GOD

FOR ALL

SEASONS

by

RON CHRISTIAN

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DEDICATION

To the hundreds of members and attenders of the Free Methodist Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, who amidst all the changing 'seasons' of the decades, remained faithful to their heavenly Lord, and often brought joy to their earthly shepherd's heart, as I served as their pastor from 1967 until 1994

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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 as well as adding illustrations in this book. I feel certain that her committed hands will bring great blessings to many persons.

Introduction

The God who created all things (Genesis1, John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1) is the God whose presence permeates all things. The greatest King of Israel recognized this fact three thousand years ago. With wonder, King David declared that God is everywhere present, i.e., that He is omnipresent! He wrote, "This is too glorious, too wonderful to believe! I can never be lost to your Spirit! I can never get away from my God! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there. If I ride the morning winds to the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, your strength will support me. If I try to hide in the darkness, the night becomes light around me. For even darkness cannot hide from God; to you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you." (Psalms 139: 6-12, Living Bible)

The Almighty God who is the Creator of all things is also the Sustainer and the Organizer of His vast universe. The Scriptures declare that in God alone do we humans live and move and have our very being (earthly existence). God created a beautiful world, in which there is both seed time and harvest, day and night, with the changing colors of the varying Seasons. And yet, amidst all the changes of earth's seasons and climates and colors, there lives the everlasting God whose faithfulness is humanly experienced 'morning by morning'.

"Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness,
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love."
(Song: Great is Thy Faithfulness')

Whether it is the ruggedness of Winter, or the gentleness of Spring, or the flowering of Summer, or the coloring of Fall, our God is always present, and for this reality we ought always to raise our hearts and heads and hands in holy praise!

"For the wonder of each hour of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower, Sun and moon, and stars of light;
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise."
(Song: 'For The Beauty of the Earth')

From God's perspective, there is no division between what we humans call the 'secular' and the 'sacred'. Every day of the week belongs to our God - whether it is Sunday or Monday, the so-called 'holy day' of the week or the so-called 'business day' of the week. All days are equally sacred to God, and God rules over all things! Whether we are praying on Sunday or working on Monday, our God is always near and equally dear! Whether we are serving the Holy Communion at the altar rail, or washing the plates in the kitchen sink, God is altogether precious to the soul who is learning to "practice the presence of God" at all times and in all places!

There must be - and rightly so - some holidays of the calendar year that are considered especially "high and holy days". Unspeakably great is the corporate joy of a small or larger group of followers of Christ who are celebrating the birth of Jesus (Christmas), or the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), or the glorious resurrection of Jesus (Easter Sunday), or the descent of the blessed Holy Spirit on the Church (Pentecost Sunday). Yes, these are uncomparable and distinctive Christian Holidays which should accent every year of every disciple of Jesus Christ.

Because Christ's presence in any event has the power to sanctify - i.e., to set apart as special and sacred - is it not proper to nationally-oriented Christians (like believers in the United States) to celebrate, in all "good conscience", the so-called 'secular' for holidays as well? Holidays which are not a distinctive part of the 'Universal' Church Calendar, such as Veteran's Day, Independence Day, and Thanksgiving Day? Even though these celebrations are national in origin and do not constitute a part of the 'high and holy days' of Christendom, is it not possible for believers to make Christ 'Lord' of these celebrations, as well? If a Christian Believer is convinced that Christ is the Lord of ALL of life - i.e., that He is the Lord of all creation and of all places and all events - then the obvious answer to that question is a resounding 'Yes'!

For the Earnest Christian, nothing is 'secular'; all things and events and places and holidays are sacred! This is to say, Christ is Lord of a holiday unless, by the intrinsic nature of the holiday, Christ would not be welcome (because of the presence of darkness and evil). In that case, it is obvious that no earnest believer would desire to celebrate such a holiday. (Is not the world's celebration of Halloween, with its costumes of witches and devils, such a holiday, which no earnest believer has justifiable reason to 'celebrate'?)

Even though they are not holidays celebrated by all Christians throughout Christendom, is it not legitimate and even 'good' for American Christians to celebrate, with a spirit of joy and reverence, the family-oriented holidays - Mother's Day, Father's Day, Children's Day? Yes, the Bible declares that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"; so this means that God is the Lord of all Seasons! Therefore, when the various holidays of the year "roll around", let us as loyal followers of Jesus Christ "shout His praises"! Let us "take Christ" into every holiday, whether the holiday is called a "high and holy day" (like Pentecost Sunday), or whether the holiday has a national origin which is often secularized or sentimentalized by worldly folks. Unless the holiday is overtly evil in its origin and pagan in its practice (like Halloween), let us, as followers of Christ, unapologetically celebrate that holiday (whether it is a Day on the Church's Calendar like Easter, or whether it is a Holiday originating in the special history of a particular People, like Thanksgiving Day).

This book is a book of messages which seeks to 'draw attention' to the various holidays and special events of each calendar year. A few words now regarding the format and the use of this book. At the beginning of each chapter, the clear division and outline is given in "overview", to help the reader to understand the general purpose and content of the chapter to be studied.

This book can be used and read in several ways. It can be used and read like any other book - read sequentially without interruption. Or this book, because of its unique nature (without a developing theme), can be read randomly (according to the interest and needs of the reader). It can be used for serious and personal in-depth study, or the book could be used as curriculum for an adult or youth Sunday School course (lasting either for one quarter or for two quarters). This book could also well serve as material for small midweek study groups (for both adults and youth) within a local Church. The thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter are intended to enable the participating students in a class to review and to apply the relevant material in each chapter.

One other possible (and perhaps, probable) use for this book. There may be local pastors who are searching for new and fresh outlines and sermon materials to share with their congregation. As author of this book, I spent much time and effort and prayer in preparing these message (all of which were first preached to my own congregation). I pastored the First Free Methodist Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, for over 25 years (1967-1994) and I thoroughly enjoyed preparing and delivering many sermons to many precious believers (and also seekers) during my long-term pastorate at this one local Church. I would be delighted if these sermons could be used (partly or in their entirety) to bless other congregations.

As you study the various seasonal messages, may the 'God For All Seasons' become your own personal and 'real' God in new and wonderful ways!

CHAPTER 1

CHRISTMAS

CHAPTER 1

SUBJECT: **MEANING OF CHRISTMAS - 'IDENTIFICATION'.**

SCRIPTURE: **Isaiah 53: 3-6; Galatians 4: 4-5; Luke 1: 68-80.**

TEXT: ***"Who has own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."*** **(I Peter 2: 24)**

INTRODUCTION: **The Bible says, "*He hath visited, and redeemed His people.*" (Luke 1: 68)**

I. **INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES THAT HUMAN FLESH IS GOOD AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS ARE SACRED.**

II. **INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES GOD'S IDENTIFICATION WITH MAN'S TEMPTATIONS.**

III. **INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES GOD'S INVOLVEMENT WITH MAN'S CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

IV. **INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES GOD'S INVOLVEMENT WITH MAN'S SORROWS.**

V. **INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES GOD'S INVOLVEMENT WITH MAN'S SINS.**

CONCLUSION: **God is like Jesus, then that kind of God can freely and gladly have my heart's loyal devotion. God's gift was His all, for God emptied Himself totally for your redemption. What will be your gift to God? Nothing less than the giving of your very Self to God is worthy of God's infinite love for you.**

Will you give Him your all - this Christmas?

CHAPTER 1

SUBJECT: **MEANING OF CHRISTMAS - 'IDENTIFICATION'.**

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 53; 3-6, Galatians 4: 4-5; Luke 1: 68-80.

TEXT: *"Who has own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."* (I Peter 2: 24)

INTRODUCTION:

"An artist once created a most unusual painting of Jesus on the cross. The body stood out in sharp relief against a darkened background. But as one gazed at the painting, a second figure seemed to appear among the shadows. It was as if God could be seen behind the figure of Jesus. The nails that went through the hands of Jesus went into the hands of God. The nail that fastened the feet of Jesus held fast the feet of God. The crown of thorns was somehow on God's head, too. The artist had made clear his conception that it is through the experience of Calvary that we look into the eternal heart of God. What we see during those hours of torture is a picture of God's suffering, outgoing love.

"It is not only Jesus but God himself who forever identifies with us. There is an infinite concern at the center of the universe for man, whether he be in joy or in pain. It enables him to say, *'If I ascend to heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, thou art there!'"* (Psalms 139: 8) (E. Stanley Jones)

"Christians often miss this analogy of the agony in the heart of God. Rather they picture God as separated from man's despair, looking on perhaps in sympathy but basically outside the human condition. Even religion has been seen as an escape from the problems and tragedies of life." (Are You Fun To Live With? by Lionel Whiston: pg. 24)

The Incarnation (which is what Christmas is all about) teaches us that God is forever identified with man. "Jesus after His resurrection showed His pierced hands and side - these marks were in the resurrected body - a body which could pass through closed doors and could rise from the earth and be caught away into heaven. Did He ever divest Himself of those signs, or are they still there?" (E. S. Jones; Word Become Flesh; pg. 158) Christianity believes that Jesus, in His eternal, resurrected body, forever bears the marks of His earthly identification with man.

Jesus was not only closely identified with mankind upon earth, but Jesus is presently identified with every man's need. "He is suffering in every man's body and hungry in every man's hunger, bound in every man's imprisonment." (Ibid; 59)

PROPOSITION:

The Bible says, *"He hath visited, and redeemed His people."* (Luke 1: 68) He couldn't sit on a cloud and utter commands or pick us up and take us to heaven with celestial tongs, not soiling His fingers with the messy business of human living. No, He dwelt among us - amid our poverty, amid our temptations, amid our problems and choices, amid our oppositions and disappointments. He lived among us and showed us how to live by living." (Ibid; pg. 34)

I. INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES THAT HUMAN FLESH IS GOOD AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS ARE SACRED.

Since God took upon Himself human flesh, we have no right to despise or debase our human form. There are some religious that despise human flesh and declare it profane, useless, and evil. The human body and human life, into which our Lord was born, is sacred. In becoming a Man, Jesus has forever sanctified and purified and ennobled human relationships. John 1: 14 is one of the high marks of Biblical revelation: *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory of the only Son from the Father."* The glory of deity shone through the temple of human flesh, pronouncing a holy benediction forever upon our human form. The Incarnation shows the glory of being a man. "He did not abhor the virgin's womb, but came as a babe and lived this life to show me how it could be done, then stretched himself on the wood at the last and died to redeem me." (Sangster's Special Day Sermons; pg. 23, 24)

II INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES GOD'S IDENTIFICATION WITH MAN'S TEMPTATIONS.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that thorough death he might destroy hin that had the power of death, that is, the devil: And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2: 14-18)

God, in the person of Jesus, knows what it is to pass through childhood, adolescence, and manhood - with all of the luring temptations unique to each stage. Jesus experienced both temptations of the flesh and of the spirit. He too felt the pull of materialism, the pull to popularity at any cost, the pull to accomplish the right ends with the wrong means. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

III. INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES GOD'S INVOLVEMENT WITH MAN'S CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Jesus knew what it was to work long, hard days, making a living for His family. It is believed that Joseph died while Jesus was a boy, and that Jesus, as the oldest child, provided the living and leadership in the home for many years. His strong skillful hands produced fine oxen yokes which were sold to provide the living for the family.

He understood what poverty was all about. After Jesus had entered into His public ministry, on one occasion He 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)

Jesus understands the challenge of involvement with people, for he worked with all sorts of people - religious and profane, literate and illiterate, high and low, rich and poor, young and old, healthy and sick, urban and rural, Jew and Gentile. He understands the complexities of human relationships and the subtleties of human nature.

Jesus knows what it is to be misunderstood, rejected, and despised, and he also knows what it is to be hailed, praised, and followed. Jesus knew abounding times and abasing times, prosperity and poverty, apparent success and apparent failure, companionship and loneliness, joy and sorrow, acceptance and rejection,. Through all the changes and chances, due to the ebb and flow of life, Jesus learned to be master of circumstances. *"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."* (Hebrews 5: 7-9)

As we would say today, Jesus learned to cope with life. To cope with the challenges and responsibilities of life. Jesus' life demonstrates God's total identification and involvement with man's daily changing experiences.

Before Jesus returned to Heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to believers. "We talk of being able to cope with things. That is precisely the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to us and takes away our inadequacies and enables us to cope with life. The Holy Spirit substitutes victorious for defeated living." (Barclay's John; pg. 195) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus in the life of the believer, enabling him to cope with the changes and chances of life.

IV INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES GOD'S INVOLVEMENT WITH MAN'S SORROWS.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah wrote regarding the redemptive ministry of the coming Christ: *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."* (Isaiah 53: 3, 4a)

The sorrows and sufferings of life are many and varied, but Jesus' life shows us that God is involved in all of them. Wrote Kagawa, the great Japanese missionary: "God dwells among the lowliest of men. He sits on the dust heap among the prison convicts. He stands with the juvenile delinquents. He is there with the beggars. He is among the sick, He stands with the unemployed. Therefore let him who would meet God visit the prison cell before going to the temple. Before he goes to Church let him visit the hospital. Before he reads his Bible let him help the beggar."

Take a look at Jesus' involvement with suffering humanity. "The poor mother of Nain, crying as if her heart would break as she stumbled after the pathetic little procession going out to bury her only son - Christ could not bear it! The leper, the innocent, once young life struck down by that slow, dreadful living death Christ could not bear it. *'I will: be thou clean.'* The great mass of attractive, lovable men and women caught in the toils of sins that spoilt their lives, and temptations they could not break, and wild regrets that were a misery - Christ could not bear it. And so He died to free them. And so we can say today, in those most moving words of our hymn, 'Jesus, Thou art all compassion'.

'Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.'

But the greatest thing of all is this, that when you see this compassionate Christ, you are seeing God." (The Gates of New Life; Stewart; pg. 197)

There is no human suffering but what Jesus can identify with it. Consider the suffering that Jesus experienced in having His pure name desecrated and defamed. "The circumstances of the birth were peculiar in all ways. The supposed parents of the child were not married and the tongue of scandal was soon busy....Does it require a wealth of imagination to glimpse the life at Nazareth in the years that followed? The baby growing up into a sturdy and lovely boy, swift in obedience to His Mother's will: going at her bidding with a child's water-pot to the well and as He draws the water some gossiping creature notices Him and tells the ugly and lying story once again.

So, as He turns towards the carpenter's shop again...they use of Him a tainted name. Is there anybody who complains that they are cursed with a tainted name? Without justification your Lord has borne that shame. The slander followed Him through life...and His enemies have poisoned their tongues with it in many ages since. Oh! Surely... 'Surely....He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows'." (Daily Readings From W. W. Sangster; pg. 287) There is never a sorrow that He doth not share, nor a woe that He does not feel. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

Picture Jesus as He made His way into the desert to contemplate, following the beheading of His cousin John. Follow Him to the grave side of His dear friend Lazarus, and listen to His deep moans and sobbing in the midst of Lazarus' broken-hearted sisters, Mary and Martha. Go with Jesus to the Mount that overlooks Jerusalem, and witness Jesus' tear-soaked cheeks as He cries out: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate."* (Matthew 23; 37, 38)

V. INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES GOD'S INVOLVEMENT WITH MAN'S SINS.

Hundreds of years before Christ's coming, Isaiah prophesied of Jesus' redemptive death. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities....and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* (Isaiah 53: 6, 11, 12)

Jesus was called 'a Friend of Sinners'. Think of the people whom Jesus befriended: the despised Woman of Samaria, Zacchaeus the Thief, Mary Magdalen the woman of ill fame, the demon possessed man called Legion, the woman caught in adultery, the tax collector Matthew who became one of Jesus' disciples and writer of one of the Gospels.

Have you taken note of the personalities in Jesus' genealogy - Rahab, a harlot of Jericho (John 2: 1-7); Thamar, a deliberate seducer and an adulteress (Deuteronomy 23: 3); Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, who was the woman whom David seduced from Uriah, her husband, with an unforgivable cruelty (2 Samuel 11 and 12)?

The very genealogy of Jesus symbolizes and demonstrates the main mission of Jesus' visit: *"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Matthew 9: 13).

Make no mistake! Jesus did not condone sin, nor did he condemn sinners! Said Jesus: *"The Son of Man came not to destroy life, but to save life; I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly!'* (John 3: 17; 10: 10) Remember, *"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."* (Matthew 9: 12)

Listen to Jesus' Parable of the returning Prodigal Son as I read it:

> "And he arose and set out for his home, and when at last he arrived at the door, he banged and there was no response. He stood there in his piteous rags and hunger for a while, and then he knocked again and a third time; and finally a window opened and his father looked out and said; 'Oh, it's you! You're spent up, I suppose. You look a nice beauty. What have you come home for? You've had your share of everything. You know where to come when you're hungry...'
>
> And he said 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight...' but his father banged the window and left him for a while on the doorstep. Presently his father opened the door and said 'You're an utter disgrace to me and to all your relatives. I'm ashamed of you; utterly ashamed. But I'm your parent, and I've thought it out, and I am prepared to put you on probation for three months, and if, at the end of three months I can find no fault in you, well, perhaps I'll have it in my heart to give you another start.'"

"That is the Parable of the Prodigal Son as Jesus DIDN'T tell it. As you hear me say it, your heart cries out against its falsity, 'Lies!' you say. 'Lies!' And you are right; they are lies. 'And while he was yet a long way off his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him' (No probationary period, you notice. No talk of three months. No, it was instant. It was now! Now!) 'The ring, the ring, the robe, the robe'." (Daily Readings from W. E. Sangster; pg. 51)

Not only did Jesus identify with sinners in life, but Jesus identified with sinners in his very death. The Scriptures tell us that "He (God) has visited and redeemed His people." "He took man's sin as His own and died as a malefactor on a cross. The visitation meant identification, and the identification meant not identification with man at the top, becoming the best of men, but becoming the worst of men - a sinner, dying between sinners. 'He became sin for us.' That identification was gradual, beginning at inner renunciation of being equal with God, coming in a Virgin's womb, and going deeper at every step until He hit rock bottom on a cross: 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'" (Word Became Flesh; 153)

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead in sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (I Peter 2: 24)

But hitting rock bottom in His identification with mankind, from there Jesus went to the very top. "Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph over his foes." He is the mighty Victor! Easter always follows Calvary! The sting of death has been removed! The grave no longer has its victory! The victory belongs to Christ, for the grave could not contain Him. The Incarnation can never be rightly interpreted without gazing into the empty tomb and understanding the personal implications of that empty tomb! As Christ was identified with mankind in His total Incarnation, so every man can identify with Christ's total victory.

CONCLUSION:

If God is like Jesus, then that kind of God can freely and gladly have my heart's loyal devotion. God's gift was His all, for God emptied Himself totally for your redemption. What will be your gift to God? Nothing less than the giving of your very Self to God is worthy of God's infinite love for you.

Will you give Him your all - this Christmas?

CHAPTER 1

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you believe that it is through the experience of Calvary (Jesus' death on the Cross) that you look into the eternal heart of God Himself?

2. Do you believe that there is Biblical support to affirm the truthfulness of the following statement? -

> "Jesus, in His eternal, resurrected body, forever bears the marks of His earthly identification with mankind, as evidenced by the distinct crucifixion wounds which are still visible on His resurrected body."

3. Give your personal response and interpretation to the following statements: "The resurrected Christ is presently identified with every man's need. He is suffering in every man's body and hungry in every man's hunger, bound in every man's imprisonment."

4. Was it possible for God to redeem the human race, without visiting the human race? Why or why not?

5. What relationship is there between believing in the Incarnation (God becoming a Man), and believing in the sanctity of the human body and the sacredness of human relationships?

6. How can knowledge of the Incarnation help a believer who is struggling with a difficult temptation? (Note Hebrews 2: 14-18)

7. What evidence is there, from a study of the Gospels, that Jesus truly understands the pressures and demands of the daily laborer in the working world, and that Jesus identifies with the poor and suffering people of the world? (Note Matthews 8: 20)

8. Considering the fact that even the Son of God had to "learn obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5: 7-9), how can your own personal "sufferings" become an occasion for you to "learn obedience"?

9. What place does the Holy Spirit have in helping you "to cope with the changes and chances and challenges of life"?

10. Give your personal reaction and response to the following statements by one famous Japanese missionary, named Kagawa: "God dwells among the lowliest of men. He sets on the dust heap among the prison convicts. He stands with the juvenile delinquents. He is there with the beggars. He is among the sick, He stands with the unemployed. Therefore let him who would meet God visit the prison cell before going to the temple. Before he goes to Church let him visit the hospital. Before he reads his Bible let him help the beggar."

