now, there was an old saying that the little front wheel of a wagon traveled just as far as the big hind wheel, only it had to turn around oftener.' He said, 'That goes for your work, Bob. It may not look big and important, but its work that needs doing. The shop couldn't do without it, any more than the wagon could do without the little front wheels. Don't you despise your work, boy, nor get discouraged because it isn't bigger. It helps the shop get there with its total output, just the same as the big jobs do', and he nodded as he saw the discontent fade from Bob's face and a smile of satisfaction take its place...The little wheels get there as fast and as well as the big ones." (Rosell, pg. 66) Said Mr. Hudson Taylor, the great missionary, "A little thing is a little thing, but faithfulness in a little thing is a great thing." "There are no 'little' people or 'big' people in God's Kingdom. There are only people who are faithful or unfaithful to their opportunities. He who is faithful in the little task is just as important to God as he who is faithful in the big tasks. Be faithful to your opportunities. (Mrs. Howard Taylor, The Triumph of John and Betty Stam, pg. 96)

Faithfulness to opportunity – regardless of the opportunity – has its reward. "Our talents may be few, these may be small, but unto him is due our best, our all."

THE MAN WITH THE CONSECRATED CAR

He couldn't speak before a crowd,
He couldn't teach a class.
But when he came to Sunday School,
He brought the folks 'enmasse'.

He couldn't sing to save his life;
In public he couldn't pray.
Bur always his 'jalopy" was just
Crammed on each Lord's Day.

And although he could not sing,
Nor teach, nor lead in prayer,
He listened well, he had a smile, and
He was always there.

With all the others whom he brought,
Who lived both near and far –

And God's work prospered – for he
Had a consecrated car.
(Rosell, No. 131)

CONCLUSION

The parable of the workers in the vineyard has important lessons for every Christian. No one dare think that he has a better chance of heaven because he has lived a Christian life longer than another person, or that he will be in a higher level in heaven than others who have been a Christian a shorter time. To think such is to revert back to works, based on calculations. Salvation is by grace based on God's mercy and love. All who accept God's grace will live together in heaven, equally and forever.

Secondly, the parable speaks about reward for service. God's reward for service is based on faithfulness to opportunity. Latecomers to Christianity are just as precious to God as early-comers and will receive their reward, based on faithfulness to their opportunity, received ever so late. Opportunity fully received by a life short lived has as great a reward as the reward received for opportunity fully received by a lifelong lived. Faithfulness in a little thing has as great reward as faithfulness in a big thing. God's reward is based on faithfulness to the opportunities given.

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard proclaims the unmerited love of God. That's a source of amazement for some and alarm for others. There are people who find it difficult to believe that God loves them in spite of what they have been or done. Others find it an affront that God does not love them because of what they've been or done. But Jesus is very clear in the parable: The wage is the same for all. But what a wage! Life now and forever: abundant, and glorious throughout eternity. The important thing is not when but that we come into the vineyard.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 33

SUBJECT: TRAGEDY IN THE VINEYARD!

SCRIPTURE: ***"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. [46] They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet."*** **(Matthew 21:33-46)**

TEXT: ***"The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner."*** **(Matthew 21:42)**

INTRODUCTION

To understand the parable better, let us look at the characters in the story, and seek to understand the actions between the characters in the story which culminated in such a dramatic climax.

PROPOSITION

The tragedy of the story is not found only or even chiefly in the death of the Son (although that was a great tragedy), but rather in the misconceptions of the cultivators who thought they could get away with such wicked actions. One can never get away with rebellion against God.

I. CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

A. THERE IS THE VINEYARD, STANDING FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL.
B. THERE WAS THE HOUSEHOLDER WHO REPRESENTS GOD.
C. THERE WERE THE CULTIVATORS, WHO REPRESENT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ISRAEL.
D. THERE WERE THE SERVANTS OF THE HOUSEHOLDER, WHO REPRESENT GOD'S SPECIAL MESSENGERS 0R THE PROPHETS.
E. THERE WAS THE SON OF THE HOUSEHOLDER, WHO REPRESENTS JESUS.

II. CLIMAX OF THE STORY

CONCLUSION

The cultivator's rejected the Son, but they didn't escape punishment. Some today reject the Son, but neither will they escape punishment.

CHAPTER 33

TRAGEDY IN THE VINEYARD!

INTRODUCTION

The background for Jesus' story was realistic at the time Jesus told this story. In troublesome Palestine there were many absentee landlords who entrusted the care of their estates to hired servants. "In the time of Jesus, Palestine was seething with economic unrest; the working people were discontented and rebellious, and the action of the cultivators in seeking to eliminate the son was not by any means impossible." (Barclay, Matthew, pgs. 289, 290)

To understand the parable better, let us look at the characters in the story, and seek to understand the actions between the characters in the story which culminated in such a dramatic climax.

PROPOSITION

The tragedy of the story is not found only or even chiefly in the death of the Son (although that was a great tragedy), but rather in the misconceptions of the cultivators who thought they could get away with such wicked actions. One can never get away with rebellion against God.

I. CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

This parable is an allegory, with each character or detail standing for some person or a group of persons. Let us look at each character in the story.

A. THERE IS THE VINEYARD, STANDING FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL

A familiar picture of the Jewish nation was that of the vineyard. *"The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel."* (Isaiah 5:7) The setting or focus for the parable then was the nation of Israel which had been in existence for more than a thousand years.

B. THERE WAS THE HOUSEHOLDER WHO REPRESENTS GOD

"There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard." **God planted or founded the nation of Israel. Israel was God's chosen people through whom He intended to work out His redemptive purposes. Israel belonged to God and was entrusted with great responsibilities.**

C. THERE WERE THE CULTIVATORS, WHO REPRESENT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ISRAEL

The priests and kings were the officially-recognized leaders of Israel, who were entrusted with oracles and laws of God. It was their

responsibility to teach God's truth to His people and to live righteous and exemplary lives.

D. THERE WERE THE SERVANTS OF THE HOUSEHOLDER, WHO REPRESENT GOD'S SPECIAL MESSENGERS OR THE PROPHETS

The prophets had a very special function. They were specially chosen by God to warn wayward Israel to turn back to God. It was always their duty to remind Israel of God's standard of justice, righteousness, and equity. In the story which Jesus told, it was the prophets who were killed by the religious leaders of Israel, simply because of the rebellious nature of Israel. The cultivators (religious leaders) refused to acknowledge their stewardship, and sought to take things into their own hands. They tried to usurp the authority of God – the Householder. They tried to run Israel their own way, failing to realize that the nation belonged to God, not to them. Their rebellion against God found its expression in the killing of the prophets.

E. THERE WAS THE SON OF THE HOUSEHOLDER, WHO REPRESENTS JESUS

For many centuries God had sent prophets to the nation, only to find that many of the prophets were cruelly persecuted and some killed. *"Surely," reasoned the Householder, "if I send my son to receive the rent, they will respect him." The son was different than the servants. Clearly, Jesus is showing His distinct divinity. As great as the prophets were, Jesus is in a class all to Himself. He is the son - the very Son of God. What did the cultivators or husbandmen do when they saw the son? "They said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and let us take the inheritance.' And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."* (Matthew 21:38, 39, Barclay's)

II. CLIMAX OF THE STORY

What is the climax or result of the evil actions in the vineyard? The action of the Householder is very typical and predictable. *"When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to these cultivators?"* Jesus asked this of His hearers. They replied, *"He will bring these evil men to an evil end, and he will give out the vineyard to other cultivators, who will pay him the fruits at their correct time."*

Did this prediction come true? Indeed it did! The Jewish nation which was guilty of rejection of the Son of God and eventual killing of him, received the harsh judgment of God. In A.D. 70 Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and the Jews were scattered abroad, and remained scattered throughout the world for centuries. They had thought that God was unconditionally obligated to bless Israel, and they tragically found out that they were rejected by God.