11. Why is Jesus such an understanding and sympathizing friend to those persons whose names are slandered and whose reputations are battered?

12. What evidence is there, from a study of Jesus' public and private ministry, that Jesus was sympathetic towards suffering persons, and that His heart was broken over God rejectors? (Note Luke 7: 11-17; Mark 1: 40-45; John 11: 30-46; Matthew 23: 37-38)

13. Who were some of the "Sinners" whom Jesus befriended during His public ministry, and why was Jesus' friendship with such persons so significant? In seeking to understand the meaning and purpose and nature of Christ's ministry and earthly mission, what significance would you attach to the fact that the following persons' names appear in the genealogy of Jesus: Rahab, Thamar, Bathsheba?

    To what extent should followers of Christ today be involved in the lives of non-Christians? How can Christians be "in" the world of sinners without becoming tainted by the sinful practices and attitudes "of" the world? (Note John 17: 14-17; James 1: 27; II Corinthians 6: 14-18)

14. In looking at the life and ministry and teachings of Jesus (as recorded in the Gospels), what would you conclude was the primary purpose for which Jesus came to earth? (Note Matthew 9: 12-13; John 3: 17; John 10: 10; Luke 1: 68)

15. To what extent or degree did Jesus identify with the needs and problems of mankind? (Note Matthew 27: 33-50; I Peter 2: 24; Romans 5: 8)

16. Give your explanation and application of the following statements: "The Incarnation can never be rightly interpreted without gazing into the empty tomb, and understanding the personal implications of that empty tomb! As Christ was identified with mankind in His total Incarnation, so every man can identify with Christ's total victory."

CHAPTER 2

NEW YEAR'S

CHAPTER 2

SUBJECT: **TIME FOR INVENTORY!**

SCRIPTURE: **Ecclesiastes 3: 1-9; Proverbs 4: 18-19**

TEXT: ***"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established."*** **(Proverbs 4: 26)**

INTRODUCTION: We should all know that the unexamined life is hardly worth living. As someone well said, "We, at best, are only 'Christians in the making'." The Christian life is a life that is unfolding and progressive - a life of limitless growth in the ways of Christ. We all must make periodic examinations of ourselves to evaluate our over-all progress in life. We must learn to ask ourselves the right questions - the questions which help us to evaluate our progress.

I. WHAT ABOUT MY STEWARDSHIP?

- **a. Consider The Stewardship of Time.**
- **b. Consider The Stewardship of Talents.**
- **c. Consider The Stewardship of Money.**
- **a. Consider The Stewardship of Opportunities.**

II WHAT ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP?

- **a. Consider The Relationships In Work.**
- **b. Consider The Relationships In The Home.**
- **c. Consider The Relationships Among Friends.**
- **d. Consider The Relationships In The Church.**

III. WHAT ABOUT MY GOALS?

- **a. Advantage of Having Goals.**
- **b. Advantage of Saying 'I Can'.**
- **c. Advantage of 'Thinking Big'.**
- **d. Advantage of Making 'Faith-sized' Prayers.**

CONCLUSION: Inventory - that is past evaluation and future planning. The past year can never be recalled or relived, but the New Year is untrodden and unblemished and holds countless opportunities.

CHAPTER 2

SUBJECT: **TIME FOR INVENTORY!**

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 3: 1-9; Proverbs 4: 18-19

TEXT: *"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established."* (Proverbs 4: 26)

INTRODUCTION:

We have all worked and toiled hard during this last calendar year. During these last few weeks of the old year, there were thousands of businesses and companies throughout our country which took an Inventory. They were taking a close look at their business and they sought to better determine the degree of success of their business. Perhaps they were asking a question, similar to the one which is asked in the ancient book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament: *"What gain has the worker from his toil?"* (Ecclesiastes 3: 9)

PROPOSITION:

It is time for Inventory, not only for businesses, but for each one of us as individuals. We should all know that the unexamined life is hardly worth living. As someone well said, "We, at best, are only 'Christians in the making'." The Christian life is a life that is unfolding and progressive - a life of limitless growth in the ways of Christ. We all must make periodic examinations of ourselves to evaluate our over-all progress in life. We must learn to ask ourselves the right questions - the questions which help us to evaluate our progress. Let us ask of ourselves at least three basic questions: (1) "What about my Stewardship?" (2) "What about my Relationships?" (3) "What about my Goals for this coming year?"

I. WHAT ABOUT MY STEWARDSHIP?

Because God is Creator and man is creature, God is always on the giving end and man is always on the receiving end. Therefore, the Christian is a steward of all life.

a. <u>Consider The Stewardship of Time.</u> Have I used all my days and all my hours to glorify the Master, or have I squandered precious hours for my own selfish use? How much time daily do I take to read the Bible and pray?

Is the way I am using my time show that I consider the Bible, prayer and witnessing to be most important?

"Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom, O God."

Only one life
Twill soon be past
Only what's done for Christ
Will last."

Even though it is not an easy prayer to pray, and it is a prayer that involves considerable faith and trust, can you find it within yourself to pray this following prayer?

"My times are in Thy hands,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, sad or glad,
As best may seem to Thee."

b. Consider The Stewardship of Talents. Have I sought to discover all the talents that God has given to me, or have I adopted an attitude of false humility and said to myself, 'Oh, I can't do much. Let someone else do it.'?

Do you remember how Moses was filled with fear when God asked him to go to the Pharaoh of Egypt and tell him to let the children of Israel leave their bondage and go to the Promised Land? Moses felt incapable of the job. But God asked Moses, *"What is that in thine hand?" Moses answered, "A staff."* God commanded Moses to throw it down on the ground. When Moses obeyed, the staff became a snake! God performed a miracle. He used a common staff to show that God is all-powerful. So God can take ordinary talent and abilities and change them into extra-ordinary tools for service to mankind. Give to God your talents. God can use them in a very wonderful way in this New Year.

Many times the question is not "Can I do this for God?" but rather the question is "Will I do this for God?" It is not a problem of the intellect and ability, but a problem of the will and volition. God may ask you to do something very simple. Will you do it? God is not asking for dramatic talents always. Rather, He is asking for a willing heart to do the rather simple things. In a faithful and consistent way. An example of this is seen in the following little poem.

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.
But 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.
-Author Unknown-

Just suppose each of us would consecrate our cars to God and would determine to bring a carload of people to Church with us each Sunday. Is this a matter of CAN or is it a matter of WILL?

What gift do you have just now that you can consecrate to God and the Church? Don't always be asking, "What can my Church do for me?" But instead ask, "What can I do for my Church and for my Lord?"

c. Consider The Stewardship of Money. Have I given beyond myself by giving liberally to God? Have I spent my money selfishly or adopted a legalistic attitude toward the practice of tithing? Have I come to the point where I delight to give to God's work? Am I a cheerful giver? Is my giving based on percentage of 10% or is my giving proportionate giving, that is, giving beyond the tithe? Do I realize that money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master? Do I realize the danger in 'the love of money' which is the root of all evil? Writes Sangster, "Anything which weakens the conviction that our security is only in God is dangerous, and nothing weakens that conviction

more than the love of money. A high-sense of stewardship is the antidote." (Readings, pg. 347)

Remember John Wesley's example of stewardship. "He made tens of thousand of pounds out of his publications, and died leaving little more than his silver spoons." (Ibid; pg. 347)

Simplicity in living is one of the most important principles in the right use of money and material things. Wastefulness or extravagance have no place in the Christian's practices of stewardship.

"Use it up,
Wear it out,
Make it do,
Or do without."

d. Consider The Stewardship of Opportunities. Have I learned to use every golden opportunity to advance God's Kingdom, and do I realize that lost opportunities bring grief to God? As one poet said, "God's time is now, this day, this hour, To rescue souls from Satan's power."

Some opportunities never come again, once they are lost. Children are young only once, so let us as parents use every opportunity to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Every time I fail to speak a kind word, I have missed a chance to cheer someone.

Act upon your positive impressions to tell someone how thankful you are for them. Flowers sincerely given in life to someone are more important than waiting until his death to give them to him. Impressions will fade if not expressed. Someone said, 'Impression without expression leads to depression." Use your opportunity today to share some hope and cheer with someone. Some opportunities never come but once. Use your opportunities in this New Year.

II WHAT ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIPS?

Besides taking a close look at your stewardship during this past year and as you anticipate the New Year, also take a close look at your relationships.

Life is made up of a multitude of various relationships, each of which gives one an opportunity to express his love and compassion.

a. Consider The Relationships In Work. Have I learned to treat my fellow employees with love and consideration, and have I learned to overcome irritation when I am tired? Have I learned how to deal respectfully with my employer when I have a disagreement?

b. Consider The Relationships In The Home. Have I learned never to take my family for 'granted', and have I been careful to show common courtesy to those whom I know best? Have I helped make my home a 'haven of rest'?

c. Consider The Relationships Among Friends. Have I taken sufficient time periodically to renew my friendships with various people? Has it been my policy to cherish old friends, and to make new friends? Am I constantly cultivating friendships? Am I possessive with my friends, or do I allow them freedom and wholesome independence?

d. Consider The Relationships In The Church. Have I periodically expressed love and appreciation to my fellow brothers in Christ? Have I been open-minded, flexible, and cooperative among fellow Church members, without disregarding my own personality distinctive and personal convictions? Above all, have I sought to glorify God in all that I do or say? Am I at the Church Services every opportunity I have?

Take a close look at your relationship with your Church. Ask yourself: Is my faith one which has built a very hot fire? If I were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me? Does my faith mean everything to me? Do I have that warm affection and devotion which characterize a New Testament Christian? Does my Church have a central part of my life?

III. WHAT ABOUT MY GOALS?

a. Advantage of Having Goals. The goal-oriented person is the person who has learned to evaluate. Goals help one to reach his fuller potential, and they give a sense of direction and motivation to activity. Many there are who are active but who have no purpose for their activity. Someone has said that many people are going and going but that they are really going nowhere. Going in a vicious circle is futile and frustrating. The Christian should always be going towards a noble end and seeking to accomplish a worthy goal.

In forming a goal, one should keep three things in mind. First, what do I want to accomplish? Second, what is necessary as the means toward accomplishing that end? Third, what are my available resources in helping me to accomplish my goal?

b. Advantage of saying 'I Can'. A positive state of mind is essential in attempting to reach a goal. The one who is frustrated because of setbacks can easily adopt the attitude, "Well, I knew I couldn't do that." Should an attitude like this persist, defeat will be inevitable. A wholesome sense of self-confidence is essential if one is to attack the obstacles that are strewn along the path that leads to one's goal. Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead has said, "If...we have in our minds a picture of ourselves as fear-haunted and defeated nobodies, we must get rid of that picture at once and hold up our heads. That is a false picture and the false must go. God sees us as men and women in whom and through whom He can do a great work. He sees us as already serene, confident, and cheerful. He sees us not as pathetic victims of life, but masters of the art of living; not wanting sympathy, but imparting help to others, and therefore thinking less and less of ourselves, and full, not of self-concern, but of love and laughter and a desire to serve." (Psycho-cybernetics by Maltz; pg. 40)

One of the most helpful psychological weapons towards warding off discouragement is the attitude 'I can', and the attitude of 'Even though I may not have reached my goal this time, I know it is possible.' Such an attitude keeps the flames of hope in the human breast burning brightly, and helps one optimistically to realize that 'the best is yet to be.' One has said that there are no hopeless situations in life, but that there are only people who have grown hopeless about them. Therefore, adopt the positive attitude of 'I Can'.

Says Charles Allen in his popular book God's Psychiatry, "I read recently of an experiment made by a psychologist. We are familiar with those gripping machines. You put in a penny and try your grip. Three men tried their grip, with no suggestion from the psychologist, and the average grip was 101 pounds. Then the three were hypnotized and the psychologist told each, 'You cannot grip, because you are weak.' Under the power of that suggestion their average grip fell from 101 pounds to only 29 pounds! With the three men still under the power of hypnosis, the psychologist told them to grip again, but this time he told them, 'Now you can grip'. Their strength was five times greater when they said, 'I can', than it was when they said, 'I cannot'." (Pg. 128)

c. Advantage of 'Thinking Big'. It is important to think big. Very few significant things are accomplished without first the exercise of big thinking. Many years ago, "a certain salesman always managed to make almost exactly $5,000 per year regardless of the territory they assigned him or the commission he was paid...Wheeler had a talk with this salesman and found that the trouble was not in the territory but in the salesman's own valuation of himself. He thought of himself as a $5,000 per-year, man and as long as he held that concept of himself, outside conditions didn't seem to matter. When he was assigned a poor territory, he worked hard to make that $5,000. When he was assigned a good territory, he found all sorts of excuses to coast when the $5,000 was in sight. Once, when the goal had been reached, he got sick and was unable to work any more that year, although doctors could find nothing wrong with him and he miraculously recovered by the first of the next year." (Psycho-cybernetics; pg.46)

d. Advantage of Making 'Faith-sized' Prayers. 'Thinking Big' is on one side of the coin. On the other side of the coin is 'Making Faith-sized Prayers'. This is an expression that Rosalind Rinker uses in her book Prayer, Conversing With God. I quote from her, "What is a faith-sized request? A faith-sized request is first of all a request which is just the right 'believing' size for your faith. It is not a request which is so large that the very size of it makes you wonder if God will answer...It is too frequently our experience to pray for the conversion of a loved one for years without an answer. That is not because God isn't willing to save the loved one, it's because we are not praying sensibly and with faith. It is like trying to take one giant leap from the bottom of the stairs to the top of the stairs. We want to get to the top of the stairs. We talk and talk about going and yet there we stand. The reason being, it is impossible to get from the bottom to the top of a flight of stairs in one step. The prayer of faith is like that. Climbing the steps is what we mean by a faith-sized request. Take one step at a time. Pray for only what you believe God can do, for a certain person in a definite situation during a given time period." (Pg. 68, 70, 71)

What can be said of prayer, can also be said of forming goals. Goals should be high enough to make us stretch for them, and yet not be so high that they are completely out of our reach and beyond our greatest potential. Goals should be made after an honest investigation of our ability and after earnest prayers.

Mr. David Schwartz, in his book, 'The Magic of Thinking Big' (front page) tells about an interesting incident in the life of his small child. "Our six-year-old son David felt mighty big when he was graduated from Kindergarten. I asked him what he plans to be when he finishes growing up. Davey looked at me intently for a moment and then answered,

'Dad, I want to be a Professor.'

'A Professor? A Professor of what?' I asked.

'Well, Dad,' he replied, 'I think I want to be a Professor of Happiness.'

A Professor of Happiness! That's a pretty wonderful ambition, don't you think?"

What a goal for this New Year - to be a 'Professor of Happiness'. How can you make someone happy? One way to make others happy is to give them permission to succeed!

Everyone needs someone's permission to succeed! I believe it is a universal law. The child looks to the parent, hoping to gain approval and permission to succeed; and finally man, in his deep search for permission, hopes that God will grant him success!

"There is in each of us a sub-conscious desire, a longing for someone else to grant us permission to be happy, to find fulfillment....

Many of us withhold permission from others and, thereby, stifle their potential and make them live in a concept of lack. The ability is in you to grant another permission to succeed. You can transfer it to them by a spoken word or a change of attitude. The power to grant permission to others is almost unlimited in its potential.

Many of us are like little gods in the lives, minds, and ambitions of people we are esteemed by. That statement may shock us but the Bible will show it to be true. Man can be as God or a devil to the hopes and dreams of other people.

"Permit others to excel by your words and actions. There is power in giving permission to excel, both to you and to others. It's a beautiful way to live and a beautiful way to come into eternity." (By Don Polston)

An older woman whom I knew in my childhood, who has long since died, wrote a poem and gave it to me. The poem has long impressed me. It is entitled:

LIFE'S WORTHWHILE

If memory takes me to a happy place
Where hearts are warmed by love and grace;
If I gladden the heart of a lonely child –
Life's worthwhile!

If I'm less vexing, but rather bless,
And ever willing a wrong to confess -
If I can earn a forgiving smile -
Life's worthwhile!

If I, in my day, some happiness bring,
And can see God's hand in everything;
If His favors I take in humble style –
Life's worthwhile!

If I'm fit to live with myself,
Through the years,
And can buffet sorrows, too deep for tears,
If I'm ready to go, o'er life's last mile –
Life's been worthwhile!

- By Hattie Holmes Humphreys -
(Mother of Rev. E. H. Humphreys)

As we all face a New Year, let me I leave you with this final statement:

> Life for you will be worthwhile if you (like the little boy) will determine to be "A Professor of Happiness" - giving permission to someone to succeed!

CONCLUSION:

Inventory - that is past evaluation and future planning. The past year can never be recalled or relived, but the New Year is untrodden and unblemished and holds countless opportunities.

What shall I do with the Golden Year
If God should give it to me?
Shall I receive it with faith, or fear?
Abuse it, or use it with conscience clear?
Oh, what will the answer be?

This will I do with the Golden Year
If God will give it to me:
I will receive it with faith, not fear,
To use it for Him, with a life sincere,
That He may rejoice to see.

And so, with the gift of the Golden Year,
O God, give Thyself to Me.
For only with Thee can I conquer fear
And live a life with a conscience clear
And give an account to Thee.
- Charles Dickey -

CHAPTER 2

QUESTIONS

1. Why does the fact that God's always on the giving end and man is always on the receiving end of things, result in concluding that man is therefore a steward of all of life?

2. Tell why you think the following prayer is so appropriate to pray for a believer who senses that he is a steward of all his time: "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom, O God."

3. Have you considered posting the following in a conspicuous place in your home? -

> "Only one life
> 'Twill soon be past
> Only what's done for Christ
> Will last."

4. How much time daily do you use to read your Bible and to pray?

5. Even though it is not an easy prayer to pray, and it is a prayer that involves considerable faith and trust, can you find it within yourself to pray this following prayer?

> "My times are in Thy hands,
> Whatever they may be,
> Pleasing or painful, sad or glad,
> As best may seem to Thee."

6. How does God's question which He asked of Moses - "What is that in thine hand?" - apply to your own life, in terms of your using the spiritual gifts which God has entrusted to you?

7. Give your interpretation and application of the following statements: "Many times the question is not, 'Can I do this for God?' but rather the question is 'Will I do this for God?'. It is not a problem of the intellect and ability, but a problem of the will and volition. It is not great ability that God always wants from us, but great availability that God needs from each one of us."

8. Give your personal response or reaction to the following statements: "Anything which weakens the conviction that our security is only in God is dangerous, and nothing weakens that conviction more than the love of money. A high sense of stewardship is the antidote."

9. Tell if you wholeheartedly agree or partly agree, or definitely disagree with the following as it relates to financial stewardship.

"Use it up,
Wear it out,
Make it do,
Or do without."

10. Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Act upon your positive impressions to tell someone how thankful you are for them. Flowers sincerely given in life to someone are more important than waiting until his death to give them to him. Impressions will fade if not expressed. 'Impression without expression leads to depression.' Use your opportunities today to share some hope and cheer with someone."

11. How can you tell the difference between a sincere compliment and genuine affirmation of a person on one hand, and insincere 'flattery' of a person on the other hand? (Note Psalms 5: 9; Proverbs 2:11-16; Proverbs 28: 23; Proverbs 29: 5; I Thessalonoians 2: 3-11; Philippians 2: 19-24; II Timothy 1: 1-5)

    Is it not the responsibility of all believers to put aside their fear of flattery and their inhibitions, and speak words of encouragement and compliments and positive affirmations to one another, for the purpose of encouraging and building up one another in the "holy faith of Jesus Christ"? If the great apostle Paul addressed his Christian friends with such affirming words, and placed such confidence in them, and expressed such affection for them (like 'the holy kiss'), why are so many believers in our day so inhibited and impersonal and even stoical in their actions and responses and feelings toward fellow believers?

12. In evaluating your various relationships, put a check by those statements which reflect your consistent (not perfect - but consistent) behavior in your interpersonal responses:

    _____a. I treat my fellow employees with love and respect and consideration.

    _____b. I speak respectfully about my employer, and I seek to honor and to obey him as one to whom I am accountable.

_____c. I am careful to show common courtesy to those whom I know best, especially to my family members.

_____d. I am not possessive of my friends, and I allow them freedom to be themselves and to think for themselves, without seeking to intimidate them or "force" my opinions and ideas on them.

_____e. Without indulging in flattery, I regularly express my love and appreciation to my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

_____f. It is my sincere desire always to glorify God in all that I do or say, recognizing that I have no right to boast about my personal (academic, social, economic, spiritual) achievements.

_____g. If I were arrested for being a Christian, there would definitely be enough evidence to convict me for being a genuine Christian.

13. Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Goals help one to reach his fuller potential, and they give a sense of direction and motivation to activity."

14. Share one specific goal (a financial goal or physical goal or social goal or spiritual goal or recreational goal or family-oriented goal) with your group, and answer the following three questions (as you share your specific goal for this coming year):

    1. What do I want to accomplish specifically?
    2. What is necessary as the means towards accomplishing that end?
    3. What are my available resources in helping me to accomplish my specific goal?

15. What attitude is important for you to cultivate in facing periodic or occasional "setbacks", in your attempts to reach your specific goals?

16. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statements: "If we have in our minds a picture of ourselves as fear - haunted and defeated nobodies, we must get rid of that picture at once and hold up our heads. That is a false picture and the false must go. God sees us as men and women in whom and through whom He can do a great work."

17. Tell what the difference is between wholesome self-confidence and sinful self-boasting, as the attitudes relate to striving to reach a goal in life. (Note Philippians 4: 13; II Timothy 4: 7-8; II Corinthians 10: 1-18; II Corinthians 11: 5-30; II Corinthians 12: 1-10; Acts 12: 21-23; Daniel 4: 19-37)

18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There are no hopeless situations in life, only people who have grown hopeless about them!"

19. In setting goals for yourself, why is it important to "think big"? What is the difference between entertaining unrealistic "illusions of grandeur", and centering on God-honoring (legitimate) "big goals" for your life? Have you seriously consulted God in prayer, to decide what your goals in life should be, or have you formulated your goals based on your own judgments alone and on your own self-limiting visions and dreams?

20. What is a "faith-sized request" in prayer?

21. Are you determined to set no goals in your own life without first making an honest investigation of your own abilities, and without first spending much time in earnest prayer, and without first sharing your dreams with at least one mature and understanding Christian?

22. Share a concrete example which illustrates the validity of the following statement: "Goals should be high enough to make you stretch for them, and yet not be so high that they are completely out of your reach and beyond your greatest potential."

23. To whom, in your personal relationships, do you need to give "permission to succeed"?

24. Tell what would have to happen in your life - what goals you would need to reach - in order for you to be able honestly to say "Life for me has been worthwhile!"

25. Give serious consideration to listing a few specific goals which you honestly believe would be worthy of your energy, and challenging to your personal potential, and truly honoring to your Lord.

    A. Social (Friendship) Goals For The New Year.
       1.
       2.
       3.

    B. Intellectual (Academic) Goals For The New Year.
       1.
       2.
       3.

C. Economic (Material) Goals For The New Year.
1.
2.
3.

D. Recreational Goals For The New Year.
1.
2.
3.

E. Physical (Health) Goals For The New Year.
1.
2.
3.

F. Family Involvement Goals For The New Year.
1.
2.
3.

G. Professional (Career and Job) Goals For The New Year.
1.
2.
3.

H. Personal Devotional Life Goals For The New Year.
1.
2.
3.

I. Local Church Involvement Goals For The New Year.
1.
2.
3.

J. Charity (Giving) Goals For The New Year.
1.
2.
3.

CHAPTER 3

SANCTITY OF LIFE

CHAPTER 3

SUBJECT: **THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE**

SCRIPTURE: **Psalms 139: 14-18**

TEXT: ***"Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous - and how well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion! You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book! How precious it is, Lord, to realize that you are thinking about me constantly! I can't even count how many times a day your thoughts turn towards me. And when I waken in the morning, you are still thinking of me!*** **(Psalms 139: 14-18)**

INTRODUCTION: Does human life have any value? Is man more than dust, more than 160 pounds of muscle and fat and bone and fluid? Is man more than a small speck living on an insignificant planet in the vast universe, lost in space?

PROPOSITION: It is in the Bible that we learn of God's high regard for human beings! The sanctity of life - and thus the basis of all genuine human freedom - is founded in the Biblical concept of Man! There are several principles in the Bible that reveal God's respect for human life.

I. CREATION OF MANKIND.

II. INCARNATION PRINCIPLE.

III. COMPASSIONATE LIFE OF JESUS.

IV. JESUS' ATONING DEATH.

V. PRINCIPLE OF THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE HUMAN BODY.

VI. PRINCIPLE OF THE SUPREME LAW OF LOVE.

VII. PRINCIPLE OF LOVE AS COMPASSIONATE ACTION TOWARDS THE HELPLESS AND NEEDY.

VIII. PRINCIPLE OF THE GOLDEN RULE.

IX. PRINCIPLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR DEEDS DONE IN THE HUMAN BODY.

X. PRINCIPLE OF THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND THE SUBSEQUENT RESURRECTION OF THE BODY OF TRUE BELIEVERS.

CONCLUSION: Man derives his value from God. God has shown in His mighty acts that He highly regards man. It is now time for us all to be reminded that all of life, as God has created it, is precious and is to be cherished. A young American black man, rebelling against the inferiority feelings inculcated in him by some white persons, wrote these words on a banner which he displayed in his room: "I'm Me and I'm good, 'cause God don't make junk!"

CHAPTER 3

SUBJECT: **THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE**

SCRIPTURE: Psalms 139: 14-18

TEXT: *"Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous - and how well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion! You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book! How precious it is, Lord, to realize that you are thinking about me constantly! I can't even count how many times a day your thoughts turn towards me. And when I waken in the morning, you are still thinking of me!* (Psalms 139: 14-18)

INTRODUCTION:

Does human life have any value? Is man more than dust, more than 160 pounds of muscle and fat and bone and fluid? Is man more than a small speck living on an insignificant planet in the vast universe, lost in space?

Slander against humanity is committed often by atheistic philosophers, such as the one who stated that man is "a boisterous bit of the organic scum of one small planet." The one who has lost faith in a loving Creator is the one who has also lost faith in the dignity of man and the sanctity of life! To such a person, human life has little value. It has been pointed out many times by perceptive minds that technology demotes persons. Arnold Toynbee once noted that technology puts persons "into serial numbers punched on a card, designed to travel through the entrails of a computer." Desmond Morris tells us that humans are nothing but animals, and B. F. Skinner, a behaviourist, believed that humans were nothing more than machines, programmed to make automatic responses to external stimuli. Is it any wonder that many people today feel that they are worthless nonentities?

When one thinks about the sanctity of life - especially on the 'Sanctity of Life Sunday' - he thinks of the abortion issue in our American society. And rightfully so, when one realizes that about one and one-half million babies are aborted each year in America! This is an atrocity that almost defies understanding and comprehension! A silent holocaust! Doubtless, the abortion problem is the number one moral problem in America today, even though we must admit that there are many other most serious moral problems which cannot be ignored.

Some people are very sensitive to the abortion issue (the 'Right-to-Life' issue) and rightly so, but some of these same people need to be sensitive to other important moral issues as well, all having to do with the concept of 'Sanctity of Life'. Many issues relate to the sacred view

toward life, a proper respect for the human body. What are a few of those important issues, beyond the obvious issue of abortion? Issues such as: (1) the alcohol issue which is critical, (2) the drug issue which is most serious, (3) the tobacco issue which has been especially clarified by science since the surgeon general's report in 1964, and magnified in recent years, (4) the race issue which has come to the forefront anew during the last decade, (5) the sex equality (gender) issue which continues to evoke considerable public debate, (6) the so-called 'New Morality' which is really the old immorality in modern garb, (7) the pornography issue which is a threat common decency in our society.

It is important, especially for Christians, in considering the general theme of 'Sanctity of Human Life' (and the stewardship of the physical body), not to become lop-sided moralists who strongly contend for justice in one area of morality, but who are oblivious or indifferent to many other equally intolerable injustices and moral evils which are destroying the very foundation of public decency.

To avoid becoming mere moralist, and to assure ourselves that we are Biblically-oriented, it is important that we embrace a total view of life and recognize that the foundation for all true respect for human life is found in our personal acceptance of the God of the Bible who is best known through a personal relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Knowing Christ will assure one that he discovers the beauty of human life - for Christ said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life..

PROPOSITION:

It is in the Bible that we learn of God's high regard for human beings! The sanctity of life - and thus the basis of all genuine human freedom - is founded in the Biblical concept of Man! There are several principles in the Bible that reveal God's respect for human life.

I. CREATION OF MANKIND.

Genesis 1: 26, 27 says, *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."*

Notes Malcolm Muggeridge, "In Christian terms every single human being, whoever he or she may be, sick or well, clever or foolish, beautiful or ugly, every single human being is loved of his Creator, who has, as the Gospels tell us, counted the hairs of his head. This Creator cannot see even a sparrow fall to the ground without concern. Now it is from that concept that our rights derive....These basic human rights depend ultimately on the Christian concept of man and of his relationship to his Creator." (The End of Christendom; pg. 19)

The Bible says, *"God giveth to all life, and breath, and all things...For in God we live, and move and have our being."* (Acts 17: 28)

God is the Creator of all persons. God loves all persons alike. As the author of life, God alone has the right to terminate the life of one of His creatures. Life is equally sacred to God, whether it be in the jungles of Africa or whether it be in the concrete jungles of New York City, whether it be life within the body of an 80-year-old or whether it be life that is surging in the body of an unborn baby.

Each person is special because each person was specially formed by God for a special purpose! Declares David, "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body, and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous - and how well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion! You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book! How precious it is, Lord, to realize that you are thinking about me constantly! I can't even count how many times a day your thoughts turn towards me. And when I waken in the morning, you are still thinking of me!" (Psalms 139: 13-18, Living Bible)

"*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. For in him we live, and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said. For we are also his offspring.*" (Acts 17: 24-26, 28)

Does a doctor or a consenting parent have any moral right to kill any of God's unborn offspring?

When we read v. 2b ("*he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.*" it reminds us of the Old Testament passage where Job said: *"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It is the Lord who gives us breath.*

This passage further teaches us that all nations of people are of one blood, that is, all life is equally important to God, be it life with black, red, yellow, or white skin. Life is equally sacred to God, be it in starving Africa, or be it in metropolitan New York, or be it the life that is surging within the body of an 80 year old or life that is surging in the body of an unborn baby.

The Bible considers blood to be the very essence of life, and the Bible forbids the shedding of human blood.

II. INCARNATION PRINCIPLE.

Perhaps the most important verse of the New Testament is John 1: 14, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.*"

Notes E. Stanley Jones: "This verse - 'the Word Became Flesh' - is the Great Divide. In all other religions it is Word became word - a philosophy, a moralism, a system, a technique, but for all time and all men everywhere, ' the Word became flesh' - the Idea became Fact." (Word Became Flesh; pg. 5)

Notes William Barclay: "Augustine afterwards said that in his pre-Christian days he had read and studied the great pagan philosophers and their writings,....but he had never read that 'the Word Became flesh'. The one thing that no Greek would ever have dreamed of was that God could 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...The great Roman stoic Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, said 'Despise the flesh - blood and bones are a net-work, a twisted skein of nerves and veins and arteries.' 'The composition of the whole body is under corruption.'" (John' Commentary)

Notes Jones: "And yet, in the face of all that - the highest thought of the day - the Gospel quietly says: 'And the Word became flesh.'" (Ibid; pg. 8)

The greatest fact of human history is the fact that God became a man, embodying Himself in human flesh. The human form was deity stamped upon it, and should never be degraded.

Why does Christianity teach that human life is sacred and that man's claim to certain 'inalienable rights' is justifiable? Because of man's unique creation, as we have noted! Also because of God's special regard for human life as shown in the fact that God embodied himself in a human form! *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."* (John 1: 14) God reflected his glory in His Son - not only in heaven but on earth - in a bodily, physical, earthly form! God did not look upon the human race as untouchable. Far from it for 'He dwelt among us', laughing, loving, longing, languishing with us humans! God has forever sanctified human life and invested dignity in the human race when He became a man in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ! Jesus is 'God with us' - Immanuel - imparting value to an otherwise valueless human existence. The great fact of human history is the fact that this planet is a visited planet - visited not merely by angels in spirit form, but visited by the Creator Himself in bodily form! God became a man, embodying himself in human flesh! This fact alone forever establishes the truth of the sanctity of human life! The human form, the result of God's special creation according to Genesis, is the very same form that God chose to live in for 33 years! Therefore, if the human form is a specially created

form, and if it is the very form that God chose to embody Himself in while living on earth, what institution, or law, or nation, or individual has a right to destroy that human form? Life is sacred because of the fact of the Incarnation!

Does Christianity really teach that the human body is sacred and that human beings therefore have dignity? Yes! Christianity, in its early days confronted a heresy called Gnosticism, which asserted that human flesh was evil and profane, and therefore to be despised. This heresy contended that because the human body was evil and God is altogether good, that God therefore could not have anything to do with human flesh. They concluded, on the basis of this erroneous logic, that Jesus did not really have a human body, but that he only appeared to have one. They believed that Jesus was not a real human being, but only some phantom or ghost-like being.

The book of I John was written to refute the heresy of Gnosticism, and to prove that Jesus was not only God, but that He indeed was truly man, with a real physical body. *"Christ was alive when the world began, and I myself have seen him with my own eyes and listened to him speak; I have touched him with my own hands. He is God's message of life."* (I John 1: 1)

While the ancient world philosophically and practically disregarded the human body at best, as of little consequence, and at worst, as an evil network to be despised, Christianity clearly taught that the body is the 'Temple of the Holy Spirit'.

However, while the New Testament highly regards the human body, the New Testament seldom views the body as a separate entity. The New Testament usually speaks of human life in its totality, including the spiritual and psychological elements of life, as well as the physical element.

On one hand, the New Testament refutes the cynical modern-day contention of some chemists and philosophical humanists who contend that man is merely a chemically and psychologically-determined animal. On the other hand, the New Testament nowhere exhorts man to worship the body or consider it as the most important feature of human life. Christ calls us to a wholistic view of life, teaching us to value all of life - body, soul, and spirit - with all of the God-sanctioned expressions of these divinely-created capacities.

III. COMPASSIONATE LIFE OF JESUS.

To the extent that a person truly seeks to be Godlike - i.e., more particularly, Christ-like - to that same extent will he learn to cherish fellow human beings. Christ's responses and attitudes toward people, as He lived and moved among individuals and among the crowds in Palestine, is the model for the followers of Christ to imitate. Christ truly loved people, and so must we, if we are to be truly human.

John Stott gives us a brief, but vivid, picture of Christ's compassionate attitudes towards human beings. Notes Stott, It is true that he drew attention to the evil and ugly things which issue from the human heart.(Mark 7: 21-23). He also spoke, however, or the 'value' of human beings in God's sight. They are 'much more valuable' than birds of beasts, he said. What was the ground of this value judgment? It must have been the doctrine of creation, which Jesus took over from the Old Testament, namely that human beings are the crown of God's creative activity, and that he made man male and female in his own image. It is the divine image we bear which gives us our distinctive value...He despised nobody and disowned nobody. On the contrary , he went out of his way to honor those whom the world dishonored, and to accept those whom the world rejected, He spoke courteously to women in public, He invited little children to come to him. He spoke words of hope to Samaritans and Gentiles. He allowed leprosy sufferers to approach him, and a prostitute to anoint and kiss his feet. He made friends with the outcasts of society, and ministered to the poor and hungry. In all this diversified ministry his compassionate respect for human beings shone forth. He acknowledged their value and loved them, and by loving them he further increased their value."

Jesus life of compassion is seen, not only in His practical acts of love for the multitudes (such as His feeding of the thousands who were hungry as a result of their listening to Jesus' teachings for several hours, Matthew 14: 15-21), but also in Jesus' personable love as He singled out persons for special attention to individualized needs. In the midst of a crowd, Jesus singled out Zacchaeus in order to bring personal salvation to him and to his household (Luke 19: 1-10). In the midst of a crowd, Jesus singled out one solitary woman whose body had been amazingly healed as a result of her having touched the hem of Jesus' garment (Matthew 9: 20-22). In the midst of a thronging crowd of people who were focused on Jesus, an overlooked and despised blind man became the object of Jesus' attention and healing power. Jesus was very concerned with the masses of humanity, and He had great compassion in His heart for these large crowds of people, for Jesus saw them as "sheep without a shepherd." Jesus taught the multitudes and He distributed bread to the multitudes, and large groups of people often followed Him. But Jesus never was awestruck by the crowds, and He was never too busy to give His attention to individuals or to small groups of needy folks. Jesus always upheld the dignity of the individual person!

Notes William Sangster, "The ordinary man, when he thinks at all, is half-paralyzed at the thought that he does not matter. The world is run, he believes...by 'high-ups'. For all the lip-service paid to him by politicians, he feels that he is just 'one of the masses'. He suspects that he is planned-for, planned-on and planned-over, but not treated as a person...He feels, at times, less than a pawn in a game played over his head by the people in authority, and he awaits the next crisis, or the next depression, or the next war, powerless himself to put it off...the evangelist treats him as a person; assures him...that he is dear to God - dear enough to shed the precious blood...He is, so the preacher affirms, so intimately known to God that the hairs of his head are all

numbered, and God has set such store on winning his love that He gives His own Son for the gift of a sinner's heart. If he will trust God for it, new life will flow into him - the life of God. It is wonderful for a 'mass-man' to become an individual; a person ... 'Meeting' with God does it. Cardinal Newman knew, in the hour of his conversion, 'two and two only absolutely and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator'. Luther knew it. He said 'It is the personal pronouns that matter'...in an age of personal futility, the evangelist has a sovereign opportunity so to offer the life of God to people that futility will vanish in conscious effectiveness, and each new-born soul know himself a person in the sight of his Maker." (Daily Readings; pg. 184)

Jesus loved not only the souls of persons, and thus emphasized their need for repentance of sin resulting in forgiveness and eternal life, but Jesus was also very concerned for persons whose bodies were racked with pain wasting away because of a variety of diseases. It is true that Jesus' primary ministry was to seek and to save the lost ones, but it was also Jesus' mission on earth to heal the sick and to feed the hungry. Jesus saw persons from a 'wholistic' viewpoint - with physical and mental and emotional and social needs which needed to be met, as well as spiritual needs which needed to be supplied. As the Great Physician, Jesus gave much time and effort in restoring sick and crippled bodies, as well as in saving lost souls. If Jesus cared so much for physical suffering, should not every earnest believer today be concerned, in the name of Christian Compassion, in ministering physical cures to hurting bodies, as well as declaring the Good News of Salvation to lost souls? If the physical body was so important to Jesus, as seen by the large amount of time which He gave to this involvement in His public ministry, should not every believer today give much attention to the physical bodies of the multitudes of sufferers throughout our disease-ridden world (especially among the masses in many poor countries)? It is not "Either-Or", but "Both-And" - i.e., "both salvation of the lost soul and healing of the sick and diseased body."

IV. JESUS' ATONING DEATH.

The fact that Jesus died for mankind should forever elevate human dignity. Man wallowing in sin has lost his dignity. Man redeemed from sin has regained his dignity! The vilest of sinners is important to God, for every sinner has the potential of sainthood! Because Christ died for all, all have infinite value!

William Temple said, "My worth is what I am worth to God; and that is a marvelous great deal, for Christ died for me."

Regardless of his physical, mental, moral, or spiritual condition, every man has value and dignity! Why? No man can be called valueless for whom Christ died! Because Christ died for all, none is beyond hope! None is unloveable! None is unredeemable! Because the most valuable person in the universe died for sinners, no sinner is without

hope! All can be saved! Man's dignity is not based upon his moral performance, or upon his utilitarian value. Man's dignity and worth is based upon the fact that he is a creature who has been redeemed by the blood of the Savior!

Christ redeems one powerfully in order to use him productively! "Whatever Christ touched He dignified, and no matter how despised a person or creature may be, Christ has a use for him...No matter how ordinary, ill-educated, disfigured, ill-born, one-talented or obscure a man or woman may be, Christ has a use for them and He gives them dignity by that use." (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 85)

The same night in which Jesus was betrayed, He took bread, "*and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*" (I Corinthians 11: 24)

This is another principle in the New Testament which emphasizes the sacredness of the Human Body. The fact that Jesus' death (which was the death of the body) was the instrument of eternal Redemption for mankind, forever teaches that the human body cannot be carelessly dealt with.

V. PRINCIPLE OF THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE HUMAN BODY.

One result of the teaching of Gnosticism was a careless disregard for the use of the body, and an excessive indulgence of the body in acts of gross immorality. The Gnostics reasoned that the soul of man was good but the body was evil, and therefore one could indulge the body in lustful acts and leave the soul untouched and unharmed and unpolluted in the process.