The Gentiles – by the Jews considered outcasts – became the recipients of God's grace. The Jews learned that God accepts all men – regardless of nation or race – if they will submit to God's law and accept God's love.

The Jews had rejected God's standards and the essence of God's love which was God's Son. Jesus, whom they had rejected so coldly, was the culmination of the very purpose for which the Israelite nation was called into being by God. "The stone which the builders rejected (which was Jesus), this has become the headstone of the corner (the very culmination of God's plan)."

Talking about stones, Jesus used this same picture to show the futility of man's rebellion against God, whether that rebellion be by Jews or by others. *"And he who falls against the stone will be broken; and it will shatter to powder him on whom it falls."* It is as if Jesus is saying (to put it in modern jargon), "To go against Christ is like batting your head against a stone wall."

The Jews rejected Christ and Christ's death appears tragic, but that is not the real tragedy of the story. The tragedy of the story is found in the rebellion of the cultivators. It is always tragic when a man or a nation thinks it can get along without God, or when a people or person attempts to usurp the authority of God. Rebellion is always tragic within itself, but also because of the results it brings. To rebel against god is to fall against the stone and be broken and eventually shattered to powder when the stone falls on the rebellious one.

Christ is the stone and to go against Christ is to go against the very source of your life. Christ is the Giver and Sustainer of Life; the Giver of all good and perfect gifts. Therefore, to go against Christ is to go against yourself. For a fish to jump out of the water is for the fish to go against itself. The fish is made for the water, and finds its very life within the water. Man is made for God, and man finds his very life in God.

> **1. There are various ways in which man can go against Christ, all of which is like "batting your head against a stone." Some are going against Christ in the form of denial of objective morality. To deny or ignore God's laws which control His universe, is not to destroy the laws but is to destroy the lawbreaker. A retired Methodist bishop once said, "Every time I hear of somebody knocking God, I say, 'Good-by hammer." (Kennedy, <u>Parables,</u> pg. 11)**
>
> **2. Other people are going against Christ by denying all authority, including parental and civil authority. God has established certain authority patterns for the purpose of governing certain relationships and of maintaining human order. Respect for parents is commanded by God and to ignore this command is to get yourself in trouble with God. Respect for civil authority is commanded by God. *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the***

power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." **(Romans 13:1, 2) Like saying that he who goes against God's ordinance will fall against a stone and be broken. It is futile to go against God.**

3. When it comes to immorality, the Scripture states very clearly that he who is unfaithful is not only going against a fellow human being, but is also going against God. ***"Therefore whoever disregards this (standard of purity), disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you."*** **(I Thessalonians 4:8) Like saying, "If you go against God's laws of purity, you are batting your head against a stone wall." You are going against God Himself and you will surely get hurt.**

4. Some people are falling against the stone, (that is, going against Christ), by mere neglect of spiritual matters. Some people seldom read their Bible, pray, talk or think about God, or go to a Church service to give themselves a chance to learn about God. How can people expect to live an abundant life when they neglect spiritual matters? Says the Scriptures: ***"How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"*** **(Hebrews 2:3) The implied answer is, "We shall not escape. We will have a head-on collision with God at the Judgment someday. Christ the Chief Cornerstone will fall on us and we will be shattered to powder. We can neglect God during life, but we can't neglect Him at the Judgment."**

5. Some people are simply trying to forget God altogether, and to do this they are indulging in all sorts of sins, only to find out that their sins don't comfort them but they have a cruel backlash. Like the Irishman who was very fond of his bottle. "Why do you drink so much?" he was asked. "I drink to drown my sorrows," he replied. "And does it work?" came the next question. "No", was the reply "the devils can swim." (Kennedy, <u>Parables,</u> pg, 14) God can even work through drink to show a man the futility of hiding from God. Said David, ***"If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."***

6. Some people are going against Christ by taking refuge in godless philosophies which deny the truth of God. Paul warned Timothy against this: ***"See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit."*** **(Colossians 2:8) Those who persistently refuse to receive God's truth will be condemned to falsehood.** ***"Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."*** **(2 Thessalonians 3:11, 12)**

CONCLUSION

The cultivators rejected the Son, but they didn't escape punishment. Men today reject the Son, but neither will they escape punishment. Men reject Jesus in various ways – denial of objective morality, rebellion against God-ordained authority, indulgence in the sins of the flesh, neglect of spiritual matters, and resort to godless and materialistic philosophies. In these ways men kill the Son, crucifying Him afresh. Will the "cultivators" or God-rejecters escape? Verily Not: ***"He (God) will bring these evil men to an evil end...he (the wicked) who falls against the stone will be broken; and it will shatter to powder him on whom it falls." "Be mindful then...learn your lesson...worship the Lord with reverence; tremble, and kiss the king, lest the Lord be angry and you are struck down in mid course; for his anger flares up in a moment. Happy are all who find refuge in him."*** **(Psalms 2:10-12, NEB)**

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 34

SUBJECT: STORY OF GOOD AND BAD SEEDS!

SCRIPTURE: ***"Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'" 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'***

"Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [3] Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He, who has ears, let him hear. **(Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43)**

TEXT: "Let them grow side by side until harvest time."

INTRODUCTION

On the basis of this common but interesting picture, Jesus draws important spiritual lessons.

PROPOSITION

Let us look at this parable in terms of (1) Sowing of the seed, (2) Growth of the seed, and (3) Harvest of the crop.

I. SOWING OF THE SEED

II. GROTH OF THE SEED

III. HARVEST OF THE SEED

CONCLUSION

In Jesus' story of the good and bad seed, He brings out several important and basic truths: (1) there is an evil power called the devil who has 'squatted' on God's territory – the world and has planted evil seeds – evil men - with an attempt to destroy the good seed – good men. (2) Satan's chief method of deception is imitation – in doctrine and in practice. (3) Christians must carefully guard against evil influence, but must not take the defensive. Rather, Christian need to take the offensive – overcome evil through good and seek the conversion of the wicked. (4) Final Judgment is coming, and Christ the Righteous Judge, will punish the wicked with unquenchable fire, and will regard the righteous with eternal life and light.

CHAPTER 34

STORY OF GOOD AND BAD SEEDS

INTRODUCTION

In Jesus' parable of the good and bad seeds which grew together side by side, Jesus was referring to a fact in wheat agriculture which every Jew well understood. Tares, a weed called bearded darnel, looked identical to wheat in its early stage of growth. Even an expert farmer could not tell the difference between wheat and darnel at this early stage. After the grain and darnel have headed out, there is a distinct and obvious difference between the two plants. By the time a farmer can tell the difference between the two plants, the roots of the darnel have so intertwined with the roots of the wheat that the wheat would be pulled out with the darnel if an attempt was made to pull out the darnel. Therefore the farmer simply waits until harvest time and both are cut together. Because the darnel is slightly poisonous and unpleasant in taste, the darnel grain must be picked out of the wheat grain. This is a tedious but important job performed by the women. The wheat, of course, is saved and the darnel is burned.