Paul refuted this heresy and contended that the body is the vehicle of expression of the soul and that the action of the body vitally affects the soul. *"Sexual sin is never right; our bodies were not made for that, but for the Lord, and the Lord wants to fill our bodies with himself...Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts and members of Christ? So should I take part of Christ and join him to a prostitute? Never! And don't you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute she becomes a part of him and he becomes a part of her? For God tells us in the Scripture that in his sight the two become one person. But if you give yourself to the Lord, you and Christ are joined together as one person...That is why I say to run from sex sin. No other sin affects the body as this one does. When you sin this sin it is against your own body. Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it."* (I Corinthians 6: 13b, 15-20)

From a quick look at I Corinthians 6: 13-20, we may learn some basic and important truths:

(1) Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (note verses 13, 19).

(2) Our bodies are not to be abused. Examples of abusive use of the body are overeating and sexual immorality (notes verses 13: 15-18) Obvious other abuses of the body include destroying the body with the use of drugs and alcohol and tobacco. Failure properly to exercise the body and failure to give the body proper rest and sleep are other examples of body abuse. Killing one's own body -suicide - is out of the question ! It is never right, and is never a Christian option. Killing other bodies - murder and abortion - obviously are always wrong.

Let's expand on this second point a little. The Bible warns believers against the dangers of both sensualism and hedonism.

Sensualism is worship of sex. Remember, God created human beings, male and female, and God intends for His wonderful gift of sex to be enjoyed by the totally committed Christian couple within the sole context of marriage. It is not sex itself that is sinful; it is the abuse of sex that is sinful. Sex, properly used, is for procreation - to bring children into the world - and for marital pleasure and for communication of marital love. Sex outside of marriage or before marriage or selfishly within marriage is to abuse one of God's choicest and most beautiful gifts. Wrote Paul, *"That is why I say to run from sex sin. No other sin affects the body as this one does. When you sin this sin it is against your own body."* (I Corinthians 6: 18, Living Bible) Wrote the apostle Paul to young Timothy, *"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."* (2 Timothy 2: 22)

Now let us look at Hedonism. Hedonism is the worship of pleasure. Never forget that sin is always an abuse of one of God's gifts, an evil perversion of something that is good. Pleasure is a gift from God. The Bible says that God has given us all things richly to enjoy. There are eternal pleasures for those who serve the Lord. It is the Father's good pleasure to give His children the joys and riches of His Kingdom. It is the joy of the Lord which is our strength. For the believer, there is a joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory. Yes, pleasure is a gift from God. But when people become pleasure-obsessed rather than God-obsessed, then pleasure is turned into a false god to be worshiped rather than as a gift from the true God to be enjoyed. Pleasure and joy are by-products which come to the one whose main concern in life is to please God. The Bible speaks of those who are *"lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."* When people make pleasure their main goal in life, they have turned pleasure into a god to be worshiped. Thus, they become hedonists. The Bible speaks of those *"whose god is their stomach."* Satisfaction of physical pleasures - like eating food - becomes more important

to them than worshiping the true and living God. Again, remember Paul's words to the Corinthian Christians: *"Take the matter of eating. God has given us an appetite for food and stomachs to digest it. But that doesn't mean we should eat more than we need. Don't think of eating as important, because some day God will do away with both stomachs and food."* (I Corinthians 6: 13, Living Bible)

(3) Our bodies are to be used in such a way that God receives honor and glory. *"For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it."* (I Corinthians 6: 20, Living Bible) Keeping our bodies strong and our minds alert brings glory to God. We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. *"And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy - the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?"* (Romans 12: 1, Living Bible)

(4) Our bodies are temporary, subject to decay and to death. God will eventually do away with our bodies. Therefore, it stands to reason, that no one is ever to worship the human body. Respect and care for the body -yes! Worship of the body - never! Our focus of attention in life, therefore, should not be on our dying bodies, but on our never-dying souls. Wrote Paul to young Timothy, *"Bodily exercise is all right, but spiritual exercise is much more important and is a tonic for all you do. So exercise yourself spiritually and practice being a better Christian, because that will help you not only now in this life, but in the next life too."* (I Timothy 4: 8, Living Bible) Our primary focus must be on the spiritual dimensions of life, and only secondarily on the physical and material dimensions of life. With all of our modern-day emphasis on sports and physical exercise (body building) and dieting (losing weight), let us never neglect our spiritual exercising (meditation on the Word and Prayer and Worship and Compassionate Involvement).

(5) *"God is going to raise our bodies from the dead by His power just as He raised up the Lord Jesus Christ."* (I Corinthians 6: 14, Living Bible) Physical death does not end it all. God will give Christians a new body - a resurrected body - which is deathless, incorruptible, identifiable, perfectly healthy, and patterned after Christ's resurrected body!

VI. PRINCIPLE OF THE SUPREME LAW OF LOVE.

"Pay all your debts except the debt of love for others - never finish paying that! For if you love them, you will be obeying all of God's laws, fulfilling all his requirements. If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself you will not want to harm or cheat him or kill him or steal from him. And you won't sin with his wife or want what is his, or do anything else the Ten Commandments say is wrong.

All ten are wrapped up in this one, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love does no wrong to anyone. That's why it fully satisfies all of God's requirements. It is the only law you need." (Romans 13: 8-10)

This Scripture shows that love is not a mere sentiment but right actions towards other human beings. Is taking the life of an unborn baby consistent with a life of love?

VII. PRINCIPLE OF LOVE AS COMPASSIONATE ACTION TOWARDS THE HELPLESS AND NEEDY.

"But if someone who is supposed to be a Christian has money enough to live well, and sees a brother in need, and won't help him - how can God's love be within him? Little children (Christians), let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions. Then we will know for sure by our actions, that we are on God's side, and our consciences will be clear, even when we stand before the Lord." (I John 3: 17-19) One who takes the life of an unborn child will have to question if his actions are consistent with love, and such a doctor or consenting parent who is connected with abortion will have to contend with a guilty conscience eventually.

Wrote James: *"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man says he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."* (James 2: 14-17)

Compassionate action toward fellow men is the standard for righteousness. Again, these Scriptures show that the human body is important and worthy of being rescued from death - be it starvation which is explicitly stated, or be it an unborn child which is implied from the principle.

VIII. PRINCIPLE OF THE GOLDEN RULE.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that man should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7: 12)

Writes Barclay: "This saying is the topmost peak of social ethics, and the Everest of all ethical teaching. It is possible to quote rabbinic parallels for almost everything that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount; but there is no real parallel to this saying. This is something which had never been said before. It is new teaching, and a new view of life and of life's obligations...it is not difficult to find many parallels to this saying in its negative form...The negative form of the rule involves nothing more than

NOT doing certain things; it means refraining from certain actions. It is never very difficult NOT to do things...It is one thing to say, 'I must not injure people; I must not do to them what I would object to their doing to me.' That, the law can compel us to do. It is quite another thing to say, 'I must go out of my way to help other people and to be kind to them, as I would wish them to help and to be kind to me.'" (Barclays Matthew pg. 278-280)

Even stated negatively, the Golden Rule of the Jews would forbid the taking of another life, yea, even that of an unborn baby. How much more then does the positively stated Golden Rule of Jesus forbid the taking of human life - born or unborn? Would the doctor who aborts an unborn child without that unborn child's consent, have wanted his own life aborted before his own birth? The Golden Rule of Jesus has much to say about the proper and respectful treatment of other people, including unborn babies!

IX. PRINCIPLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR DEEDS DONE IN THE HUMAN BODY.

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." (Romans 6: 12-13)

The body is either the instrument of sin or the instrument of righteousness. The body is the vehicle of expression of morally accountable actions. God is sovereign over life and death. Whatever a man sows, he must reap. Judgment for sin is found in sin's harvest - namely, a life plagued with guilt and separated from fellowship with the Creator.

One does not really break the Laws of God; the Laws break the offender. He who ignores the objective, absolute Laws of God regarding the sanctity of life, and becomes a law unto himself, not only hurts the innocent, but reaps God's judgment.

Those who arbitrarily or selfishly decide to end the life of an unborn child are operating their lives upon a subjective, relative ethic rather than the objective, absolute Biblical ethic. In the time of the Judges (of the Old Testament) it is said that *"Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes."* Those people reaped the judgment of God then, and surely people today who operate with this relative ethic will also reap the judgment of God. For God, the Author of Life, is alone to decide in the issues of life and death. God alone has the right to terminate human life. Because life is sacred to God, life must be sacred to man. The whole message of the New Testament is the message of Salvation of man - including the healing of the body and the cleansing and restoration of the soul. Anyone who does not value all life and

seek does not to save it, is challenging the very values of Almighty God and is in

danger of severe punishment. Man is accountable directly to God for the way he handles human life.

X. PRINCIPLE OF THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND THE SUBSEQUENT RESURRECTION OF THE BODY OF TRUE BELIEVERS.

"The resurrection of Jesus was bodily, and it is not to be confused with the widely-held doctrine of immortality of soul. It is fashionable today in some scholarly circles to disassociate the resurrection from anything involving the body of Jesus. This is a misuse of terms, for the concept of resurrection implies body. In fact, it is redundant to say, 'Bodily Resurrection'. That is like saying 'Widow woman'. When one says 'resurrection', he has already implied 'Body'. The concept of an immortal soul, separate from the body, is a pagan idea, traceable back to pagan religions, centuries before Jesus. This is one fallacy refuted in John's Gospel." (Dr. Frank Stagg; Prof. Of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky).

The fact of the Resurrection conclusively establishes God's positive attitude toward the human body. God is forever identified with humanity through the resurrection body. If God thinks so much of the human body that He raised Jesus' dead body to life, then what man has a right to think so little of the unborn human body to kill it? The unborn babe is a body, mind, and soul with infinite possibilities, and to kill it is to kill God's potential, and indeed, to play the role of God!

I Corinthians 6: 14 says: *"And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power."* If the human body is so important that God will resurrect the body of every believer in the future, then what right has anyone to destroy the body of a person - especially the body of an unborn immortal babe?

CONCLUSION:

Man derives his value from God. God has shown in His mighty acts that He highly regards man. It is now time for us all to be reminded that all of life, as God has created it, is precious and is to be cherished. A young American black man, rebelling against the inferiority feelings inculcated in him by some white persons, wrote these words on a banner which he displayed in his room: "I'm Me and I'm good, 'cause God don't make junk!"

In his amazing article entitled 'The Weight of Glory', C. S. Lewis notes, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is

civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals, whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner - no mere tolerance, or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbor he is holy in almost the same way, for in him Christ - the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself - is truly hidden."

> "To the masses of the western world the news that all men are more than things was proclaimed by the Christian gospel and was celebrated in its central mysteries. It proclaimed the news to all men that they were not brute things, to all men without exception, the weak, the outcast, the downtrodden, the enslaved, and the utterly dejected. The influence of that gospel has been inexhaustible. It anchored the rights of men in the structure of the universe. It set these rights apart where they were beyond human interference. Thus the pretensions of despots become heretical. And since that revelation, though many despots have had the blessings of the clergy, no tyranny has possessed a clear title before the tribunal of human conscience, no slave has had to feel that the hope of freedom was forever forciosed. For in the recognition that there is in each man a final essence - that is to say, an immortal soul - which only God can judge, a limit was set upon the dominion of men over men. The prerogatives of supremacy were radically undermined, the inviolability of the human person was declared." (By Walter Lippmann in 'The Good Society'; quoted by George Roche in 'One by One'; pg. 208)

CHAPTER 3

QUESTIONS

1. When one loses faith in a loving Creator, what is the inevitable consequence in terms of one's attitude toward mankind?

2. Of the following moral issues which must be faced in our contemporary society, which one or ones do you feel most strongly about and wish most to be involved in?

   _____a. The alcohol issue.
   _____b. The drug abuse issue
   _____c. The tobacco issue.
   _____d. The race issue.
   _____e. The sex equality (gender) issue.
   _____f. The "New Morality' (illicit sex) issue.
   _____g. The pornography issue.
   _____h. The abortion issue.
   _____I. Other _____.

3. What is the most reliable "foundation" for all true respect for human life?

4. What is the "source" for all basic "human rights"? (Note Genesis 1: 26-27; Acts 17: 28; Psalms 139: 13-18)

5. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: "As the Author of life, God alone has the right to terminate the life of one of His creatures." (Note Acts 17: 24-26, 28)

6. Does a doctor or a consenting parent have any moral right to kill any of God's unborn offspring? Why or why not?

7. Why is John 1: 14 considered by many people to be one of the most important verses in the Bible?

8. Why does Christianity teach that human life is sacred and that man's claim to certain 'inalienable rights' is justifiable?

9. If the human form is a specially created form, and if it is the very form that God chose to embody Himself in while living on earth, what institution, or law, or nation, or individual has a right to destroy that human form, either through abortion, or infanticide, or suicide, or murder, or so-called "mercy killing" of the elderly?

10. Briefly describe the heresy of Gnosticism and tell why this heresy posed such a serious threat to the Early Christian Church.

11. Why is it both foolish and wrong to base a man's dignity and worth upon his moral performance or upon his utilitarian value?

12. Do you believe that, no matter how despised one may be, that no matter how ordinary or ill-educated or disfigured or ill-born or one-talented or obscure a man or woman may be, Christ has a use for them and He gives them dignity by that use?

13. What does the EUCHARIST (Lord's Supper) mean to you, how does participation in this sacred ceremony help deepen one's respect for human life, and particularly respect for the human body?

14. According to I Corinthians 6: 13-20, how does the action (behavior) of the human body affect the soul of a person? Why is sexual immorality an obvious abuse of the human body? To whom does your own body and the body of every other human being belong?

15. Name several ways in which you may bring honor and glory to God by the proper use (stewardship) of your body.

16. If abuse of one's body is wrong, why is worship of one's body equally wrong? What are some possible ways in which one might worship his own body? (Read I Timothy 4: 8 in several different Bible translations)

17. Share your understanding of what you think your life in your future resurrected (spiritual) body in heaven will be like. (Note I Corinthians 6: 14)

18. Describe and define the life of sensualism, and tell why such a life results in an abuse of the physical body and in a serious offense to Almighty God who has created the human body.

19. For what purpose did God create man and woman as sexual creatures?

20. Describe the hedonistic lifestyle, and share why such a lifestyle is so futile and so wrong. Is it possible for believers thoroughly to enjoy the "good things" (pleasures and material possessions of the physical world) "falling into the trap of hedonism"?

21. According to Romans 13: 8-10, what is the only "law" one needs in order to live a truly successful and meaningful life?

22. Is taking the life of an unborn baby consistent with a life of love? (Romans 13: 8-10; I John 3: 17-19)

23. According to James 2: 14-17, how should Christian compassion practically and explicitly be demonstrated? By implication, what treatment should be afforded an unborn child, according to the Scripture?

24. What application does Jesus' "Golden Rule" (Matthew 7: 12) have to the abortion issue?

25. Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: "He who ignores the objective, absolute Laws of God regarding the sanctity of human life, and becomes a "law unto himself", not only hurts the innocent, but he reaps God's judgment."

26. If God thinks so much of the human body that He raised Jesus' dead body to life, then what man has a right to think so little of the unborn human body to kill it?

27. If, according to I Corinthians 6: 14, the human body is so important that God will resurrect the body of every believer in the future, then what right has anyone to destroy the body of a person - especially the body of an unborn immortal babe?

CHAPTER 4

VALENTINE'S

CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT: **THE PERSONALITY OF LOVE**

SCRIPTURE: **I Corinthians 13: 4-7**

TEXT: ***"Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Loves does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him."***

INTRODUCTION: What best characterized the personality of Christ? Was it not love? If Jesus was God in human form, and if 'God is love', this means that 'Jesus is love'. To be people who follow Jesus is to be people who lead a life of love! Let us look at those specific characteristics which describe the personality of holy love.

I. LOVE IS PATIENT.

II. LOVE IS KIND.

III. LOVE DOES NOT ENVY.

IV. LOVE DOES NOT BOAST; LOVE IS NOT PROUD.

V. LOVE IS NOT RUDE.

VI. LOVE IS NOT SELF-SEEKING.

VII. LOVE IS NOT EASILY ANGERED.

VIII. LOVE KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS.

CONCLUSION:

Love is the very essence of the Christian life and is the capstone of all the Christian graces. Said John Wesley: "Religion is the most simple ting that can be conceived. It is only humble, gentle, patient love."

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INTRODUCTION:

Did you realize that Valentine's Day originated as an ancient Christian holiday? Recently my sister, who worked for Hallmark Company for more than 25 years, sent my wife and me a special Valentine card in which the story of Valentine's Day was shared. Perhaps you are one of many who will be surprised to learn that this holiday, which is often secularized and sentimentalized in our modern day, has special spiritual 'roots'. Following is the story of Valentine's Day, as it appeared in the card which we recently received from my sister:

> The story of Valentine's Day begins in the third century with an oppressive Roman emperor and a humble Christian martyr. The emperor was Claudius II. The Christian was Valentinus.
>
> Claudius had ordered all Romans to worship twelve gods, and he had made it a crime punishable by death to associate with Christians. But Valentinus was dedicated to the ideals of Christ, and not even the threat of death could keep him from practicing his beliefs. He was arrested and imprisoned.
>
> During the last weeks of Valentinus's life a remarkable thing happened. Seeing that he was a man of learning, the jailer asked whether his daughter, Julia, might be brought to Valentinus for lessons. She had been blind since birth. Julia was a pretty, young girl with a quick mind. Valentinus read stories of Rome's history to her.
>
> He taught her arithmetic, and told her about God.
>
> She saw the world through his eyes, trusted in his wisdom, and found comfort in his quiet strength.

"Valentinus, does God really hear our prayers?" Julia said one day.

"Yes, my child, He hears each one," he replied.

"Do you know what I pray for eery morning and every night? I pray that I might see. I want so much to see everything you've told me about!"

"God does what is best for us if we will only believe in Him," Valentinus said.

"Oh, Valentinus, I do believe," Julia said intensely. "I do." She knelt and grasped his hand.

They sat quietly together, each praying. Suddenly there was a brilliant light in the prison cell. Radiant, Julia screamed, "Valentinus, I can see! I can see!"

"Praise be to God!" Valentinus exclaimed, and he knelt in prayer.

On the eve of his death Valentinus wrote a last note to Julia, urging her to stay close to God, and he signed it "From Your Valentine."

His sentence was carried out the next day, February 14, 270 A.D., near a gate that was later named Porta Valentini in his memory. He was buried at what is now the Church of Praxedes in Rome. It is said that Julia herself planted a pink-blossomed almond tree near his grave. Today, the almond tree remains a symbol of abiding love and friendship. On each February 14, St. Valentine's Day, messages of affection, love and devotion are exchanged around the world.

Recently I heard a Church architect say that after working with many Church building committees and congregations, he has noticed that every Church has its own unique personality. He said that just as each individual has a personality, so every Church has its own unique personality.

What is the personality of your Church? How would you answer that?

If your Church claims to be a Christlike Church, this means that the people of your Church must be constantly seeking to imitate the personality of Christ! What a high calling! To imitate the very personality of Christ!

PROPOSITION:

What best characterized the personality of Christ? Was it not love? If Jesus was God in human from, and if 'God is love', this means that 'Jesus is love'. To be people who follow

Jesus is to be people who lead a life of love! Let us look at those specific characteristics which describe the personality of holy love! Is not 'holy love' the true meaning of Valentine's Day?

I. LOVE IS PATIENT.

"It is the word used of the man who is wronged and who has it easily in his power to avenge himself and who yet will not do it...In our dealings with men, however refractory and however unkind and hurting they are, we must exercise the same patience as God exercises with us." (Barclay's 1 Corinthians, pg. 119)

Patience is that loving spirit which will never give way to vengeance. God's loving, forbearing forgiving, patient attitude toward sinful mankind, is the attitude which every believer is to reproduce in his life. It is God's patience which breeds man's patience. "It God had been a man He would have taken his hand and wiped out this world long ago; but God has that patience which bears with all our sinning and which will not cast us off." (Barclay's Galatians; pg. 56)

"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay', says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12: 19-21)

"But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly." (I Peter 2: 20-23)

"A dramatic fable story is told of a young man who fell madly in love with a girl who hated the young man's mother. The girl laid down the hard condition that she would marry him only if he would bring the heart of his mother to her. His mad love for her got the better of him, so he killed his mother, took out her heart, wrapped it in a piece of paper, and ran with it to the girl. In his eagerness he tripped and fell, and the heart rolled out of the paper. The heart spoke and said: 'Son, I hope you haven't hurt yourself?'

"Jesus prayed, '*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*' That was the long-suffering God saying when they were murdering Him: *'My sons, I hope you*

haven't hurt yourselves.'" (Ibid; pg. 98)

Love is longsuffering, i.e., love suffers long with persons who are sinners or persons who are immature or indifferent. Like God's Love!

II. LOVE IS KIND.

One of the great characteristics of love is kindness. God is love; therefore, God is kind. He is not harsh. He comes not to condemn but to save. He is only severe after his mercy and love are ultimately spurned. As God is kind, so must Christians be kind. Says the Scriptures, *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."* (Ephesians 4: 32)

Notes Barclay, "So much Christianity is good but unkind." There is a type of Christianity which is critical and harsh. We must never lose our ability to be indignant with holy love, and we must be able to whip our will into a holy campaign against sin when the occasion demands it. But too many times believers find it easy to identify with the critical crowd who wanted to stone the condemned adulterous woman. Believers ought always to identity with the tender-hearted Christ who spoke words of love and forgiveness to the guilty woman. The crowd's stones would have broken her body, but Jesus' kind and forgiving words broke her heart. *"Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more."* Those were kind words. Here is the sweetness of Jesus' temper which put the woman at ease and which shrank back from causing her needless pain. The pain of her shame and guilt was enough to drive her to repentance. No need for the infliction of the cruel pain of self-righteous judgment. Jesus' kindness healed the woman! The kindness of Jesus' followers will also heal the broken-hearted today.

III. LOVE DOES NOT ENVY.

Comments Barclay, "Love knows no envy. It has been said that envy is the last sin to die. There are really only two classes of people in this world - 'those who are millionaires and those who would like to be'! There are two kinds of envy. The one kind covets the possessions of other people; and such envy is very difficult to avoid because it is a very human thing. The other kind is worse - it grudges the very fact that others should have what it has not. It does not so much want things for itself as it wishes others had not got them. Meanness of soul can sink no further than that." (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 134)

What is one of the causes of jealousy or envy? Constantly comparing ourselves with other people. Competition and comparison is a common way of life in America. We compare mind with mind, bank account with bank account, beauty with beauty, achievement with achievement, Church with Church, ball team with ball team, etc.

Notes Dr. McMillan, "We consciously or subconsciously try to prove to ourselves and to our fellows that our ideals are superior, our doctrines are the correct ones, our Church is the best, our city is the choicest, our state is the most important, our political concepts and party are necessary to save the world from destruction, our ball team is going to win the world series, and our, our, our, - you name it, and we will argue until we are blue in the face..." (None of These Diseases; pg. 133)

This tendency towards power, popularity, dominance, and leadership breeds envy, strife, and jealousy. The musical expresses this spirit of comparison and strife, and competition: "Anything you can do, I can do better!"

What is the source of such carnal competition? An unsurrendered, carnal ego! What is the solution to such carnal competition? A surrendered ego, cleansed by the Holy Spirit, who sheds abroad God's love in the human heart. Spirit-imparted love *"is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud."* (I Corinthians 13: 4, Living Bible)

"If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Then we won't need to look for honors and popularity, which lead to jealousy and hard feelings." (Galatians 5: 25, Living Bible)

What is the solution to the problem of envy and jealousy? Allowing the Holy Spirit to shed abroad God's love in your heart. Comparing yourself, not with others, but with Christ and His holy standards, which brings genuine humility, not pride or despair. Rejoicing in the God-ordained place Christ has for you, and learning to rejoice in the God-ordained place Christ has for others. Seeking not the praise and approval of men but seeking instead the praise and approval of God, in serving Christ.

IV LOVE DOES NOT BOAST; LOVE IS NOT PROUD.

" The really great man never thinks of his own importance. Carey, who began life as a cobbler, was one of the greatest missionaries and certainly one of the greatest linguists the world has ever seen. He translated at least parts of the Bible into no fewer than thirty-four Indian languages. When he came to India, he was regarded with dislike and contempt. At a dinner party a snob, with the idea of humiliating him, said in a tone that everyone could hear, 'I suppose, Mr. Carey, you once worked as a shoe-maker.' 'No, your lordship,' answered Carey, 'not a shoe-maker, only a cobbler.' He did not even claim to make shoes - only to mend them. No one likes the 'important' person. Man 'dressed in a little brief authority' can be a sorry sight." (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 121)

V. LOVE IS NOT RUDE.

While love is not proud, it is at the same time not rude or crude. The dignity of good manners is consistent with the humility of godly attitudes.

Love is perhaps best tested in the privacy of the home, in the closeness of family relationships. Love has good table manners. Love knows how to listen to others, rather than rudely interrupting others. Love knows how to say 'Thank you', 'Please', 'You First', 'Sorry', 'Pardon me', 'May I Help you?'." Love is courteous. Love is constantly trying to 'Knock off' the rough edges of uncouth behavior, while at the same time 'being natural' and 'down-to-earth'.

Of all people in the world, Christians ought to be the best mannered and most becoming in behavior. The believers' speech ought to be natural, yet refined and edifying to others.

"It is a significant fact that in Greek the words for grace and for charm are the same. There is a kind of Christianity which takes a delight in being blunt and almost brutal... There is a graciousness in Christian love which never forgets that courtesy and tact and politeness are lovely things." (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 121)

In our homes especially (as well as in public) let us ask God to help us to manifest that Christian love which is never rude. As a child, I remember seeing that plaque which read:

"Christ is the Head of This Home,
The Silent Listener to Every Conversation,
The Unseen Guest at Every Table!"

If Christ is the constant unseen guest at every table, and the silent listener to every conversation, how can we ever intentionally be rude?

V. LOVE IS NOT SELF-SEEKING.

Christ has come to deliver from self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is that human disease that manifests itself in a perverted misplacement of self on the throne of life rather than God on the human throne.

Centering on Self causes an undue distress over a trifling mishap to ones self and an insensitivity to major calamities in someone else's life.

Illustrations of this concept are:

a. A husband's impatience with his wife when having to wait a half hour for supper (which is his third meal for the day) - and at the same time totally being insensitive to reports of millions of persons presently starving to death.

b. A football coach in the summer of 1939 said most earnestly that he hoped there would not be a war. Then he added: "You see, I think I shall have the finest football team next season the school has ever known!"

c. Notes Sangster: "Traveling by train from Hull to London recently, I heard a lady falteringly tell another lady in the next seat that she was in great grief; she had recently lost her husband. The lady to whom she gave her confidence expressed her instant sympathy. 'I can feel for you,' she said, 'I recently lost my dog!"

Self-centeredness and pride are close kinsmen! Pride is the foulest of all sins, and yet the sin that is often disguised as a mere human weakness, of little consequence.

When God's love replaces self-centered love, the believer has a proper attitude towards both himself and others. He has a humble attitude towards himself, an attitude neither of self-despising or of self-glorying but an attitude of wholesome self-love. He has an attitude toward others that is honoring to Christ and edifying to others.

"*Is there any such thing as Christian cheering each other up? Do you love me enough to want to help me? Does it mean anything to you that we are brothers in the Lord, sharing the same Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic at all? Then make me truly happy by loving each other and agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, working together with one heart and mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and in what they are doing.*" (Philippians 2: 1-4, Living Bible)

VII. LOVE IS NOT EASILY ANGERED.

Love is not characterized by over-sensitive feelings which can easily be hurt or by a temper that can easily be stirred into a rage. A love-filled person never flies into an angry rage because of personal injury. He keeps his head. He knows how to think

objectively. He is given to reason, not to passion.

When he is angry, he is angry for the right reasons. A love-filled person (like God Himself) is "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." When the love-filled person is angry, his anger is motivated by unselfish considerations. "Jesus Christ never spoke one angry word when he was personally mistreated - not even at Calvary, when he was unjustly put to an excruciating death as a common criminal." (Christianity Today; July 19, 1968)

The anger of love-filled person "is directed not against persons, wrong though they be, but against wrong deeds, things, institutions, and situations." (Ibid)

When a love-controlled Christian is angry, there is no vindictiveness in his anger. In this anger there is a warm emotional exchange, with no bitting or stabbing remarks, and no coercion and no grudge-bearing. The love-filled believer is not easily angered, and when he is angered, the anger is short-lived, followed by forgetting and forgiving, and results in building stronger relationships.

VIII. LOVE KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS.

Someone wrote, "When God pardons, He consigns the offense to everlasting forgetfulness." God hides our sins in the *"sea of His forgetfulness"*, never to be brought to our attention again. *"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."* Colossians 3: 13 says, *"Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."* Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love forgives!

Why forgive? Because God forgives. To be like God and like Christ, I must forgive. Forgiveness is one of the greatest proofs of love.

The story is told of a mother whose son was an alcoholic. The alcoholic son came into the mother's presence in a drunken state, and others in the room with the son and the mother began to criticize and ridicule and 'cut down' the wayward son. The broken-hearted mother of the son said nothing to the son but went over to the pathetic-looking son and kissed his bloated lips. The criticism of the others did nothing but confirm the son's self-hatred, but the tender forgiving kiss of the mother, whose love was unconditional, was the kiss that broke the heart of the rebellious son. As I recall the story, that son repented of his sins and gave his life to Christ. The actions of forgiveness did far more than the words of rebuke and criticism.

Love learns to forgive and to forget. "Loves does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received." (Barclays translation).

CONCLUSION:

Love is the very essence of the Christian life and is the capstone of all the Christian graces. Said John Wesley: "Religion is the most simple thing that can be conceived. It is only humble, gentle, patient love".

Pray for an outpouring of God's love into your own heart just now! Let this prayer be your personal prayer: "Father, I am seeing that I am made by Love and for loving. If I don't love, I perish, perhaps only gradually but surely and ultimately! Enable me to love with your kind of love, I perish, perhaps only gradually but surely and ultimately! Enable me to love with your kind of love–the love that loves love into the loveless, that cares for the careless, that lifts up the fallen, that soothes the sorrowing, that heals the hurting. Let my motions today be the motions of love because I am motivated by nothing less than the love of God! In Jesus' loving name. Amen."

CHAPTER 4

QUESTIONS

1. Without 'falling into the trap' of critical judgmentalism, how would you describe the personality of your local Church, in terms of Christlikeness?
Check the following statements which are general descriptions of the Church where you regularly worship.

   a. Patient with people's faults.
   b. Kind and compassionate with hurting people.
   c. Non-competitive and non-comparative, rather than envious and jealous.
   d. Humble rather than boastful.
   e. Dignified and courteous, rather than rude and crude.
   f. Others-oriented, rather than self-seeking and proud.
   g. Love-filled, rather than overly-sensitive and angry.
   h. Forgiving, rather than grudge-bearing and vengeful.

2. According to I Peter 2: 20-23, what is the appropriate and Christ-honoring response which a believer is to make toward a person who abuses and mistreats and persecutes him? According to Romans 12: 19-21, whose responsibility is it to *"reap vengeance"* upon evil-doers?

3. Give your personal response or reaction to the following statement: "If God had been a man He would have taken his hand and wiped out this world long ago; but God has that patience which bears with all our sinning and which will not cast us off."

4. Is it possible for professing Christians to be "good" but nevertheless "unkind"? How does Jesus' reaction to the adulterous woman (John 8: 1-11) provide an example for the follower of Christ in his reaction towards sinful persons? What is the difference between "condoning sin" and "condemning sinners"? Why do so many Christians find it easy to identify with the critical crowd who wanted to stone the condemned adulterous woman? Is it your personal tendency, in the name of righteousness and moral justice, to inflict pain upon sinners, rather than to speak words of hope and love and mercy and forgiveness?

5. Give your personal response and reaction to the following statements: "There are two kinds of envy. The one kind covets the possessions of other people; and such envy is very difficult to avoid because it is a very human thing. The other kind is worse - it grudges the very fact that others should have what it has not. It does not so much want things for itself as it wishes others had not got them. Meanness of soul can sink no further than that."

6. What is one of the main causes of envy and jealousy?

7. If an unsurrendered, carnal ego is the source of so much hurtful comparison and competition, what steps should be taken by the sincere Christian to deal with such an ego? (Note Galatians 2: 20; Galatians 5: 24-26; Galatians 6: 1-3; Philippians 2: 1-4; I Corinthians 13: 4; Romans 5: 5; Romans 12: 9-10)

8. In finding the "solution" to the problems of envy and jealousy in your own personal life, which of the following Scriptural concepts and Godly attitudes have you found most helpful?

   a. Allowing the Holy Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in my heart.
   b. Comparing myself, not with others, but with Christ and His holy standards, which brings me genuine humility, and which delivers me on one hand from pride and on the other hand from despair.
   c. Rejoicing in the God-ordained place Christ has for me and learning to rejoice in the God-ordained place Christ has for others.
   d. Seeking not the praise and the approval of other persons, but instead seeking the praise and approval of God, in serving Christ.

9. Tell to what extent you agree with the following statement: "The really great man never thinks of his own importance."

10. Give your own interpretation and personal application of the following statement: "The dignity of good manners is consistent with the humility of Godly attitudes."

11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Love is probably best tested in the privacy of the home, in the closeness of family relationships."

12. Is it "Christlike" for Christians to be blunt in speech, uncouth in manners, judgmental in attitudes, unkind in reactions, impolite in conversation? Have you ever observed or experienced professing Christians who take a certain delight in being blunt and almost brutal in their words and actions and reactions towards others, thinking all the time that they are simply being "uncompromising in their moral convictions" and "bold in their witness for Christ"?

13. Have you ever considered posting the following "Motto" in a predominate place in your own home?

"Christ is the Head of This Home,
The Silent Listener to Every Conversation,
The Unseen Guest at Every Table!"

14. From your own observations and personal experiences, illustrate the truth of the following statement:

> "Centering on Self causes an undue distress over a trifling mishap to ones self and an insensitivity to major calamities in someone else's life."

15. Give your personal response to the following statement: "When God's love replaces self-centered love, the believer has a proper attitude towards both himself and towards others. He has a humble attitude towards himself, an attitude neither of self-despising or of self-glorying but an attitude of wholesome self-love."

16. Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Love is not characterized by over-sensitive feelings which can easily be hurt or by a temper that can easily be stirred into a rage."

17. Does the example of Jesus and the lives of the saints throughout the ages, demonstrate the truth of the following statement?

> "The anger of a love-filled person is directed not against persons, wrong thought they be, but against wrong deeds, things, institutions, and situations."

18. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The love-filled believer is not easily angered, and when he is angered, the anger is short-lived, followed by forgetting and forgiving, and results in building stronger relationships."

19. On what "basis" does God have a "right" to command His children never to hold grudges and always to forgive others (according to Colossians 3: 13)? (Note I Peter 3: 8-18)

20. If it is true that, when God pardons you of your sins He consigns your offense to everlasting forgetfulness, then what should be your attitude towards persons who have offended and hurt you? Tell what the following statements mean to you: "Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received."

21. Have you personally sought to surrender your all to Christ, and have you asked in faith to be 'filled with the Holy Spirit' in order that the love of God might be Shed abroad in your heart (Romans 5: 5)?

CHAPTER 5

COMPASSION SUNDAY

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT: **WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**

SCRIPTURE: **Luke 10: 25-37.**

TEXT: ***"Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."*** **(Romans 13: 10)**

INTRODUCTION: In our age of irresponsibility, the story of the Good Samaritan is sobering and instructive. In our age when it is so easy to be discriminating and exclusive in our attitudes and actions, the story of the Good Samaritan comes as a reminder that the Christian's love should be as wide as God's love. God is no respecter of persons, and neither must the Christian. The story of the Good Samaritan teaches us that the essence of the true religion is responsible involvement in the shattered lives of our fellow men.

I. CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

- **a. Consider The Traveler.**
- **b. Consider The Priest**
- **c. Consider The Levite.**
- **d. Consider The Samaritan.**

II COMPASSION IN THE STORY.

- **a. Compassion Involves Helping The Reckless.**
- **b. Compassion Involves Helping The Needy Regardless of Race or Nation.**
- **c. Compassion Involves Action and Not Merely Feeling or Sympathy.**

CONCLUSION: The Samaritan shows us who really is our neighbor. Our neighbor is anyone who is in need, regardless of his moral condition, regardless of his racial breed, regardless of his national loyalties, regardless of his social status. Neighborly compassion involves action, not mere sympathy.

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT: **WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**

SCRIPTURE: **Luke 10: 25-37.**

TEXT: ***"Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."*** **(Romans 13: 10)**

INTRODUCTION:

In our age of irresponsibility, the story of the Good Samaritan is sobering and instructive. In our age when it is so easy to be discriminating and exclusive in our attitudes and actions, the story of the Good Samaritan comes as a reminder that the Christian's love should be as wide as God's love. God is no respecter of persons, and neither must the Christian. The story of the Good Samaritan teaches us that the essence of the true religion is responsible involvement in the shattered lives of our fellow men.

The foundation for compassion is worship, but worship is not merely a passive activity, but worship is an active involvement with people.

PROPOSITION:

To better understand the familiar and intriguing story of the Good Samaritan, let us first study the characters in the story, and then let us note the compassion in the story.

I. CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

To better appreciate the significance of this interesting story, it is important for one first to investigate the characters. Let us look at each one of the main characters.

a. Consider The Traveler.

When one realizes the danger involved in traveling the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, the traveler in the story is seen to be foolhardy and reckless in character. No sensible person would travel this road alone for the simple reason that the road was infested with bandits and murderers. As Barclay notes, *"It was a road of narrow, rocky defiles, and of sudden turnings which made it the happy hunting grounds of brigands...People seldom attempted the Jerusalem to Jericho road alone if they were carrying goods or valuables.*

Seeking safety in numbers, they always traveled in convoys or caravans. This man had no one but himself to blame for the plight in which he found himself." (Luke 13: 1)

Who does the traveler represent? He represents all who are traveling the road of life, oblivious to danger or at least indifferent to danger. He represents those who are reckless and foolhardy, and who bring trouble upon themselves because of their own indiscretion.

b. Consider The Priest.

The priest was the first one who rushed past the man without giving any assistance. It is probable that he supposed the man dead and therefore he dared not touch him lest he become ceremonially unclean for seven days. (Numbers 19: 11-18) If a priest would touch a dead man, he must go through a process of cleansing on the third day after he touched the dead body, and he could not enter the tabernacle until the seventh day. Thus, to touch this man to see if he were alive or dead might cause much inconvenience. As Barclay notes, "He was a man who set the claims of ceremonial above those of charity. The Temple and its liturgy meant more to him then the pain of man." (Barclay's Luke pg. 141)

The priest was a failure because he believed that religion consisted in ceremony and ritual rather than in compassion and charity. This is a danger that Christians must guard against. The words of Kagawa, a Japanese Christian, are quite sobering: "God dwells among the lowliest of men. He sits on the dust heap among the prison convicts. He stands with the juvenile delinquents. He is there with the beggars. He is among the sick. He stands with the unemployed. Therefore, let him who would meet God visit the prison cell before going to the temple. Before he goes to Church let him visit the hospital. Before he reads his Bible let him help the beggar." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 2; pg 257)

There is a brand of Christianity that is withdrawing, isolating, and contemptuous of society and its problems. I counseled with one man who was not ritualistic but who was very withdrawing. Said he, "Denver, with its pollution, is hell to me."

Barclay is right when he says, "Christian service is not monastic rituals." It is involvement in all the tragedies and problems and demands of the human situations." Jesus "went about doing good." To do his Father's will was His meat and drink.

"O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother!
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

For he whom Jesus loved hath truly spoken;
The holier worship which he deigns to bless
Restores the lost, and binds the spirit broken,
And feeds the widow and the fatherless.

Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was doing good;
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude."
(Barclay's Matthew, v. 2; pg. 28)

c. Consider The Levite.

Barclay notes that the Levite "seems to have gone nearer to the man before he passed on. The bandits were in the habit of using decoys. One of their number would act the part of a wounded man; and when some unsuspecting traveler stopped over him, the others would rush upon him and overpower him. The Levite was a man whose motto was, 'Safety first'. He would take no risks to help anyone else." (Barclay's Luke, pg. 132)

What was the function of a Levite? The Old Testament regulations laid down instructions for the Levite: *"This is that be, longeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation."* (Numbers 8: 24)

The Levite in this story failed because he felt that religion consisted solely in doing service in the tabernacle. There are yet those who feel that their religious duties are fulfilled if they have performed some work within the Church. (This is important, but only the beginning)

One modern saint of God is Father George Potter who founded the Brotherhood of the Order of the Holy Cross which seeks to minister to outcasts, to homeless boys with a criminal record or with criminal potential. In writing of those who wish to enter the Brotherhood, he exhorts: "He (the member of the Brotherhood) mustn't sulk if he cannot get to Vespers on the Feast of St. Thermogene. He may be sitting in a police court waiting for a 'client'... He mustn't be the type who goes into the kitchen and sobs be just because we run short of incense...We put prayer and sacraments first. We

know we cannot do our best otherwise, but the fact is that we have to spend more time at the bottom of the Mount of Transfiguration than at the top." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 2; pg. 27) Religion consists not merely in service in the tabernacle, but mainly in service to one's fellow men.