On the basis of this common but interesting picture, Jesus draws important spiritual lessons.

PROPOSITION

Let us look at this parable in terms of (1) Sowing of the seed, (2) Growth of the seed, (3) Harvesting of the crop.

I. SOWING OF THE SEED

Jesus explained the meaning of the parable. He said, *"The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world."* (Matthew 13:37, 38) We notice from the parable itself that the field was only intended for good seed. The field belonged to the sower of good seed, and obviously, that means that the field which is the world belongs to the Son. The Scriptures make it clear that the world belongs to the Son. *"Through the Son God made the whole universe and to the Son he has ordained that all creation shall ultimately belong."* (Hebrews 1:2, Phillips) *"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."* (Psalms 24:1) John wrote, *"All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made."* (John 1:3) Paul wrote, *"For by him (the Son) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."* (Colossians 1:16)

The whole world was made by the Son and for the Son, and it is God's intention that the whole field or world be fertile ground for only good seed. God will have all men to be saved. It is not God's will that any in his world be

corrupt seed. God made his world to be the dwelling place of His children, whose lives are to be holy, righteous, and good. God made the world (the field) to be inhabited by righteousness. The good seed is the sons of God's Kingdom. God's purpose was that all should be sons of His Kingdom.

Jesus goes on to give the interpretation to the parable. *"The weeds are the children of the evil one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil."* (Matthew 13:38b-39a) Into God's beautiful field an enemy comes and secretly sows seeds of corruption. That enemy is Satan. Someone said, "The devil is a squatter. A squatter is a man who settles on land he has no right to, and works it for his own advantage." (G. Campbell Morgan, Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord; pg. 51) The Devil has no right to the field. He has subtly crept in and sown seeds of corruption with the intention of destroying the good seed. With great deception and craft, Satan asked Eve, *"Yea, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"* Satan still is deceiving men, and through this deception, sowing evil seeds. This parable teaches us to be on our guard against the enemy. There is a devil who seeks to destroy the good and to advance the evil. Satan has no respect for the good seed of the field. He only desires to destroy it, and he seeks to do this though the instrumentality of the evil seed. Evil men are used of Satan to crowd out good men. Paul exhorted Christians: *"Be not overpowered by evil, but master evil with good."* (Romans 12:21) The Scripture tells us that evil companions corrupt good manners. Christians are not to be intimate with evil but are to shun evil and to cleave to the good.

II. GROWTH OF THE SEED

It was pointed out earlier that the wheat and darnel cannot be told apart in their early growth. They look identical although they are very different. This part of the parable points out to us the method of Satan's deception. It is imitation. Satan's evil seed appears to be the same as the good seed. Satan wants to clothe himself in the garments of righteousness and appear to be an "angel of light." "Satan does not want to build a Church and call it 'The First Church of Satan'. He is far too clever for that. He invades the Sunday school, the youth department, the Christian education program, and even the pulpit." (Christianity Today, January 19, 1968)

Through imitation, Satan can deceive man and pull many into his terrible grip. There are so many false religions and false prophets which are devastatingly dangerous simply because, on the surface, they appear to be genuine. The darnel appears to be genuine wheat and so false doctrine appears to be genuine and true. Satan is the Master Deceiver, and he uses evil men, who appear to be good, in an attempt to destroy the genuinely good seed.

Many false religions use the same terminology as true Christians. Many false teachers refer much to the Bible, but these teachers do not accept the Bible as the only and final word of authority. They accept additional "scriptures" as

their source of authority. Many false teachers speak about Jesus but they do not accept Him as the true, divine, and incarnate son of God. Denying the virgin birth, they deny the deity of Jesus. Describing Him only in terms of a great teacher or wonderful humanitarian, they divest Jesus of his uniqueness, as the Divine Son of God. Many acknowledge that Jesus died, but many also consider this death only to be heroic, not meritorious or redemptive. Thus many despise preaching concerning 'the Blood'. In their theology of man they have dressed man in garments of self-righteousness and denied the existence of sin. Man saves himself, they say, by getting on the 'band wagon' of scientific development and social improvement. Man is ever moving upward and onward on the wings of the evolutionary process. Man climbs up to God instead of God climbing down to man (as Christians assert). The false teacher talks much about morals just as the Christian does, but false teachers espouse relative morals while Christians advocate absolute morals. The false teacher bases his system of morals on the question, "What is meaningful to me?" The Christian bases his system of morals on the question "What is right?" Thus, we see that the darnel and the wheat at first appear to be the same. Satan's method of deception is imitation. False teachers imitate true Christians, both in doctrine and in humanitarian endeavors.

As time goes by, the true wheat and the degenerate wheat (darnel) become increasingly different in appearance. So it is with false and true religion. When one closely and carefully investigates false teachers and doctrines, he learns that the false teaching is very different from the true teaching. The Scriptures exhort Christians to earnestly contend for the true doctrine and faith. Christians are to examine themselves to see if they are in the faith. Wrote Paul: *"Be careful that nobody spoils your faith through intellectualism or high-sounding nonsense. Such stuff is at best founded on men's ideas of the nature of the world, and disregards Christ!"* (Colossians 2:8, Phillips) Jesus warned us of false prophets: *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Does man gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."* (Matthew 7:15-17) When the darnel and the wheat have headed out, there is no mistake then which is wheat and which is darnel. We can know a teaching by the kind of fruit it produces.

III. HARVEST OF THE SEED

What did Jesus say about the harvest? *"The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then, shall the righteous shine*

forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." **(Matthew 13:39)**

This is a description of the fate of the righteous and the wicked. Darnel is good for nothing but to be burned.

Jesus made it clear that God alone is qualified to render just punishment and just reward. *"Let them both grow together until the harvest."* (v. 30) God alone knows the hearts of all men and He alone is absolutely just. The Christian's job is not the job of judgment, but rather it is the job of reconciliation. It is at this point that the illustration from the world of nature breaks down: Once a darnel always a darnel in the physical realm. In the spiritual realm, through the mysterious power of God, darnel can become wheat. In fact, it is the Christian's job to influence the darnel to yield itself unto the power of the Creator who can transform it into wheat. A Christian must grow up side by side with the darnel and seek to overcome the evil with the good. When the servants of the farmer asked if they should pull up the darnel, he replied. "No." When the disciples asked Jesus if they should call down fire from heaven to destroy the disobedient Samaritans, Jesus replied No and told the disciples that they did not know of what spirit they spoke. *"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good."* (Romans 12:19-21)

The fact still remains, however, that judgment does come eventually and finally. Evil will be punished and good will be rewarded. The punishment of the wicked will be most tragic – fire, weeping, gnashing of teeth. Whatever this means, it is a description of a horrible existence away from the presence of God! Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, as He was speaking of false prophets: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Matthew 7:19) John the Revelator wrote, concerning the Judgment of God, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelations 20:15)

The fate of the righteous is much different. *"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."* (Matthew 13:43a) Many have testified to the glory of heaven in their dying moments. Jordon Antie: "Eternity rolls up before me like a sea of glory." Martha McCrackin: "How bright the room! How full of angels!" S.B. Bangs: "The sun in setting; mine is rising. I go from this bed to a crown. Farewell." (Shoe-Leather Faith, No. 141)

CONCLUSION

In Jesus' story of the good and bad seed, He brings out several important and basic truths: (1) there is an evil power called the devil who has 'squatted' on God's territory – the world - and has planted evil seeds – evil men - with an attempt to

destroy the good seed – good men. (2) Satan's chief method of deception is imitation – in doctrine and in practice. (3) Christians must carefully guard against evil influence, but must not take the defensive. Rather, Christians need to take the offensive – overcome evil through good and seek the conversion of the wicked. (4) Final Judgment is coming, and Christ the Righteous Judge will punish the wicked with unquenchable fire, and will reward the righteous with eternal life and light.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 35

SUBJECT: THE TRAGEDY OF UNPREPARDNESS!

SCRIPTURE: ***"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' " 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.*** **Matthew 25:1-13**

Text: ***"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."*** **(Matthew 25:6)**

INTRODUCTION

The wedding ceremony would last for a week's time. It was a time of great festivities in which all of the friends, who were prepared when the bridegroom came, enjoyed a great time. Those who were unprepared when the bridegroom came were barred from the house of festivities.

PROPOSITION

Let us look at the possible meanings of Jesus' parable, and then note the positive applications of the parable.

I. POSSIBLE MEANINGS
- **A. UNPREPAREDNESS OF THE JEWS**
- **B. UNPREPAREDNESS IN THE HOUR OF DEATH**
- **C. UNPREPAREDNESS FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**

II. POSITIVE APPLICATION
- **A. HOLY SPIRIT CAN'T BE ACQUIRED WHEN THE END HAS COME.**
- **B. HOLY SPIRIT CAN'T BE BORROWED OR BOUGHT.**

CONCLUSION

Prepare now to meet thy God, for there will be no opportunity when the angel of death robs you of life, or when the trumpet of God shall sound and Christ shall come again.

CHAPTER 35

THE TRAGEDY OF UNPREPAREDNESS!

INTRODUCTION

The story of the bride and bridegroom is most interesting and different from anything that we know in Western culture. The bride with her bridal party, waited for the coming of the bridegroom. The bride did not know for certain which exact night or day the bridegroom would come. Therefore, careful watchfulness was required on the part of the bridal party. An observer explains of a modern-day Palestinian wedding, "One of the great things to do, if you could, at a middle-class wedding in Palestine, was to catch the bridal party napping. So the bridegroom comes unexpectedly, and sometimes in the middle of the night; it is true that he is required by public opinion to send a man along the street to shout: 'Behold! The bridegroom is coming!' but that may happen at any time; so the bridal party have to be ready to go out into the street at any time to meet him, whenever he chooses to come...Other important points are that no one is allowed on the streets after dark without a lighted lamp, and also that, when the bridegroom has once arrived, and the door has been shut, late-comers to the ceremony are not admitted." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 353) The wedding ceremony would last for a week's time. It was a time of great festivities in which all of the friends that were prepared when the bridegroom came, enjoyed a great time. Those who were unprepared when the bridegroom came were barred from the house of festivities. Such is the background of Jesus' parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were prepared for the bridegroom and five of whom were not prepared for the bridegroom.

PROPOSITION

Let us look at the possible meanings of Jesus' parable, and then note the positive applications of the parable.

I. POSSIBLE MEANINGS

A. UNPREPAREDNESS OF THE JEWS

The immediate meaning of the parable had direct reference to the Jews who were unprepared when the Messiah came to earth. For centuries the prophets had written about the coming Messiah, and Israel's history itself was elaborate preparation for Christ's coming. However, when He came, His own people failed to recognize Him and even rejected and destroyed Him. Wrote John: *"He came to his own home, and his own people received him not."* (John 1:11, RSV)

B. UNPREPAREDNESS IN THE HOUR OF DEATH

Some have interpreted this parable to mean unpreparedness to meet God when death comes. It is good that no man knows his hour of

death. If one knew the time of his death, he would despair and give up all interest and effort in living. "To take away the uncertainty about the time of death would have a tendency (which the best men would resist, but to which multitudes of men would yield) to give the bulk of life up to indifference, recklessness, and crowd the last few months or days with an artificial religiousness that would have little power to prepare the soul for its great change. The only real way to 'Prepare to meet thy God' is to live with thy God so that to meet Him shall be nothing strange." (Phillips Brooks, The Law of Growth, pg. 55)

A man should live every day, not preoccupied with thoughts of death, but prepared to meet God if death should snuff his life out that day.

C. UNPREPAREDNESS FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

At the conclusion of the parable Jesus said, *"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."* (v. 13) The bride and bride's party did not know the exact time when the bridegroom would come, therefore, they were required to be always prepared for his coming. Wrote Peter, "*But the Day of the Lord will come; it will come, unexpected as a thief. On that day the heavens will disappear with a great rushing sound, the elements will disintegrate in flames, and the earth with all that is in it will be laid bare. Since the whole universe is to break up in this way, think what sort of people you ought to be, what devout and dedicated lives you should live! Look eagerly for the coming of the Day of God and work to hasten it on.*" (II Peter 3:10-12a) The five wise virgins in the bridal party represent the people who are prepared for and expecting Christ's Second Coming.

II. POSITIVE APPLICATION

These are the various meanings which have been given for this parable. The common factor in each interpretation is preparedness. Why were the five foolish virgins not prepared? Simply because they did not possess oil for their lamps. No one was allowed on the streets without a lighted lamp. Therefore, when the bridegroom came, the five foolish virgins were unprepared and thus, missed out on the week's marriage ceremonies. Spiritually speaking, oil represents the Holy Spirit. To be prepared, one must have the oil of the Holy Spirit which produces Christ-like character. This parable positively teaches us basic truths concerning the oil of the Holy Spirit which produces Christ-like character.

If the Jews would have possessed the oil of the Holy Spirit, they would have recognized the truth when they saw it. They would not have nailed the Son of God to the cross, but they would have accepted and served Him gladly. They would have been like the worshipping Simeon who declared upon seeing the baby Jesus, *"Mine eyes have seen thy salvation."* (Luke 1:30)

If a man has the oil of the Holy Spirit, he is prepared for death. Death does not catch such a person off-guard, but death merely makes heaven on earth, heaven forever.

If a man has the oil of the Holy Spirit, he is prepared for Christ's Second Coming. Indeed, he looks forward to it. The Christian *says "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."* (Revelations 22:20b)

This parable teaches us certain basic truths concerning preparedness. Preparedness depends upon the possession of the Holy Spirit; therefore we shall speak of preparedness in terms of the Holy Spirit.

A. HOLY SPIRIT CAN'T BE ACQUIRED WHEN THE END HAS COME.

If one does not have the oil of the Holy Spirit which produces Christ-like character when death comes or when Christ comes again, it will be too late. Tennyson took the parable and turned it into a poem:

"Late, late so late! And dark the night and chill!
Late, late so late! But we can enter still.
Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now.

No light had we; for that we do repent;
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now.