The Levite failed because he was not willing to take risks to help someone else. It is oftentimes easier to remain in the safety of a Church than to serve the rough, ragged, and diseased. For instance, it is sometimes easier to be involved in church work than it is to be involved in the risk of treating the leprous.

d. Consider The Samaritan

It is possible that the Samaritan was a Samaritan by race, or it is also possible that this man was called a Samaritan in derision because he was unorthodox in his theology. This Samaritan might have been considered unorthodox in his theology, but he was an honest man. He told the inn-keeper to look after the wounded man and told the inn-keeper to bill him for any extra expense. Many of the Jewish leaders may have considered themselves orthodox in doctrine, but many were really dishonest and unjust with their fellow man. Some of the orthodox Pharisees were actually dishonest in that they robbed their fellow man of the real joy of life. Said Jesus about them, *"They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."* (Matthew 23: 4)

Jesus, just like the Samaritan, was considered unorthodox. In contrast to the religious leaders, Jesus defined the essence of religion in terms of action and compassion. Christ did works of compassion on the Sabbath, while the religionists were formulating rules of Sabbath observance and then looking critically upon any who would even care for the needy on the Sabbath. The Samaritan was much more like Jesus than either the priest or the Levite!

II. COMPASSION IN THE STORY.

We have already noted that compassion is the essence of true worship. Let us further note what Christian compassion really involves.

a. Compassion Involves Helping The Reckless.

Because of his own recklessness, the traveler brought trouble upon himself. However, Jesus showed his approval of helping even the reckless, through His praise of the Samaritan who ended aid to the reckless traveler.

Christ cared for the reckless and despised people, and every Christian is to follow Christ's example. Christ cared for the despised woman of Samaria; Christ cared for the immoral woman caught in adultery; Christ showed his care for the wanderer through his parable of the Lost Sheep.

Barclay notes a story from the life of T. E. Lawrence. "In 1915 (Lawrence) was journeying across the desert with some Arabs. Things were desperate. Food was almost done and water was at its last drop. Their hoods were over their heads to shelter them from the wind which was like a flame, and which was full of the stinging sand of the sandstorm. Suddenly someone said, 'Where is Jasmin?' Another said, 'Who is Jasmin?' A third answered, 'That yellow-faced man from Maan. He killed a Turkish tax-collector and fled to the desert.' The first said, 'Look, Jasmin's camel has no rider. His rifle is strapped to the saddle, but Jasmin is not there.' A second said, 'Someone has shot him on the march.' A third said, 'He is not strong in the head, perhaps he is lost in a mirage; he is not strong in the body, perhaps he has fainted and fallen off his camel.' The first said, 'What does it matter? Jasmin was not worth half a crown.' And the Arabs hunched themselves up on their camels and rode on. But Lawrence turned and rode back the way he had come. Alone, in the blazing heat, at the risk of his life, he went back. After an hour and a half's ride he saw something against the sand. It was Jasmin, blind and mad with heat and thirst, Jasmin being murdered by the desert. Lawrence lifted him up on his camel, gave him some of the last drops of the precious water, slowly plodded back to his company. When he came up to them the Arabs looked in amazement. 'Here is Jasmin,' they said, 'Jasmin, not worth half a crown, saved at his own risk by Lawrence, our lord .' That is a parable. It was not good men Christ died to save; it was sinners." (Barclay's Roman's 74, 75) If Christ cared for the lost and reckless, we as Christians must also care.

b. Compassion Involves Helping The Needy Regardless of Race or Nation.

In time of war it is strange how that all racial barriers seem to be shattered. Each man is looked at as a soldier and not according to race. The story is told of a soldier who was wounded in battle. "The padre (Chaplain) crept out to him and did what he could for him. He stayed with him when the remainder of the troops retreated. In the heat of the day he gave him water from his own water bottle, while he himself remained parched with thirst. In the night, when the chill frost came down, he covered the wounded man with his own coat, and finally wrapped him up in even more of his clothes to save him from the cold. In the end the wounded man looked up at the padre. 'Padre,' he said, 'you're a Christian?' 'I try to be,' said the padre. 'Then,' said the

wounded man, 'if Christianity makes a man do for another man what you have done for me, tell me about it, because I want it.'" A Christian must not be discriminatory. He must help all who are needy.

c. Compassion Involves Action and Not Merely Feeling or Sympathy.

There are three ways the Samaritan could have reacted to the wounded man. First, he could have simply felt sorry for the wounded man. This was probably the reaction of both the priest and the Levite. But simply to feel sorry for a person does not help the person.

Second, the Samaritan could have gone to a city and given money to the inn-keeper to go and help the wounded man. However, to take this delayed course of action may well have resulted in the man's death. The Scripture says that the man was already half-dead. By the time help was sent back to the wounded man, he could have been dead. It is very possible that immediate action was necessary in order to save the man.

Many there are who give charity money simply to appease their conscience. Money is necessary but money alone is not enough. For instance, a slum area needs more than money. Many there are in slum areas who need love, attention, and care more than they need money.

Third, the Samaritan could have and did give more than sympathy or money. He gave of himself in rescuing the needy one. As Barclay says, "A feeling which remains only a feeling, a pity which remains a pity only of the heart, a fine desire that never turns into a fine deed, is a sadly truncated and frustrated thing." (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 255, 256)

Wrote James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ: *"Dear Brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, 'Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat hearty', and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all - it is dead and useless."* (James 2: 14-17, Living Bible) And John, the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ, wrote: *"We know what real love is from Christ's example in dying for us. And so we also ought to lay down our lives for our Christian brothers. But if someone who is supposed to be a Christian has money enough to live well, and sees a brother in need, and won't help him - how can God's love be*

within him? Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions. Then we will know for sure, by our actions, that we are on God's side, and our consciences will be clear, even when we stand before the Lord." (I John 3: 16-19, Living Bible)

Christ is the supreme example of one who involves Himself in human suffering and need. There is a Scottish paraphrase which says:

"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."

What does it mean for us to be a 'Good Samaritan'? It could mean many things, but here are a few suggestions:

1. A listening ear (each person needs another person who will listen sympathetically).

2. A tender heart (ability to really feel the hurt of another person).

3. An understanding mind (as Christians, we must never condone sin, but at the same time, we must never condemn sinners; we must try to understand why people act and react as they do; we need to 'walk in another person's moccasins', as it were, and learn never to judge another person, but leave all judgment in the hands of Almighty God who is both perfectly just and perfectly merciful).

4. An extended hand (as Christians, we must do what we can do for the needs of persons closest to us. We can't do everything, but we can do something. This means practical works of kindness. It may mean giving financially to those who are in need of the basic necessities of life, such as food and clothes and medicine.) The Bible

speaks often about the importance of caring for the poor ones around us. *"He who shuts his ears to the cries of the poor will be ignored in his own time of need."* (Proverbs 20: 13) *"Happy is the generous man, the one who feeds the poor."* (Proverbs 20: 13) *"Don't rob the poor and sick! For the Lord is their defender. If you injure them he will punish you."* (Proverbs 22: 22, 23) To give to the poor is like lending to the Lord, and always remember that the Lord pays wonderful interest on any 'loans' which are made to Him!

5. A praying life (believers must affirm the incredible power of prayer. David said of fallen King Saul, "God forbid that I should sin against you by failing to pray for you.")

CONCLUSION:

The Samaritan shows us who really is our neighbor. Our neighbor is anyone who is in need, regardless of his moral condition, regardless of his racial breed, regardless of his national loyalties, regardless of his social status. Neighborly compassion involves action, not mere sympathy. To the Jew who learned that religion consisted in showing mercy Jesus said, *"Go, and do likewise,"* To every Christian who would seek to better serve Christ, the command is, "Go and do likewise. Go and follow the example of the Samaritan!

CHAPTER 5

QUESTIONS

1. Is it your sincere desire, as a Christian, to be a 'Good Samaritan'?

2. Why do you think the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-27) is so relevant for our present generation?

3. Considering the foolhardiness of the traveler in the story of the Good Samaritan, whose indiscretion in traveling alone resulted in his being robbed and attacked, how do you think you, as a believer, should treat a down-and-out person who has no one to blame for his moral and economic plight but himself? Tell how you personally react to a person who says of a down-and-out person: "He made his own bed, so let him lay in it, or decide finally to get out of his 'bed' on his own. He is at fault for his present predicament, so let him take care of his own problems. I 'wash my hands' of all of his misery. He has no one but himself to blame!"

4. Is it possible in our contemporary religious community for professing Christians to become more concerned, as in the case of the priest in the story of the Good Samaritan, in performing proper religious ritual and in Church attendance than in becoming involved in helping and healing and loving the sick and sorrowing and spiritually degenerate people around them?

5. Give your personal response or reaction to the following quotation from the famous Japanese missionary (Kagawa): "God dwells among the lowliest of men. He sits on the dust heap among the prison convicts. He stands with the juvenile delinquents. He is there with the beggars. He is among the sick. He stands with the unemployed. Therefore, let him who would meet God visit the prison cell before going to the temple. Before he goes to Church, let him visit the hospital. Before he reads his Bible let him help the beggar."

6. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement: "Christian service is not monastic ritual; it is involvement in all the tragedies and problems and demands of the human situations."

7. How does the fact that Jesus "went about doing good," and that Jesus said that to do His Father's will was his "meat and drink", influence you in the setting of your own life's goals?

8. Why are not withdrawing and retreatism and isolationism worthy 'options' for you as a Christian? Is it your personal desire to follow the example of Christ "whose work was doing good"? Dare you, as a Christian, be contemptuous of society and all of its problems? Why or why not?

9. Give your personal interpretation and application of the following statement: "As Christians, we have to spend more time at the bottom of the Mount of Transfiguration than at the top." (Note Matthew 17: 1-21) Do you believe that true religion consists not merely in service in the 'tabernacle', but mainly in service to one's fellow man?

10. Is it possible (as it may have been in the case of the Samaritan in the story Jesus told) for one to be 'unorthodox' in his theology, and nevertheless be truly Christlike in his practical works of compassion and caring? Is it possible to be orthodox in one's theological beliefs, and, at the same time, to be unfeeling towards the sufferers and detached from personal involvement with the physically and spiritually injured? (Note Matthew 23: 1-3, 23, 28)

11. As you consider the example of Christ caring for the reckless and despised people in his day, who would you identify as persons today who are reckless and despised to whom you might be able to minister? (Note John 4: 7-14; John 8: 1-11; John 15: 11-32; Luke 7: 36-50)

12. Why is racial discrimination and prejudice so inconsistent with the practice of true Christianity? What personally do you believe you could do to help "bridge the gulf" between various races of people in your own community?

13. In the face of overwhelming human need and suffering, why does a response of mere sympathy and even of generous financial giving to the poor not enough? What does the example of the "Good Samaritan" teach you what should be the proper response to the suffering ones around you? In considering your own life and environment, who would you consider to be your 'neighbor' who (like the wounded traveler in Jesus' story) needs your personal assistance and compassionate involvement? Because there are probably too many "hurting people" in the total circle of your environment for your personally to be involved with, how will you personally decide whose lives you will become more intimately involved with in a truly compassionate ministry?

14. Give your personal interpretation and application of the following statement: "A feeling which remains only a feeling, a pity which remains a pity only of the heart, a fine desire that never turns into a fine deed, is a sadly truncated and frustrated thing." (Note James 2: 14-17; I John 3: 16-18)

15. As you consider what being a "Good Samaritan" might mean (in terms of the simple following list), write in a name of a person whom you know who needs special attention in the specific areas which are listed.

Ways To Show I Am A "Good Samaritan"	Names Of Needy Persons
a. A listening ear (listen sympathically)	a.
b. A tender heart (ability to feel the hurts of another person)	b.
c. An understanding mind (never condoning sin, but also never condemning the sinner who needs my understanding)	c.
d.. An extended hand (do what I can for the needs of persons closest to me)	d.
e. A praying life (because the power of prayer is incredible, I will intercede especially for those closest to me)	e.

15. Consider the following definition of a 'Neighbor': "My 'neighbor' is anyone whom I 'know' or whom I am willing for God to allow me to 'know', who is in need, regardless of his moral condition, regardless of his racial breed, regardless of his national loyalties, regardless of his social status." With this definition in mind, list persons - your 'neighbors' - who 'fit' into each of the above mentioned categories.

Categories of 'Neighbors'	Specific Names of 'Neighbors'
a. A needy person with a hurtful 'moral condition'.	a.
b. A needy person with a different racial breed.	b.
c. A needy person with a different national loyalty.	c.
d. A needy person with a different social status.	d.

CHAPTER 6

REVIVAL

CHAPTER 6

SUBJECT: REVIVAL IN OUR DAY

SCRIPTURE: II Chronicles 7:14

TEXT: *" If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* (II Chronicles 7: 14)

INTRODUCTION: All great revivals have been characterized by three simple ingredients: (1) sensing the need, (2) meeting the conditions, (3) seeing the results. God is no respecter of ages. What He has done in the past, He is doing today - at this very time!

I. ELEMENTS IN TRUE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

A. Sensing the Need - Revival is always preceded with a sense of deep need for revival and a realization that only God can give a true revival. Part of sensing the need for revival is realizing the degenerating conditions that exist in a nation, such as social injustice and personal and selfish indulgence.

B. Meeting the Conditions - The Scriptures clearly outline the conditions for revival in II Chronicles 7: 14. God brings revival through humble, praying, earnest, repentant Christians.

C. Seeing the Results - When God changes many lives, through His transforming power and grace, then society and its institutions can eventually be transformed as well.

II. EXAMPLES THROUGHOUT HISTORY

A. In Past History - as seen many times during the days of the Early Church, as recorded in the Book of Acts; as seen during the thirteenth century, under the leadership of Francis of Assisi; as seen during the Protestant Reformation, under the leadership of Martin Luther; as seen in the 18th century England, under the leadership of John Wesley; as seen in America during the Great Awakening, under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield and Francis Asbury.

B. In Contemporary Times - as seen with the Asbury Revival in 1970; as seen in the growth of the Christian Movement in many parts of the world during the last half of the 20th century, as in South Korea and in Communist

China and in South America; as seen through 'The Promise Keepers' movement which started the last decade of the 20th century and grew to 'touch' the lives of millions of men.

CONCLUSION: What will bring revival in your personal life or in the life of your local Church or in the life of our nation? *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land."* (2 Chronicles 7: 14)

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INTRODUCTION:

Are great revivals a thing of the past, something that only our grandfathers verily remember as young boys? Has our generation outgrown this expression of Christianity? Are the 'good old days' gone forever, only a pleasant memory?

Thousands of students in 1970 in over forty American colleges in almost every state of the Union thought that God was very alive. In February 1970, revival came - not through a dynamic speaker or evangelistic association, but through thousands of American students who spread the revival fires far and wide, as they told of the great things God had done for them. I am speaking of the great Asbury Revival which began on the Campus of Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky.

PROPOSITION:

All great revivals have been characterized by three simple ingredients: (1) sensing the need, (2) meeting the conditions, (3) seeing the results. God is no respecter of ages. What he has done in the past, He is doing today - at this very time.

I. ELEMENTS IN TRUE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

A. Sensing the Need. The first ingredient in any true revival is sensing the need for revival. Revival is always preceded with a sense of deep need for revival and realization that only God can give a true revival. Part of sensing the need for revival is realizing the degenerating conditions that exist in a nation. This was true of the prophets. Amos serves as a good example of a man who deeply felt the need for a revival, as a result of viewing the degenerating conditions of his day. Listen to how he describes some of the terrible conditions of his day that pointed to a need for national revival.

SOCIAL INJUSTICE

"They have forgotten how to do right, says the Lord.
They maintain their palaces by the fruit of violence and robbery. (3:10)

"Listen to this, you who trample upon the needy
And grind the faces of the poor!
You who say, When will the new moon be past,
So that we may sell our grain?
When will the Sabbath be over,
So that we may offer our corn for sale?
While you make your measure short
And your prices high,
And cheat with biased scales,
And all to possess the poor for silver,
And the needy for the price of a pair of shoes,
Selling for grain the sweeping from your floor.
The Lord has sworn by the glory of Jacob,
Never will I forget what you have done." (8: 4-7)

PERSONAL INDULGENCE

"You put off the day of reckoning,
Yet bring ever nearer the days of misrule!
You who lie on beds of ivory,
And sprawl upon your couches,
Eating choice lamb and farm-fed veal.
Who croon to the music of the harp,
And compose melodies as though you were David himself!
You who drink wine by the bowl-full,
And anoint yourselves with the finest oils.
But never a thought do you spare
For the terrible miseries of Joseph! (6: 3-6)

What about America? Do we sense the need for revival? A sensitive Christian, looking at the degenerating trends in our national life, cannot help but sense the need for revival.

Crime and violence are wide spread. One can hardly listen to a news program or read a newspaper without learning of increasing violence in our streets and crime of all kinds. The percentage increase in some crimes is most alarming.

Rebellion is widespread, both on the college campus and off the college campus, both among the youth and among adults. There seems to be a widespread rebellion against all authority - parental, school, government, and even Church authority!

Immorality seems to be the order of the day. Traditional standards of morality are mocked, and our culture has become obsessed with sex. The sacred is grossly profaned. The Holy is casually trodden on.

Materialism has become the philosophy of America. Thousands of Americans judge the worth of a man by his bank account. The glitter of gold is more precious to many than the glory of God. The materialistic attitudes of many Americans is tragically described by Oscar Wilde who wrote: "I used to think that money was the most important thing in life. Now that I'm old, I know it is."

Ceremonialism has replaced personal transformation in religion. Proper procedure, ritual, mere recitation of meaningless creeds have replaced a personal and vital relationship with Christ. It has been estimated that perhaps one half of all Church members today have never had a personal conversion experience. Ceremony that does not lead one to God is a farce.

Revival becomes imperative in this age of Alienation. Divorce rates are reaching staggering proportions. Broken homes produce shattered lives. Juvenile delinquency is further proof of the permissiveness in our society. More prisoners are becoming alienated from society every day.

Man today is plagued with a sense of meaninglessness. He has lost all sense of direction. He has no North Star to guide him. His system of relative ethics has not brought liberation to him as he expected, but instead frustration and bondage. Man today is filled with an aching void. He feels that he is in a maze, not knowing which direction to go.

B. Meeting the Conditions - After sensing the need for revival, we must meet the conditions for revival. The Scriptures clearly outline the conditions for revival. *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their lands."* (II Chronicles 7: 14) What a promise, and yet what responsibility!

Revival comes through Christians. *"If my people, which are called by my name,"* describes the channel through which revival comes. Revival first comes to the Church - then to the world. If revival is not present in our midst,

it is the fault of Christians - not sinners.

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way;
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died;
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.

What if our hands are busy
With other work than His?
What if our feet are walking
Where sin's allurement is?
What if our tongues are speaking
Of things His lips would spurn?
How can we learn to help Him
Unless from Him we learn?"

Anne Johnson Flint

Revival comes through humble Christians, as shown by the phrase - *"shall humble themselves."* A Christian who thinks that he can bring revival through his own efforts, plans, procedures, or ability, will be barren of revival. That does not mean that planning for a revival is not important. However, if revival comes, a Christian must be humble enough to realize that only God can send true revival. A Christian must be very careful not to take any of the glory to himself, but ascribe all the glory to God.

Revival comes through praying Christians. Says A. T. Pierson, well-known minister and writer, "From the day of Pentecost, there has been not one great spiritual awakening in any land which has not begun in a union of prayer, though only among two or three; no such outward, upward movement has continued after such prayer meetings have declined; and it is in exact proportion to the maintenance of such joint and believing supplication and intercession that the Word of the Lord in any land or locality has had free course and been glorified." (Alive To God through Prayer; Donald Demaray, 48)

Revival comes through earnest Christians - "*and seek my face.*" How badly do you want a revival? Said God through Jeremiah, *"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."* (Jeremiah 29: 13) Those who have become desperate for revival have oftentimes spent much

time in fasting and prayer, and have always sought God with all their heart.

Revival comes through repentant Christians - "turn from their wicked ways." Uncleansed, carnal, jealous, backbiting, careless Christians are poor instruments for God to send revival through. When Christians repent, confess, and make proper restitution, then there is great possibilities for the world to be saved, but not until there is true repentance and restitutions by Christians.