No light: so late ! and dark and chill the night!
O let us in so that we may find the light!
Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! Ye cannot enter now."
(Barclay's Matthew, pgs. 354-355)

One can find Christ in the last hour and be saved, just like the thief on the cross. However, one cannot produce character in an hour's time. It takes a life-time to develop Christ-like character. It was the Holy Spirit which the five foolish virgins failed to possess. Therefore, they were barred from the entrance into the marriage festivities.
The five foolish virgins represent religious people without Christ in their hearts. Paul described such people as those who have a form of religion but who deny the power thereof. They are those who have the outward appearance of genuine religion – Christian dress, Christian jargon, and Christian theology – but who do not have present readiness

and assurance. Some religious people are like the "patient" described in The Screwtape Letters. "A chief devil is writing to his nephew, who is undertaking to wreck a certain human whom he calls his "patient". He writes in this fashion: 'I hear your patient has become religious. Don't let that bother you unless he has become altogether religious. If he is only partially religious, he will be just as harmless and a lot more fun." (Quoted by Chappell in Meet These Men, pg. 41)

The foolish virgins have failed to submit to the Holy Spirit, which submission would have given light and power. "At the end there will be division, and the Church and the Bridegroom will be revealed, while those who have had lamps, and attitudes, and expectations, intellectually, but have made no living response; to them He will say, 'I know you not.'" (G. Campbell Morgan, Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord, pg. 151)

B. HOLY SPIRIT CAN'T BE BORROWED OR BOUGHT

When the virgins were caught unprepared by the coming of the bridegroom, the virgins cried out, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps have gone out." The wise answered, "No; we cannot do that in case there is not enough for us and for you." It is not within the power of a Christian to give the Holy Spirit to an unbeliever. The Holy Spirit cannot be borrowed. That is to say, in other words, that God has no grandchildren, only children. A parent cannot loan or give the Holy Spirit to his child. A parent can give a child a Christian heritage, but he cannot give the child a Christian experience. The child must have the Holy Spirit for himself. He must personally accept God himself.

As a child I trusted that, because my mother was a Christian, I was also a Christian. Finally the frightening realization struck me that I had never personally accepted Christ as my own Saviour. I had to repent of my sins and give my life to God myself. Clovis Chappell recounts the following sad experience: "I had to see a young fellow die in terror a few years ago. That does not often happen. Death generally brings its own anesthetic. But this young chap was terribly afraid. Beside him sat his Christian mother. She would have gladly given him her very all, but she could not take her high faith and courage and put into his trembling hand. Though his lamp was rapidly going out, she could not give him of her oil. Life's supreme treasures, I repeat, cannot thus be transferred." (Chappell, Sermons From the Parables, pg. 200)

W. E. Sangster gives evidence to this truth. "He points out that in his country the prison population is increasing. 'Is it only a coincidence', he asks, 'that the generation which saw the churches empty saw the

prisons full?' Dr. Sangster gives a personal incident; he says a man denied that connection to him: 'The churches have been emptying for more than a generation. Only of recent years have the prisons been over-full.' 'I know the answer to that', Pastor Sangster says. 'The generation just past lived on the moral capital of its predecessors – a moral capital built up by the attendance at church, and respect for spiritual things. Now the capital is exhausted.' Sangster observes that the exhaustion of moral capital may be more serious than Britain's loss of monetary capital then continues: 'The bill usually comes into the third generation. How often I have heard young people, going wrong, say in scorn of Church: "My parents were decent and they had nothing to do with Church." Was it any good pointing out to them that their parents were often living on the fine past of their forebears and that the account was now overdrawn!" (Alive To God Through Prayer, pg. 55)

The Holy Spirit cannot be bought. The foolish virgins went to buy oil, but they were unsuccessful. There is an opinion among many people that everything has its price. In the early church, Simon the sorcerer thought that he could purchase the Holy Spirit with money. "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the *Holy Ghost was given, he offered them (Peter and John) money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive; that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."* (Acts 8:18-23)

CONCLUSION

Preparedness is the lesson of this parable. There are signs which read "Be prepared" – "Be prepared to stop", "Be prepared to meet a financial crisis, so have a savings account and plenty of life and health insurance". If we prepare for the future, physically speaking, how much more should we be prepared spiritually speaking! Prepare now to meet thy God, for there will be no opportunity when the angel of death robs you of life, or when the trumpet of God shall sound and Christ shall come again! Prepare Now! Don't put it off! *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"* (Hebrews 2:3a)

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 36

SUBJECT: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER!

SCRIPTURE: ***"Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness[1] he will get up and give him as much as he needs. "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*** **" (Luke 11:5-13)**

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'" "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" "And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" **" (Luke 18:1-8)**

TEXT: ***"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."*** **(Luke 18:1b)**

INTRODUCTION

In the first parable, the householder finally got up and granted the request of the persistent friend. In the second parable, again the poor widow, because of her persistence, was finally granted justice by the unfair judge.

PROPOSITION

Let us seek to discover from these two stories, some important truth regarding prayer.

I. CONTRASTS
   A. INDIFFERENT DELAY CONTRASTED TO SPEEDY RESPONSE
   B. SELFISH ACTION CONTRASTED TO SELF-GIVING ACTION

II. SIMILARITIES
   A. MOTIVATION OF ACTION – URGENCY AND DESPERATION
   B. MOVEMENT IN ACTION – WENT DIRECTLY TO SOURCE OF HELP

C. CONDITIONS
   A. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO MAN'S NEEDS
   B. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO MAN'S PERSISTENCE
   C. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL
   D. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO GOD'S TIME
   E. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO GOD'S WAY

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the parable of the Unjust Judge, Jesus asked the probing question *"But when the Son of Man comes will He find faith on earth*?" (Luke 18:8) Jesus must have realized the real possibility of Christians to lose heart and prove unfaithful in the test of time. One thing that will keep one from growing weary is a heart-felt declaration in our prayers of 'Thy will be done', according to God's own time and way. In praying, we must follow the example of the widow and the host. Unlike the judge and the householder, we must realize that God is Personal and speedy in response and unselfish.

CHAPTER 36

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER!

INTRODUCTION

The host in Jesus' parable was embarrassed because he did not have enough food to set before his guest. To avoid the heat of the midday sun, travelers usually travelled late in the evening. Late at night the host went to the house of a friend and knocked on the door. This was obviously a great emergency for when once a door of a house was shut, it was shut for good. During the day the door was open all of the time and people could come and go at will, but at night no householder wanted to be disturbed. The houses of those days were small and not only did the large families snuggle close together on their mats to keep warm, but also the animals were brought into the house at night. Great inconvenience was caused by having to arise in the middle of the night. However, it was in this situation that the host knocked on his friend's door with shameless persistence. Finally the householder got up and granted the request to the friend.

The story of the unjust judge reveals truths about prayer also. There were some judges during Jesus' day who were notorious for fraud and robbery. Some seemed to have no conscience at all but would "pervert justice for a dish of meat." (Barclay's Luke, pg. 231) The poor widow was defenseless and had no hope of receiving justice from the judge. However, simply because of her persistence, she was granted justice.

PROPOSITION

Let us seek to discover from these two stories, some important truth regarding prayer.

I. CONTRASTS

The real point in the parables is that God is different than either the householder or the judge. Let us see this contrast in two main ways.

A. INDIFFERENT DELAY CONTRASTED TO SPEEDY RESPONSE

When the host knocked on the door, how did the householder respond? "Don't bother me; the door has already been shut and my children are in bed with me; I can't get up and supply you." (Barclay) Only after some persuasion, did the householder finally grant the request. In contrast to this householder, God lovingly grants the requests of His children. If an earthly father grants gifts to his children, how much more will the Heavenly Father grant good gifts to His children – especially the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13)? "If a churlish and unwilling householder can in the end be coerced by a friend's shameless persistence into

giving him what he needs, how much more will God who is a loving Father supply all His children's needs?" (Barclay's Luke, pg. 149)

How did the judge respond to the widow's request for justice? "For some time he refused." But afterwards he finally gave into the woman. In contrast to the response of the judge's indifferent delay, God's response to the need of His children will be speedy. *"Do you suppose God, patient as he is, will not see justice done for his chosen, who appeal to him day and night? I assure you he will not delay in seeing justice done."* (Luke 18:7, 6a, Phillips)

God immediately responds to the pray–er's request, although the pray-er may not realize it. God has promised to answer: *"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in troubles; I will deliver him, and honour him."* (Psalms 91:15) This verse, just quoted, is the answer to the earnest pray-er: *"Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me; in the day when I call answer me speedily.'* (Psalms 102:2) God does promise to answer speedily: *"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."* (Isaiah 65:24)

Some may ask: "If God knows my needs and is willing to supply my needs as well as the needs of others, why pray for myself or for others?" There is at least two answers to that question: (1) "The point of prayer is to get God. Answers are most meaningful when they are thought of least; prayer is most meaningful when God is thought of most." (Alive To God Through Prayer, pg. 127) (2) God answers prayer with us, not for us. Thus, prayer is a co-operative endeavor. A person prays to know how he can help answer his own prayers, and while helping to answer his own prayers, he becomes a better person. "The end of the whole process of prayer is not the prayer but the person." (Abundant Living, pg. 230)

Thus, God speedily responds to our prayers, but God expects continued cooperation from us in seeing the prayers answered. Above all, God's primary interest in our praying is that we may know God better and become a better and more responsible person.

B. SELFISH ACTION CONTRASTED TO SELF-GIVING ACTION

Why did the householder respond finally to the man who persistently knocked on his door? Simply because: he didn't want to be bothered any longer. Why did the judge finally respond to the widow? "Even though I neither fear God nor respect man, because she bothers me, I will vindicate this widow lest by her constant coming she exhausts me." The action of both the householder and the judge was from selfish

motives. They no longer wanted to be bothered by what they considered a nuisance.

God is so different! God never considers man or his prayers a nuisance. He invites us to the throne of grace and mercy. He tells us to come boldly before the throne of grace. "We are not wringing gifts from an unwilling God, but we are going to one who knows our needs better than we know them ourselves, and whose heart towards us is the heart of generous love." Luke, pg. 149) Said Jesus, *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* God does not grudgingly give us gifts, but gladly and willingly. God is not cold, calculating, impersonal, and selfish. Rather, God is warm, personal, sympathetic, and self-giving.

"Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.

Our fellow suff'rer yet retains
A fellow-feeling of our pains;
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, His agonies and cries.

In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of sorrows has a part;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the suff'rer sends relief."
(Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 170)

II. SIMILARITIES

We have noted the contrast between the actions of the householder and judge and the actions of God. Let us now note the similarities between the actions of the host and widow and the actions of the true pray–er.

A. MOTIVATION OF ACTION – URGENCY AND DESPERATION

The host went to the householder and the widow went to the judge out of a sense of desperation. Both experienced an urgent need. Both realized that they needed outside help, that they were helpless and destitute within themselves.

So it is in prayer. The motivation of prayer should be a sense of urgency and desperation. Wrote James: *"Tremendous power is made available through a good man's earnest prayer."* (James 5:16) Earnestness in praying comes about when one realizes his total

dependence upon God. "We can only guarantee the reality and sincerity of our desire by the passion with which we pray." (Barclay's Luke, pg. 149)

Urgency and desperation go into one's prayers when he realizes that he is unable to carry out the Kingdom responsibilities with human effort alone. "Not by might or by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Human ingenuity or human energy can never alone accomplish God's will. Total dependence on God in prayer is necessary. This realization creates great urgency and desperation in prayer. Said George Whitefield the famous English evangelist, "O Lord, give me souls, or take my soul!" Martin Luther prayed thus on the night preceding his appearance before the Diet of Worms: "Do Thou, my God, stand by me against all the world's wisdom and reason. Oh, do it! Thou must do it. Stand by me, thou true, eternal God!" (Rosell, No. 64) Each of these men expressed deep earnestness and urgent desperation in their prayers.

There is oftentimes urgency and desperation in prayer during times of personal or national crisis. A classic example of this is Lincoln's urgency in prayer during the Civil War. "During the most hectic days of the Civil War, one of President Lincoln's White House guests had difficulty sleeping. One night, just before the Battle of Bull Run, he heard low tones proceeding from a private room where the President slept. He got up, found the door open and walked in. There he saw Lincoln kneeling before an open Bible, and he caught the words: 'O Thou God that heard Solomon in the night when he prayed and cried for wisdom, hear me! I cannot lead this people; I cannot guide the affairs of this nation, without Thy help. I am poor and weak and sinful. O God, thou didst hear Solomon when he cried for wisdom – hear me and save this nation!'" (Roswell, No. 60)

The widow and the host were urgent and desperate in their requests; so must every pray-er be in his requests to God.

B. MOVEMENT IN ACTION – WENT DIRECTLY TO SOURCE OF HELP

Both the host and the widow went to their respective sources of help – one to the householder friend and the other to the judge. They were not satisfied to become paralyzed with fear or to be overcome with anxiety and self-pity. They went directly, personally, and boldly to the ones who had the ability and the resources to help.

How sad it is that so many do not follow the example of the widow and the host. If the host and widow went boldly to unwilling sources of help, how much more Christians ought to go to the willing and loving source of help which is God. God's source of help is unlimited and all-

powerful. And yet there are still those who will wallow in self-pity, worry, fear, and doubt.

"O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer."

Every Christian may go personally and boldly into the Holy of Holies to make his requests known unto God. The energy wasted on worry should be transferred into prayer energy. Prayer is the key that unlocks the door to God. Use it often! Make prayer a practice of life, both in act and in attitude.

III. CONDITIONS

Mostly by implication, we learn from Jesus' parables on prayer some truths regarding conditions in praying. The answers to prayer are controlled according to certain standards and conditions.

A. Answered According To Man's Needs

The host persisted so long in his knocking that finally the householder arose and gave him as much as he needed. God answers according to needs – not necessarily luxuries. Paul wrote, *"My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:19) Whether our need is physical or material or spiritual, God is willing to supply the need out of His exhaustless storehouse of resources. God, however, gives us what we need, not always what we want.

PRAYER ANSWERED

I asked for strength that I might achieve;
He made me weak that I might obey.
I asked for health that I might do greater things;
I was given grace that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy;
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I received nothing that I asked for, all that I hoped for,
My prayer was answered.
(Rosell, No. 212)

B. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO MAN'S PERSISTENCE

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." **(Luke 11:9) Continue to ask, seek, and knock.**

"'...yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' " **(Luke 18:5) "Widow keeps bothering me."**

C. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL

In the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to His Father, "Not my will, but thine be done." That was hard for Jesus to pray, but He prayed it.