When Christians meet these conditions, then there will be results. God will hear from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal the land or nation. Great is our need for national healing. Such healing can only come through revival. In what ways would our nation be healed if a national revival would come? What would be the practical results of such a revival? William Sangster, great British preacher, lists ten definite results that would come from a genuine revival of religion. To these we turn.

C. Seeing the Results - William Sangster, the great Methodist preacher from England, notes ten results from true revival.

(1) First, a revival would pay old debts. A true revival would produce practical honesty.
(2) Second, a revival would reduce sexual immorality.
(3) Revival would disinfect drama and the press. Motion pictures and TV would also be drastically changed. Violence and sensuality would be replaced with wholesome expressions.
(4) Revival would diminish the increasing rate of divorce.
(5) Revival would reduce juvenile crime.
(6) Revival would lessen the prison population.
(7) Revival would improve the quality and increase the output of work.
(8) Revival would restore to the nation a sense of high destiny. We cannot legislate this high sense of destiny. National purpose only becomes a reality as the individuals of a nation are personally possessed with a spiritual purpose.
(9) Revival would make us invincible in the war of ideas. The best deterrent of evil ideas and systems is true Christianity which has been translated into daily, dedicated living.
(10) Revival would provide happiness and peace. Man, aligned with the Purpose of the Universe, cannot help but have a sense of harmony, integration, and peace.

II. EXAMPLES THROUGHOUT HISTORY

We have looked at the three ingredients in any true revival - sensing the need, meeting the conditions, and seeing the results. Let us briefly look at times throughout history in which individuals and groups of people sensed the need and conditions, and consequently saw great results.

In the early pages of Acts we have recorded a great revival which broke out in the city of Samaria. *"The Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Phillip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city...Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."* (Acts 8: 14-17)

In the early thirteenth century, at a time when corruption was widespread in the established Church of the day, God put His hand on a young man and said, "Build my Church". That man was Francis of Assisi who interpreted his call as a command to repair the physical structures of existing Church buildings. Finally, Francis realized that his call was a call to repair the spiritually-degenerating condition of his day. "He felt impelled to become a traveling preacher, proclaiming the kingdom of God and calling men to repentance, doing so in complete poverty, subsisting on whatever food might be given him, and radiating the love of Christ. He sought to imitate Jesus and to obey him to the letter. Francis at once 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." (A History of Christianity by Latourette; 430) As a result of sensing the need and meeting the conditions, thousands were converted and society was changed.

Two centuries later, a monk was converted and this converted monk became the instrument of the greatest Reformation since the time of Christ. Luther's insight into justification by faith came at a time when the Catholic Church had greatly degenerated in doctrine and in practice. Luther sensed the need for a widespread change in morals and in doctrine, and he believed that this could not be done within the established framework of the Catholic Church. Therefore, he preached justification by faith and became the founder of the Protestant Movement that reached countless thousands of people. He sensed the need for change, both in his own life and in the life of society,

and he met the conditions for revival, and he saw the widespread results of revival - a Church that was purged and a society that was changed.

Two centuries later, John Wesley had his heart-warming experience and he in turn went out to evangelize England. Out on the hillsides, thousands came to hear Wesley preach. Thousands were converted and sanctified, and these were organized into hundreds of small societies for Christian growth and further perpetuation of the transforming message. The very face of England was changed. Lay preachers went far and wide proclaiming the message. The movement finally became organized into the Methodist Church which has encompassed the globe with the message of grace and love. Wesley sensed a need in his own life and found that need wonderfully met. He in turn met the condition for societal revival and lived to see the astounding results. It is said by historians that if it had not been for the Wesleyan Revival in England, England would have been plunged into a bloody revolution, like as happened in France.

Sensing a great need among the unchristianized population in the thirteen colonies during America's early history, certain men arose to the occasion and fervently preached the Gospel of grace and salvation. Notable among these was Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Francis Asbury. The revival led by these and many other 'lesser lights', claimed so many thousands of converts that it became known as the Great Awakening. "The Great Awakening was evidence of vigor inherent in the Protestantism of the Thirteen Colonies. Here was a vitality which through succeeding decades was to reach a growing proportion of the partially de-christianized population, was fairly steadily to augment the percentage of Church members, and was to continue the mass conversion of which the Great Awakening was the beginning. Out of the Great Awakening came a large increase in Churches, of young men entering the ministry, of earnestness among the rank and file of professing Christians, and of missions." (Ibid.: pg. 960)

Considering these historic revivals, the question that most comes to our minds is this: 'Is it possible for America to experience a deep and widespread great awakening?' Is God a respecter to persons or to ages?' 'Are the days of great revivals over?' Let us more carefully look at these questions.

God has marvelously worked in the twentieth century - sometimes obviously as in Billy Graham crusades, sometimes quietly as in small prayer and Bible Study groups.

The following was written by Dwight Gregory, a first-hand report of the Asbury revival which started in February 1970. "By now many of you will have already heard of the revival which began at Asbury College and is now spreading across the continent. It has been my privilege to share in this awakening, and I would like to relate my own impressions of what is happening.

"The movement, I believe, can be traced to what was termed the Great Experiment, suggested by Asbury College President Dennis Kinlaw at the beginning of the year. A number of students covenanted together to discipline themselves in prayer and study of the Bible in a more serious way. When people do this, something is bound to happen. On the morning of February 3, the college chapel service was given over to testimonies. After a number of the predictable, cliche-ridden testimonies **had been given, one or two campus leaders** with notoriously non-spiritual reputations stepped to the pulpit to bear witness to real transformation within that week. Right after that, a faculty member stepped up to say that there might be others who wanted to surrender their lives to God. Almost immediately, the altar was filled with over 150 students. By the next day, the revival had spread across the street to the seminary, and nearby newspapers and television stations had begun reporting the story. People were making confessions, being reconciled to fellow Christians, and being filled with the Holy Spirit and giving radiant testimonies. There were many new conversions and a number of testimonies to physical healing. By the weekend, teams had gone out to witness in many other schools and churches, and were bringing back reports just as dramatic as what was being seen in Wilmore. Classes were dismissed at the college for a full week. That is the story in summary, but I would like to single out a number of important items for comment.

"The most obvious thing about this movement of the Holy Spirit is its spontaneity. It seems that nothing has been planned. Even witness teams who have gone out to 'Spread revival' have found that the revival had preceded them. I was a part of the team which went to Greenville, (Illinois) and all of us felt that we had virtually nothing to do with what happened there. The Lord Himself seemed to have made all the arrangements, and we just watched Him work. People seem so hungry for reality, that all anyone has to do is to give a clear testimony, and the fire is lighted. Within three weeks, similar awakenings have taken place in over 30 colleges and untold scores of churches. There have been too many "coincidences" for anyone to call this man-made.

"The second factor has been the centrality of the Scriptures. Many have testified that the Bible has become an open book to them for the first time. At Greenville, one girl stepped to the pulpit during the testimony time and read the whole book of Philippians - and every word seemed appropriate."

"A third characteristic has been the spirit of honesty. People have confessed long-standing resentments and made restitution for many past wrongs. Some have found Christ able to deliver from the bondage of drugs. In spite of the deep frankness of the testimonies, there has been very little that could be considered out of order in what has been said publicly."

"Another element has been the new naturalness of prayer. At the Wilmore Free Methodist Church the last two Sunday morning services have been almost completely taken over by spontaneous praise and intercession, and regular patterns have been laid aside. It has become easy to trust the promise of God."

This revival - now called the 'Asbury Revival' - spread far and wide. Donita Gregory, who was a student at Greenville College in Illinois when the revival in Wilmore, Kentucky, started, gave the following eye-witness account of this Revival when it came to Greenville College.

> "The Revival which so many of you have heard about began at Greenville on Friday morning February 6, 1970, when several students from Asbury College and Seminary came to Greenville College to tell us about the Revival in Wilmore. About five of the Asbury students shared in chapel what had happened in their lives, and what they said really wasn't that impressive or dynamic, and since it was about time for the chapel period to be over, they decided to sing a closing song. As they did, many students, perhaps fifty or more, started going to the altar to pray. For a chapel service this reaction was startling."
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> "Chapel lasted until 2:00 p.m. that day. On Sunday evening the service was opened for sharing, and both sides of the Church were lined with people waiting to tell what God had done for them. As a result many more went forward so that they too could receive the Holy Spirit or God's Salivation. Chapel the following Friday again went way overtime; Vespers on Wednesday lasted until 5:00 in the morning. The Reville spread through Thursday and Friday. Again on Sunday the services were given over completely to the direction of the Holy Spirit and there was complete freedom as people came to share, or request a song, or ask for prayer for a special request."
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> "Much more impressive than the surprising length of services is the amazing change which has taken place on campus. The revival has resulted in the biggest 'love-in' I've ever seen or imagined. Old differences are continually being settled. Literally hundreds of phone calls home to share the good news or to straighten out long time misunderstandings have tied up all the lines out of Greenville at times. No one is left unaffected. Students, faculty, 6 foot 6 inch basketball players, campus rebels and discipline problems, and even the administration were all wonderfully included. No one is at all surprised to see some happy student run up and hug a professor whom they have detested for several years. The Vice-President of the college was a bit surprised (happily so) when one girl burst in on a meeting of his to tell about the New Thing in her life. She didn't even think to be embarrassed. Since he wasn't alone, she just told everyone."

"The thing I would really like to get across is the complete freedom which there has been throughout the Revival. It's about time we learn just what the Holy Spirit can do when man doesn't interfere. There have been no special speakers, no pleas, no force. We can't look back and talk of the Revival when Rev. John Doe was here, but only of the 1970 Revival when God and the Holy Spirit were here. I don't know why the Holy Spirit decided to so wonderfully bless us at Greenville College. I'm just very glad. I don't know where it will hit next, but I'm praying that it will be Colorado."

The Revival Fires starting at Asbury College spread to national and even international proportions. It is reported that countless thousands of people were either saved or sanctified as a result of this revival. The revival fires spread into more than forty states, other parts of the world via shortwave radio, scores of churches, and over thirty colleges including the following: Azusa-Pacific, Greenville, Trevecca Nazarene, Olivet Nazarene, Mount Vernon Nazarene, Malone, Houghton, Eastern Mennonite, Gordon, Fort Wayne Bible, Spring Arbor, Roberts Wesleyan, Taylor, Oral Roberts, Vennard, Central. Several secular universities also were profoundly affected by the Revival. The Associated Press through its wire services relayed news of the Asbury revival across the country. Television coverage reached uncountable thousands. Can it be possible that we are at the door of another 'Great Awakening'?

During the years following the historic Asbury Revival which started in the obscure village of Wilmore, Kentucky, in the early days of 1970, the Spirit of the Living God has amazingly manifested His transforming power in the lives of millions of persons. Many spiritual leaders believe that there has never been as great a revival of interest in and conversion to Jesus Christ, as there has been in the last decade of the 20th century. Many anticipate that the 21st century may experience the greatest moving of God in all of human history.

There are millions of people around the world, in all countries, whose hearts are tender toward Christ, and whose minds are open to investigate seriously the unique claims of Jesus Christ. It has been estimated by those who make a careful study of the growing worldwide movement of Christianity, that no fewer than 100,000 persons accept Christ as their personal Saviour each day, throughout the world! Never in the history of Christianity has there been a faster growth of the Church of Jesus Christ!

Millions are turning to Christ in the Latin American countries. Tens of thousands come forward for salvation at the city-wide, massive evangelistic crusades!

Even though the Communists forced all missionaries to leave the mainland of China in the 1940's, it is reported that the growth of the Underground House Church

Movement in China has been phenomenal! No one knows for sure just how many Chinese believers there are in this huge country where persecution of Christians has been severe and brutal, but some leaders estimate that there may be as many as one hundred million believers in China today!

There is a great openness to the Gospel of Christ among the masses of people who one time composed the former Soviet Union! With the new freedom which has been granted Christian believers, following the amazing collapse of Communism in 1989, there are encouraging reports of thousands of spiritually-hungry Russian people seeking new meaning and purpose through Christ and the Christian way of life.

There is so much evidence that God is moving in astonishing ways in our world today. Yes, through hundreds of thousands of local Churches in many parts of the globe, millions of followers of Christ are actively engaged in "reaching out in love" to their unsaved neighbors.

The United States is ripe for a mighty spiritual harvest, and many Churches from many different traditions (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish Messianic Churches, Eastern Orthodox) are effectively harvesting souls for the Master. Churches are uniting to sponsor city-wide Crusades where millions are experiencing spiritual renewal as they respond to Spirit-anointed evangelists like Billy Graham, as well as to many other lesser known evangelists. There are hundreds of new "Church Plants', sponsored by many different branches of the Church of Jesus Christ. There are encouraging signs that many local Churches are beginning, as never before, to take seriously Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20)

Evidence that God is moving in special ways among the thousands of broken and confused men (husbands and fathers) in America today, is seen in the amazing growth of the movement called "Promise Keepers" which was founded in 1990, when University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney first gathered 72 men together. From that initial gathering of a small group of men, a fast-growing movement expanded into several states, with nearly a million men who attended one of about 25 different regional conferences throughout the United States in 1996. Who knows how many more men will be touched by this Spirit-impelled movement, in the next several years! I personally had the privilege of participating as a learner and worshiper in a Promise Keepers' Conference several summers, since its beginning. I was one of the 4200 men who attended the first large conference. I heard Coach McCartney express his vision for tens of thousands of men to be reached through his new movement called "Promise Keepers". The second year, the 4200 expanded to 20,000 men in attendance in Boulder, Colorado. The third year, there were about 50,000 men who attended the Promise Keepers Conference in Boulder. Then, by 1995, there were 13 different regional conference Promise Keepers' rallies which touched about 500,000 men! During the summer and fall of 1996, there were about

25 regional conferences throughout America, with several hundred thousands more men attending! On October 4, 1997, there was an estimated one million men who gathered together on the Washington, DC mall for the "Standing In The Gap" solemn assembly, to express deep repentance and a desire for National Healing!

I believe that October 4, 1997, will be remembered as one of the more important days in the History of Christianity - the day when probably the largest group of men that has ever met assembled together in the name of Christ and for the purpose of expressing genuine repentance and of turning wholeheartedly in faith and surrender to the Living Christ! Because of the importance of this event, I have chosen to include the two following personal eye-witness accounts of this event, one by my brother-in-law Robert Bailey, and one by a close friend Phil Sheridan.

STAND IN THE GAP IN D.C.

By Robert C. Bailey

Being part of history? Making History? Sounds pretty humbling, wouldn't you say? When I first knew I had the opportunity to do just that, I jumped at the chance! Let's face it, an opportunity to possibly Stand in the Gap with millions of other fellows doesn't face me everyday.

I'm referring to the opportunity I had to make history by attending the Promise Keepers' "Stand in the Gap" in our nation's birthplace on October 4, 1997. Admittedly, I was ready to pack and go way back in the spring of '97. Spring, when I think of it seemed like so long till October. One must wait though. It was a time of prayer and meditation in the Word, which I diligently searched. I needed to get my heart in such a state as to be ready for whatever God was planning to do in my heart. The anticipation was renewed as I checked the PK Web page and read of other guys who were preparing their hearts and yes, were very anxious to go to DC along with me. Getting e-mail from other guys was inspiring and encouraging to me. I felt a bonding to these guys even though I had never laid eyes on them.

Finally, the big day arrived! No, I did not get much sleep several nights before this day. A friend and I and our wives went up in the dark to the place we were assigned to get our big bus. They showed us where to get our special hats and other information. It did not take long to get to meet those faces of our bus buddies in the darkness of only street lights. We knew what we all were anticipating! Stand in the Gap was the goal of all of us. We were about to leave on a

voyage never attempted by mankind in history. I wonder if they were as nervous as I was. As we drove off, waving to our wives, tears in our eyes and lumps in our hearts, we knew that we would be coming back different than when we went.

There were masses of busses at every rest stop along the way. We had never seen these guys, but we knew we were bonded for the same purpose. It was like we had known them all for a long time. I guess the word is 'bonded.'

Our thoughts were full of emotions as we were directed into the parking lot for the multitude of buses in Washington. We were finally here!!Emotions? Rampant!! We were wondering if we would get lost in the subway system, would ever find that bus again. All kinds of butterflies were in our tummies!

As we walked over the walkway, we looked into the west and saw and heard the roar and rumble of hundreds and hundreds of our brothers coming for the same purpose as we. This view brought a lump into my throat and tears to my eyes, as these guys raised their black leathered hands with the Jesus sign and honking horns and racing engines. Wow! And we were not into the massive maize of the subway system!! Is it going to get better? As far as one could see, they kept coming and coming, like ants at a picnic, looking for good! Some had given their time and money and vacations to come over 3000 miles to join me in DC to Stand in the Gap! Whew!

We did find our subway, with much help from the attendants on duty. Finally, we emerged from the bowels of DC's subway system into the bright light of the sun in Washington. As we walked through one of the many parks, we studied the statues of others who had stood in the gap for America long ago. One famous general had a tear rolling down his cheek, maybe of some defeat, or of some honor he had received maybe from President Lincoln?

Leaving the parks, we were awed to see so many races, creeds, sizes, all coming together to the seat of liberty which our forefathers had set up with biblical standards and prayers and suffering and dying. Strolling over to the Washington Monument, the hillside was literally crawling with men interspersed with groups of like hats, jackets, t-shirts and other group emblems. There were small groups scattered in and around the prayer tents, arms around each other praying that our country would turn to Biblical standards of fore years. Praying

that the efforts and prayerful dedication of our country of famous men from our country's beginnings would once again prevail.

Next on the agenda, as noted earlier, a camp spot. After some searching, we decided on a spot under some beautiful trees in the shade. We noticed at once that all the guys were so polite and kind and unselfish as they found their spot. We struck up conversations with many groups, like the Green Mt. Boys from Tennessee. We eagerly learned about their part of the country and the hospitality of the south.

Soon, the blessed event was to begin!! The opening of the Hebrew horns sent a shiver down my back and tears to my eyes, as I thought of the same things being done thousands of years ago by Aaron and the priests of the Old Testament for the assemblage of the Children of Israel, brought together for one purpose-forgiveness of sins, restitution and beginning of new lives. Now, we were being brought together to begin new lives in Jesus' teachings and Standing in the Gap, that our nation might renew itself with God. As in the days of Moses, we wanted the fire to fall from the heavens and consume the sacrifices of our human offerings. We would too shout to the God of the heavens, fall on our faces on the ground before Him. I personally joined untold thousands of guys in this very act on the remarkable day of Standing in the Gap for our country. We cried, confessed our sins, with many others. We felt the Spirit of God forgiving, convicting, healing hurts, both racial and cultural hurts. There on the ground, Holy and dedicated to God that day, many, many prayers like an incense rose to the heavens. Tears drenched the dry hard ground as we asked for forgiveness of evils which we had committed as persons and as a nation. We were challenged throughout the day with messages from various speakers and songs. Truly, we did Stand in the Gap and determined to return home and start a renewal in our homes with our wives, families, jobs, churches and fellow men and women in our sphere of influence.

Our bus became a "Confession and Renewal Bus" on the return trip! We were still savoring the last days in the seat of liberty and beginnings of Christianity in America. God was not finished with us yet! Out moderator gave all who wanted to, a chance to share their experiences of the last day. Several rededicated their lives to the Lord, confessed hidden sins, a wayward son gave his heart to Jesus with his face on the floor of that bus. Singing and shouting, tears and hugs were in abundance among the guys. All was a continuation of

what the Holy Spirit worked in our lives in DC. As we strove to also Stand in the Gap with God, we returned home.

REPENTANCE AT STAND IN THE GAP

by Phil Sheridan

On October 4th, 1997, in Washington, D.C. more than 1,000,000 men knelt before God in a special time of private confession and repentance. I was fortunate to be one of those men. As part of the agenda of the Promise Keeper's *Stand in the Gap*, a Sacred Assembly of Men, the men were asked to go before the Lord with a humble and contrite heart. We were asked to examine our lives to search for any sin in our lives. To search for all of those times of broken promises. To recall those times when we did not have integrity and honesty in our dealings with our family, at our job, or in a public setting. To envision any time when we were abusive toward others. This all happened in response to one of the theme verses for the Assembly which states; "...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7: 14)

As the day progressed, each speaker would address another area of our lives where sin could be persistent. I didn't realize how many opportunities there were and the subtle ways we have sinned. The sins we dealt with include: forsaking God; racial insensitivity; evasions of spiritual leadership in the home; abuses to the family; sexual sins; lack commitment to the Church; sectarianism; passivity in the Church; sins of pride and jealousy; gossip, backbiting and murmuring; and prayerlessness. We compared these sins to God's Word and confessed them. But merely confessing them doesn't usually change one's behavior. True repentance is the key. Repentance means to turn away from the sin and take whatever means to avoid committing the sin again. It is the conscious effort to avoid repeating the sin that makes the difference in repenting.