"God is a Christ-like God; His actions are Christ-like actions; and He can answer prayer only if the thing desired is in accord with Christ. That is what Jesus meant when He said, 'If ye shall ask any thing in my name...' – in my character, according to my spirit. Don't try to get God to do something that isn't Christ-like. He can't, for He can't do something against His own nature." (Abundant Living, pg. 229)

In prayer, we must always submit our wills to God's will. Thomas a Kempis, (1379-1471), said, "Give what Thou wilt and how much Thou wilt, and when Thou wilt. Set me where Thou wilt and deal with me in all things as Thou wilt." Dwight L. Moody prayed, "Use me then, my Saviour, for whatever purpose and in whatever way Thou mayest require. Here is my poor heart, an empty vessel; fill it with Thy grace." (Rosell, No. 64)

A father tries to give to a child, not always what the child wants, but what is best for the child. Sometimes earthly parents are fallible in this respect, but God never is fallible. "The story is told of a minister who purchased skates for his small golden-haired daughter. He had come home late and found pinned to his pillow a note that touched him deeply: "Dear Daddy, please, O please buy me a pair of skates.' This was the climax of a long series of requests for skates, and right then and there he went out to look for a pair. Though it was late he finally found a store open, made his purchase, and returned home to put the skates by his sleeping daughter. In the morning she went bounding into her daddy even before he was awake, threw her arms around his neck and expressed her joy. She hurried out of the house to try her new skates. But an hour or so later, during the father's breakfast, neighbors brought in his little girl, quite dead. She had fallen backwards and had

hit her head in such a way as to rob her of life. Can you imagine the pathos in the father's voice when he said, 'If only I had known, if only I had known, I would never have purchased the skates were she to have pleaded endlessly.'" (Alive To God Through Prayer, pg. 129) God always knows what is best for us.

D. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO GOD'S TIME

God sometimes seems slow in answering our prayers. However, God makes a speedy response to the earnest pray-er. However, it is the visible answer of the prayer that may seem a long time in coming. This could be for several reasons: (1) "We cannot see from His perspective, nor can we always see how natural law or the disobedience of another has played roles in the final outcome." (Alive To God Through Prayer, pg. 125) (2) God may delay in answering our prayers externally and visibly simply in order that we do not become spoiled. "God's 'Yes' may be delayed – delayed in order to put persistence and toughened fiber in us. He often holds us off to deepen our characters, so that we won't be spiritual crybabies if we don't get everything at once." (Abundant Living, pg. 231)

God works in His own time. Abraham was 75 years old when he was first given a promise of having a son. Twenty-five years passed before Isaac was born. God prepared Moses for about eighty years before Moses was permitted to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. God's perspective is different from man's perspective. Man tends sometimes to run ahead of God. God will work out His perfect will in a man's life, according to His own timing, even if that timing seems slow to man.

E. ANSWERED ACCORDING TO GOD'S WAY.

***"God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform." When Lazarus died, it seemed that his death could have been avoided if only Christ would have hurried to his sick bed to heal him. Both Mary and Martha declared to Jesus when He finally came to them, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." (John 11:21, 32). However, Jesus wanted to work a miracle before the eyes of the Jews in order that they might believe in Him. Therefore, Jesus permitted Lazarus to die to give opportunity for a great miracle. What was the result of Lazarus' resurrection? "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."* (John 11:45)**

Sometimes God refrains from healing a certain person, for He can get more glory to Himself through His 'thorn in the flesh' than from His perfectly healthy state. This was true of Paul. ***"I will say this: because these experience I had were so tremendous, God was afraid I might be puffed up by them; so there was given me a sickness which has been a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to hurt and bother me, and prick my pride. Three different times I begged God to make me well again. Each time He said, 'No, but I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people.' Now I am glad to boast about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ's power, instead of showing off my own power and abilities. Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite happy about 'the thorn', and about insults and hardships and persecutions; for when I am weak, then I am strong. The less I have, the more I depend on Him.""*** **(II Corinthians 12:7-10)**

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the parable of the Unjust Judge, Jesus asked the probing question ***"But when the Son of Man comes will He find faith on earth?*** **(Luke 18:8) Jesus must have realized the real possibility of Christians to lose heart and prove unfaithful in the test of time. One thing that will keep one from growing weary is a heart-felt declaration in our prayers of 'Thy will be done', according to God's own time and way. In praying, we must follow the example of the widow and the host. Unlike the judge and the householder, we must realize that God is Personal and speedy in response and unselfish.**

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 37

SUBJECT: **THE DECIPLINE OF PRAYER!**

TEXT: ***"Man ought always to pray, and not to faint."*** **(Luke 18:1)**

INTRODUCTION

If prayer was so important to Christ, should it not be far more important to believers today? As C.B. Archer says, "Finite man can enlist the Infinite God. Let us not think of prayer as one of many things to do, but the One Thing around which everything else revolves."

PROPOSITION

If one is to follow Christ's commands and example regarding prayer, he must discipline himself in the art of prayer.

I. THE DISCIPLINE OF PERPETUITY

II. THE DISCIPLINE OF PRIORITY

III. THE DISCIPLINE OF PATIENCE

IV. THE DISCIPLINE OF PURITY

V. THE DISCIPLINE OF PRIVACY

CONCLUSION

Someone said, "Prayer works. Prayer is work. Prayer leads to work." Each statement is true, therefore prayer is associated with discipline. A disciple is one who disciplines himself to obey and to practice the teachings of Jesus. One of Jesus' most important teachings and practices was prayer. Said Sir Thomas Buxton: "You know the value of prayer: it is precious beyond all price. Never, never neglect it." (Power Through Prayer; pg. 28)

We do not say, "If the Lord lays it upon my heart, I'll pay my electric light bill." Let us never say, "If the Lord lays it upon my heart, I will pray." The Lord has already commanded us – once and for all – to pray. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Should it not be motivation enough for us to pray when we realize that every 24 hours, many souls go out into eternity and that many will only be saved through our prayers and obedience?

CHAPTER 37

THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER!

INTRODUCTION

God Almighty places no limit on what He wants to do through any one of us. God wants to do great things for each of us. Says God to us: *"Call upon me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."* (Jeremiah 33:3) God promises to do many things for us, if only we will ask in faith and ask according to God's will, in Christ's name. *"If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."* (John 14:14) *"Therefore I say unto you, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'"* (Mark 11:24) *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."* (Matthew 7:7) *"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."* (John 16:24)

Prayer was the habitual atmosphere of Jesus' daily life. He prayed at all times and in all circumstances: *a great while before day* (Mark 1:35); *all through the night, after a hard day* (Mark 6:46); *when crowds pressed upon Him* (Mark 7:34). "Prayer was not only an important part of his life; it was his life, the very breath of his being." (James Stewart, The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ, pg. 99)

Jesus taught prayer, both by precept and by practice. If prayer was so important to Christ, should it not be far more important to believers today? As C.B. Archer says, "Finite man can enlist the Infinite God. Let us not think of prayer as one of many things to do, but the One Thing around which everything else revolves."

PROPOSITION

If one is to follow Christ's commands and example regarding prayer, he must discipline himself in the art of prayer. Praying as Jesus taught requires (1) the discipline of perpetuity, (2) the discipline of priority, (3) the discipline of patience, (4) the discipline of purity, (5) the discipline of privacy.

I. THE DISCIPLINE OF PERPETUITY

"Perpetuity' means "endless or indefinitely long duration or existence." (The American College Dictionary) Jesus taught "that men ought always to pray and not to faint." (Luke 18:1) Jesus taught that we should never give up praying, regardless of inward feelings or outward circumstances.

If change of mood keeps us from praying consistently, it can be traced back to a lack in our affection for God – for Jesus prayed in all moods (joy and sorrow, smiles and tears, ecstasy and weariness), and He said that *"men ought always to pray and not to faint."* The discipline of prayer is the discipline of our affections – making sure that we keep our affections fixed on Christ.

In all the changing circumstances and crisis of life, Jesus resorted to prayer. Life does not stand still. Life brings the decision concerning a life-time vocation. Jesus faced this decision with prayer (Luke 3:21). Life brings one up against many other momentous decisions that have to be made. Jesus always sought guidance in making such decisions. *"He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God,"* (Luke 6:12) before He chose His first apostolic band. Life's works for God require super-human strength. Jesus prayed for strength for His mighty works (Mark 9:29). Life brings threatening temptations. Jesus prayed against temptations. (Luke 22:44) Life's day finally ends in death's night. Jesus prayed while he was dying on the Cross (Luke 23:46). To pray as Jesus prayed means to pray perpetually – in all moods and during all changing circumstances and crisis. To pray perpetually requires discipline and practice.

"Very frankly, when circumstances are against us we are not always driven to our knees. Sometimes we recoil at the thought of prayer. But the established Christian prays anyway. As a matter of basic knowledge he knows that reverse circumstances will come and is therefore not surprised. They are normal in a sin sick world...The inattentive Christian will let circumstances use him; the creative, praying Christian will use the circumstances for noble ends. When we come to God in all humility and let Him do with us as He pleases, and ask Him for guidance to use our circumstances (happy or unhappy) for His noble purposes, then it is that we are praying to glorify God." (Alive To God Through Prayer, pg. 128)

II. THE DISCIPLINE OF PRIORITY

Jesus, of all men, was most busy, "and yet the harder the days were, the more time did Jesus make for prayer." (Steward, pg. 99) "However busy a man's life, he must, he can, make time to shut the door and kneel." (Ibid, 100) To obey Jesus' example in prayer requires the discipline of establishing priorities – leaving some things undone perhaps to make room for prayer.

Says C.B. Archer, "Knowing what God has done and desires to do in answer to prayer, then failure to pray is one of the greatest sins."

Some say, "I don't have time to pray. I have too many things to do." It is significant that in the midst of ministering to the multitudes, Jesus would, at times, feel so greatly the need for communing with His Father, which He would leave to go to a solitary place to pray. Prayer is the greatest time saver known to man. God can do more in fifty seconds – in answer to intercessory prayer - than man can do in fifty hours – through his own efforts. Luther, in regards to prayer, said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business, I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." He had a motto: "He that has prayed well has studied well." (Power Through Prayer, pg. 38) No

day is well ordered unless there is time for the most important work of all – Prayer.

III. THE DISCIPLINE OF PATIENCE

Jesus persistently prayed and never gave up. Jesus taught "that lackadaisical, halfhearted praying was worse than useless, and that often it is only when a man's importunity has given proof of his earnestness that the answer of God can come." (Ibid, 100) To follow Jesus' example and commands in praying requires the discipline of patience.

When an answer is slow in coming, we tend to grow impatient. We must exercise the discipline of waiting for God to answer prayer in His own time and way. When God does not answer our prayer, it is easy then to think of God as deaf. It is then that we must patiently realize that God "wants to do something different (even better) for us, something other than that for which we prayed in the first instance." (Alive To God Through Prayer, pg. 125) The most important thing we must discipline ourselves to think is this: "The meaning of prayer is that we get hold of God, not of his answer." (Ibid, pg. 126)

IV. THE DISCIPLINE OF PURITY

Jesus' communion in prayer with God was never broken by sin. The Psalmist wrote, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* (Psalms 66:18) Although Jesus was in all points tempted like as we are, yet He never sinned. Sin cuts off communion with God. To pray as Jesus commanded us to pray requires the discipline of immediately confessing every known sin to God and constantly experiencing the cleansing blood of Jesus.

V. THE DISCIPLINE OF PRIVACY

Said Jesus, *"When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."* (Matthew 6:5, 6)

The discipline of privacy in praying is not easy "because we are not recognized and appreciated. We like to be applauded – that is natural – and we like also to see results. But the work of intercession is largely a private affair; it is usually done in secret where people do not see us and most will never know the hours of work invested." (Alive To God Through Prayer, Pg. 131) It takes discipline to pray and not be recognized or rewarded by men. However, such praying has it is own rewards. Jesus promised to reward such a person outwardly. Satisfaction that God and the persons for whom you have prayed are closer together is a great reward.

CONCLUSION

Someone said, "Prayer works. Prayer is work. Prayer leads to work." Each statement is true; therefore, prayer is associated with discipline. A disciple is one who disciplines himself to obey and to practice the teachings of Jesus. One of Jesus' most important teachings and practices was prayer. Said Sir Thomas Buxton: "You know the value of prayer: it is precious beyond all price, never, never neglect it." (Power Through Prayer; pg. 28) Discipline yourself in the perpetuity, priority, patience, purity, and privacy of prayer.

We do not say, "If the Lord lays it upon my heart, I'll pay my electric light bill." Let us never say, "If the Lord lays it upon my heart, I will pray." The Lord has already commanded us – once and for all – to pray. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Should it not be motivation enough for us to pray when we realize that every 24 hours, many souls go out into eternity and that many will only be saved through our prayers and obedience?

MATTHEW CHAPTERS 5, 6, AND 7

MATTHEW 5

The Beatitudes:

1 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat
down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them saying:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

The Fulfillment of the Law

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Anyone who breaks one

of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Murder

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder,[1] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother[1] will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,[1]' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. 23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. 25 "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.[1]

Adultery

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'[1] 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

31 "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'[1] 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

An Eye for an Eye

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'[1] 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two

miles. [42]Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

[43]"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor[1] and hate your enemy.' [44]But I tell you: Love your enemies[1] and pray for those who persecute you, [45]that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [46]If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? [47]And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? [48]Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

MATTHEW 6

Giving to the Needy

[1]"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. [2]"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. [3]But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, [4]so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

[5]"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. [6]But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [7]And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. [8]Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

[9]"This, then, is how you should pray:
" 'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
[10]your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
[11]Give us today our daily bread.
[12]Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
[13]And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.[1] [14]For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15]But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting

16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Treasures in Heaven

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Do Not Worry

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life[1]? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as **Well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**

MATTHEW 7

Judging Others

1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. 6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

Ask, Seek, Knock

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be
opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who
knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give
him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you
are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your
Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to
others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the
Prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that
leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow
the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

A Tree and Its Fruit

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly
they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick
grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears
good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a
bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut
down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. 21 "Not
everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he
who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day,
'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons
and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away
from me, you evildoers!'

The Wise and Foolish Builders

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is
like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams
rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it
had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and
does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on
sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against
that house, and it fell with a great crash." 28 When Jesus had finished saying these
things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who
had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Filename:	JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT - COMPLETED MAY 6-2010.docx
Directory:	C:\Users\Shirley\Documents\PASTOR RONS BOOKS\BOOKS COMPLETED
Template:	C:\Users\Shirley\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dotm
Title:	"AND JESUS TAUGHT THEM, SAYING..."
Subject:	
Author:	Shirley
Keywords:	
Comments:	
Creation Date:	06/15/2010 10:20:00 AM
Change Number:	2
Last Saved On:	06/15/2010 10:20:00 AM
Last Saved By:	Shirley
Total Editing Time:	2 Minutes
Last Printed On:	06/15/2010 11:28:00 AM

As of Last Complete Printing

Number of Pages:	348
Number of Words:	112,908 (approx.)
Number of Characters:	643,577 (approx.)