What impacted me the most at *Stand in the Gap* was the genuine sense of sorrow that so many men displayed when a specific sin was mentioned that hit a sensitive button within him. A personally impacting moment for me was when one speaker told us to open our wallets and pull out pictures of our family members. He told us to

kneel or become prostrate before the Lord and look at the pictures. To think of all of the times when we failed our families in sinful ways, i.e. verbal abuse, physical abuse, broken promises, avoidance of leadership, lack of time, poor prioritization of activities, etc. As we thought of those sins we asked God for forgiveness. Tears of the men were streaming down their faces and dripping on the photos. Men were crying to the Lord for forgiveness and making a commitment to change.

I praise the Lord for this special time in my life. For a time to truly focus on sin and to commit to true repentance. Only through His help and prayer will I be able to be a true repentant man of God.

At the "Sacred Assembly", we were about 1/3 of the way back from the stage on the Mall. We could not see the stage, but we could see the dome of our nation's Capital. How awesome it was to be in a place that is the center of power of our country. When I would look at the Capital, I was constantly reminded of the verse above that we were there representing our country, making a commitment to turn from our wicked ways so that God would hear our prayers and heal our land. Where we sat, we had men from Michigan in front of us, men from Florida to our right, men from Kentucky to our left, and men from California behind us. At one point we even had the chance to form a huddle with the men from California and pray for each other. I firmly believe God was present that day. I pray that He heard our prayers as we knelt before Him, humbly seeking Him as representatives for all Americans so that He will heal our land. Only through true repentance will we and our land be healed. I believe, as a witness, there was a true spirit of humbleness and repentance among those million men that day on their faces before God.

CONCLUSION:

What will bring revival in your personal life or in the life of your local Church or in the life of our nation? *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land."* (2 Chronicles 7: 14)

QUESTIONS

1. What degenerating conditions in our nation are you particularly sensitive to, resulting in intensifying your desire and prayer for a God-sent revival of true religion in our nation?

2. What low moral condition did Amos (in the 8th century BC) describe in Amos 3: 10 and Amos 8: 4-7? How relevant is Amos' description, as it relates to some of our contemporary moral conditions in America?

3. How is the life of hedonism (i.e., the life of worshiping pleasure) described in Amos 6: 3-6? According to Amos 6: 3-6, what is the characteristic attitude of a hedonist towards the suffering people surrounding him?

4. Put a check beside the following statements which you believe accurately and briefly describe the condition of modern-day America:

   _____a. Crime and violence are widespread.
   _____b. There is a widespread rebellion against all authority - parental, school, governmental, ecclesiastical authority.
   _____c. Materialism has become the philosophy of America.
   _____d. Secularism has become the spirit of the modern age.
   _____e. Religious ceremonialism has replaced personal transformation.
   _____f. Most people in America today are plagued with a sense of meaninglessness.

5. According to 2 Chronicles 7: 14, what specific conditions must the People of God meet, if God is to bring revival and spiritual renewal to our Nation? What are some of the specific 'Sins' which you, as a believer, are especially aware of (both in your own life and in the lives of fellow believers) which need to be acknowledged and confessed, in order that God might be 'free' to bring a genuine revival in this society?

6. As you seek to make an honest application of the truths of the following statements, tell what is your personal reaction or response: "From the day of Pentecost, there has been not one great spiritual awakening in any land which has not begun in a union of prayer, though only among two or three; no such outward, upward movement has continued after such prayer meetings have declined; and it is in exact proportion to the maintenance of such joint and believing supplication and intercession that the Word of the Lord in any land or locality has had free course and been glorified."

7. Cite Scriptural support to 'back' the claims of the following statement: When Christians repent, confess, and make proper restitution, then there is great possibilities for the world to be saved, but not until there is true repentance and restitution by Christians."

8. What 'concrete' results can one expect to experience and observe - both personally and socially - when a person or a nation experiences 'true revival'? (Note Acts 8: 14-17)

9. What are some of the so-called 'common denominators' - features that are the same - in all great spiritual awakenings and revivals, both past and present?

10. What evidence can be cited that the Church of Jesus Christ may be presently experiencing at least the 'beginning stages' of what could become the 'greatest spiritual awakening' in the history of mankind?

CHAPTER 7

PALM SUNDAY

CHAPTER 7

SUBJECT: **THE KING OF PEACE**

SCRIPTURE: **Matthew 21: 6-16**

TEXT: ***"Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king shall come to you, righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*** **(Zechariah 9: 9)**

INTRODUCTION: Because we in Western lands look at the donkey as a despised beast, we wonder why Christ, the King, would ride into Jerusalem on such an animal. In Jesus' day, however, the donkey was a noble animal on which kings rode. There is special significance in the fact that Jesus, the King, rode on a donkey - a donkey which had never previously been ridden - instead of on a horse.

I. JESUS' COURAGE

- **a. Jesus' Courage In Presence of Hateful Jewish Leaders.**
- **b. Jesus' Courage In Presence of Emotional Jewish Crowd.**

II JESUS' CLEANSING

- **a. Defiance of Materialistic Preoccupation (Money-Changers).**
- **b. Defiance of Legalistic Ritualism (Jewish Leaders).**
- **c. Defiance of Shallow Conceptions of Messiahship (Shouting Crowd).**

III. JESUS' CLAIMS

- **a. Significance of the Donkey.**
- **b. Significance of the Lame and Children**

CONCLUSION: Jesus is a King of Peace and not a King of War. Christ came not to conquer the Romans by the sword, but to conquer men's passions by the cross.

When Christ defied the legalisms of the Jewish leaders, the fiery patriotism of the Jewish crowd, and the materialistic preoccupation of the money-changers, He showed that man cannot base his life on anything else but on firm faith in God. Christ also defies the self-sufficient and proud person, but honors the faith of simple, needy people. The lame who are needy and the children who are simple in faith, represent those whom Christ accepts.

CHAPTER 7

SUBJECT: **THE KING OF PEACE**

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 21: 6-16

TEXT: *"Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king shall come to you, righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."* (Zechariah 9; 9)

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus rode into Jerusalem upon a donkey. We cannot think of Palm Sunday without thinking of this donkey. Because we in Western lands look at the donkey as a despised beast, we wonder why Christ, the King, would ride into Jerusalem on such an animal. In Jesus' day, however, the donkey was a noble animal on which Kings rode.

Barclay recites a poem of G. K. Chesterton in which Chesterton makes the modern donkey speak) Barclay's Mark - pg. 275)

"When fishes flew and forests walk'd
And figs grew upon thorn,,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.

"With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
Of all four-footed things.

"The tatter'd outlaw of the earth
Of ancient crocked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me, I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

"Fools! For I also had my hour,
One far fierce hour and sweet;
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet."

PROPOSITION:

In this dramatic scene, we learn much about Jesus. We learn of (1) Jesus' Courage, (2) Jesus' Cleansing, (3) Jesus' Claim. Let us carefully look at each of these three areas.

I. JESUS' COURAGE

Jesus' entire ministry was characterized by great courage. He was the most courageous person that ever lived. Jesus' courage is most wonderfully shown in his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

a. Jesus' Courage In Presence of Hateful Jewish Leaders.

Jesus first showed his courage when He faced hostile Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. These murderous Jewish leaders were ready to seize an opportunity to kill Jesus. These Jewish leaders in Jerusalem hated Jesus, and Jesus well knew this when He entered Jerusalem.

Jesus brazenly, defiantly, and fearlessly entered Jerusalem, well knowing that He alone would be facing the crafty, plotting Jewish leaders who were not content to rest until Jesus was destroyed.

Throughout Jesus' entire ministry, He had clashed head on with these obstitute, stiff-necked Jews. This clash was now reaching its climax.

Why did the Jews so intensely hate Jesus? It was because Jesus (1) made special claims and (2) pronounced harsh accusations.

1. Jesus' Special Claims

Jesus made special claims throughout his entire ministry which the Jewish leaders were unwilling to accept. Because Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of prophecy, his own people at Nazareth were filled with wrath and tried to throw him off a cliff. (Luke4) Jesus claimed special authority that no man had ever claimed before. No Rabbi would dare to speak with any authority of his own, but Jesus, the son of a village carpenter, spoke with an authority all his own. He pointed all men directly to Himself. He said He was the Good Shepherd, The Way, The Truth, The Life, The Light of the Word, The Water of Life, The Bread of Life. He said he existed before Abraham, and thus was greater than Abraham. Greatest of all claims was His claim to be the Son of God.

Because Jesus held Himself up before man as altogether unique, the Jews hated him and often sought to kill Him. Jesus was not permitted to speak in the Jewish synagogues (churches). The Jews were filled with hatred and jealously because the *"world had gone after him."* (John 12: 9) Jesus often had to leave a city or territory and hide himself in order to escape attempts of the Jews to kill Him. (Luke 4:30; John 7: 1; John 10: 39; John 11: 53; John 12: 13)

2. Jesus' Harsh Accusations

Jesus pronounced harsh accusations to the very faces of his opponents. Jesus told the Jewish leaders, who prided themselves in keeping the Law, that they did not in fact keep Moses' Law! This was a very serious accusation, for the whole life of the Jew was centered around the Law. Jesus shattered the false confidence of the Jews. He destroyed the very foundation on which their religious life was built. Jesus "pulled the rug out from underneath them". Jesus undercut their whole complex system of religious rules and regulations and condemned the system as harmful.

Jesus further accused the Jews of having the devil as their father! What a horrible threat to the Jews! Jesus said their father was not Abraham. Every devout Jew depended upon his ancestral lineage from Abraham, and trusted in Abraham's righteousness to give him a passport to heaven. Jesus condemned them on the basis of their faithless lives. Jesus said that they believed not in him, because they were not of his sheep. (John 10: 26)

It was because Jesus made special claims and because He harshly accused the Jews, that the Jews were murderously hostile to Jesus. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was a deliberate and defiant act which signaled His climatic clash with his Jewish opponents.

B. Jesus' Courage In Presence of Emotional Jewish Crowd.

Jesus also showed great courage when He faced the many shouting Jews who expected Him to fulfill their nationalistic dreams of military victories. For several months many of those Jews had been following Jesus, and they expected that Jesus was finally making his last plans to conquer the Romans and to set up his earthly kingdom. Barclay says, "Their whole welcome was the welcome which befitted, not the King of Love, but the conqueror who would shatter the enemies of Israel." (Barclay's Mark; pg. 278)

The excited crowd believed that Jesus was the Son of David and thus the Messiah, but their kind of 'Son of David' was militaristic.

II JESUS' CLEANSING

Christ fearlessly defied sin in every form when he saw it. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, as well as his activity in the Temple, may be viewed as a type of magnificent defiance against sin. Christ defied the attitude of the religious leaders who were assembled in Jerusalem. He defied the shallow war cry of the Jewish patriots. He defied the grasping actions of the money-changers and sellers in the Temple. Let us carefully investigate the defiant action of Jesus in these three areas.

a. Defiance of Materialistic Preoccupation (Money-Changers)

When Jesus overthrew the tables of the money-changers, He showed defiance for materialistic preoccupation, especially as it was shown in exploitation of one's fellow men. The simple were exploited for money in the name of religion. Jesus knew that men were often greedy and grasping and often obtained money dishonestly. Such exploitation could not escape the scrutiny of Jesus. Jesus not only rebuked outright dishonesty, but also any kind of preoccupation with material things. Many followed Jesus because he had provided food for them, but when they realized that his kingdom was spiritual and not material, they forsook Christ. Christ did not build his kingdom on the flimsy structure of materialism which would have led to grasping, greedy, deceitful conduct in men, but his kingdom is made up of men whose first loyalty is Christ.

Many there are today who would accept Christ as the King if Christ would not demand their first allegiance. The chief stumbling block to many is material things, which they honor before Christ. If Christ would not object to questionable financial practices and let men use all their energies in making money and accumulating material things, then many people would follow Him. But Christ defies all preoccupation with things and has come to cleanse life of all greedy practices which often result because of wealth. Christ never objected to money, but only to the wrong use of money. Greediness results from the wrong use of money.

b. Defiance of Legalistic Ritualism (Jewish Leaders)

We have already seen how that Jesus clashed head on with the Jews throughout His entire ministry. We saw how Jesus showed great courage in facing these hostile Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

Jesus defied the Jewish system of legalistic ritualism, and came to cleanse away this evil. The entire religion of the Jewish legalists consisted in keeping thousands of minute and even ridiculous laws. These minor external ceremonies, such as their cleansing rites, were considered by the Jews to be just as important as the Ten Commandments. Such regulations as strict Sabbath observance and the eating of only certain kinds of meats, were matters of life and death to these Jewish leaders.

Jesus condemned this legalism and defined life in terms of love and compassion, not cold laws. Jesus showed that the scribes and Pharisees were hypocritical, for they cared more for things than they did for people. They despised the sinner, and congratulated themselves in their religious accomplishments.

Jesus came to cleanse away all cold legalism, and to define worship in terms of loving relationships to one's fellow men and God.

c. Defiance of Shallow Conceptions of Messiahship (Shouting Crowd)

When Jesus came into Jerusalem, the crowds cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!" As Barclay says, "Hosanna means Save now! And it was the cry for help which a people in distress addressed to their king or their God." (Pg. 264, Matthew vol.2)

The crowd addressed Jesus as the Son of David which was a Messianic title. Many believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. However, they believed that the Messiah would deliver the Jews from their Roman oppressors, and establish a new social order in which the Jews would rule over all other nations. The Jews looked to Jesus as God's agent through which Jews would conquer all their enemies and enjoy an age of peace and prosperity. The excitement of the Jews was great as they hailed the long-expected king. When they cried out, "Hosanna in the highest," they must have meant, "let even the angels in the highest heights of heaven cry unto God, Save now!"

Because, Jesus failed to fulfill the popular expectations of the Jews, it is possible that some of the very Jews who proclaimed "Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday, were among the Jews who cried out "Crucify Him!" only a few days later as Jesus stood before Pilate. Because Jesus came not to set up an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom instead, Jesus' own people crucified Him.

Modern man would quickly welcome Jesus today if He would only promise to change society and to establish an era of peace and prosperity. Many Americans would doubtless follow Jesus today if He would destroy our

enemies, eliminate our slums, fill our bank accounts, do away with our national debt, and destroy all diseases. Men today who have such a shallow understanding of Christ's mission are ready to cry "hosanna!" - "Save now!" People want to be saved from anything unpleasant or undesirable. However, when Christ offers suffering, sacrifice, a cross, and death, the popular cry of the crowd is no longer "hosanna" but Crucify Him!"

Jesus came to change this concept of the 'Son of David'. He came not to destroy, but to restore. He came not to hate, but to love. Barclay comments on this: "One of the most dangerous things a man can do is to go to people and tell them that all their accepted ideas and notions are wrong. Any man who tries to tear up by the roots of a people's nationalistic dreams is in for trouble. But that is what Jesus deliberately was doing. Here we see Jesus making the last appeal of love and making it with a courage that is heroic." (Barclay's Mark, 279)

III. JESUS' CLAIMS

Why did the Jewish leaders, the Jewish crowd, and the temple money-changers reject Jesus? It was because they failed to realize who Jesus really was.

a. Significance of the Donkey.

What was Jesus' intention when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey? By this act, Jesus attempted to dramatically communicate his message to the Jews. The Jews had failed to understand Jesus' teaching concerning His Messiahship. Perhaps through a dramatic act which had much meaning attracted to it, Jewish misunderstanding concerning the Messiah would be corrected.

Jesus rode on a donkey which had never been ridden on before. This act itself showed that this event was special and sacred. Donkeys which had never been ridden on before were used for sacred purposes.

Jesus' very act of riding upon a donkey into Jerusalem, was a deliberate Messianic claim, and reminded the Jews of the words of the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah prophesied of the coming Messiah: *"Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your kingi shall come to you, righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."* (Zechariah 9: 9)

It was on a donkey that a king rode. When a king rode on a donkey, it was a sign that he came in peace, but when he mounted a horse, it meant that he

came in war. Jesus claimed to be a king, but his purpose was peaceful, as shown by riding upon a donkey. Jesus claimed to be a King of peace, not of war, as the Jews wanted Him to be.

Jesus failed to fulfill the popular expectations of the Jews. He came not to establish a new order of society by overthrowing the Roman government, but He came rather to establish a new order in men's hearts which is characterized by love and not by hate.

The Jewish crowd who cried Hosanna expected Jesus to radically change society through revolutionary means. However, Christ came not to change society by military revolution but to change men, who in turn can peacefully change society. Society can't be changed until men's hearts are cleansed. Men futilely attempt to change society, without having Christ first change their hearts. Society is made up of men. Christ can only change society through transformed men. Hate, war, injustice, and oppression can only be destroyed through love, actively expressed by cleansed, transformed men.

This was Jesus' mission - to become the King of men's hearts that men may in turn peacefully change society. This mission of peace is what Jesus tried to dramatically communicate to the people when He came into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey - the animal which represented peace.

b. Significance of the Lame and Children

In the Temple Jesus confronted the blind and the lame. Matthew records, *"And the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple and He healed then."* (Matthew 21: 14)

Jesus always responded to need. The lame in the temple could well represent all men who sincerely respond to the Savior, as the true Messiah of God. The lame represent all who feel their dependence on Christ. The Jewish leaders, the crowd, and the money-changers felt self-sufficient, and therefore felt no real need for the true Messiah. It was the lame who accepted Jesus as the Great Physician whose ministry was redemptive and peaceful. The Jewish leaders depended upon excessive ritual, the crowd anticipated militaristic victories and the money-changers grasped for materialistic gain. The lame, however, based their entire life and future on Christ and thus became the object of Christ's mercy and healing. Christ can only help a person when he realizes his own helplessness, and depends solely on Christ.

In the Temple Christ also met children who shouted praises to Christ. Matthew contrasts Christ's response with the Jewish leaders' response to

these children: "*And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yes, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*" (Matthew 21: 15 - 16)

The children represent all who receive Christ in simple faith, and who recognize who Christ really is - the Son of God who is the Suffering Servant for mankind. The Jewish leaders represent those who have rejected Christ and have become fixed in their formal practices of religion.

Barclay contrasts the response of the children with the response of the Jewish leaders: "When we take this story just as it stands, and when we listen again to the fresh, clear voices of the children shouting their praises, we are faced with one great truth. There are truths which only the simple in heart can see, and which are hidden from the wise and the learned and the sophisticated. There are many times when heaven is nearer the child than it is to the wisest of men." (Barclay's Matthew, Vol 2, pg. 275)

CONCLUSION:

One of the most important lessons that we can learn from this story of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, is that He is a King of Peace and not a King of War. Christ came not to conquer the Romans by the sword, but to conquer men's passions by the cross.

When Christ defied the legalisms of the Jewish leaders, the fiery patriotism of the Jewish crowd, and the materialistic preoccupation of the money-changers, He showed that man cannot base his life on anything else but on firm faith in God. Christ also defies the self-sufficient and proud person, but honors the faith of simple, needy people. The lame who are needy and the children who are simple in faith, represent those whom Christ accepts.

CHAPTER 7

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways did Jesus demonstrate unusual courage, when He chose to enter into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday?

2. Why did the Jewish leaders, whom Jesus faced in Jerusalem, so intensely hate Jesus?

3. Throughout Jesus' earthly public ministry, why did Jesus often have to hide himself from the Jewish leaders? (Note Luke 4: 30; John 7:1; John 10: 39; John 11: 53; John 12: 9,13)

4. What accusations did Jesus make against the Jewish leaders, that resulted in bitter persecution and murderous plots against Jesus?

5. What popular Messianic expectations did the Jewish crowds cherish, the results of which brought great disillusionment to them and an eventual rejection of Jesus?

6. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, in what three specific ways was Jesus expressing 'holy defiance'?

7. In light of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21: 12-17), tell with what degree of conviction you personally agree with the following statements: "Christ defies all preoccupation with things and has come to cleanse life of all greedy practices which often result because of wealth. Christ never objected to money, but only to the wrong use of money. Greediness results from the wrong use of money."

8. What were some of the features of legalistic ritualism in the lives of the Jewish leaders (the scribes and Pharisees) which so greatly kindled the wrath of Jesus?

9. What popular understanding was in the minds of the crowd on Palm Sunday when they cried aloud to Jesus "Hosanna", as He entered Jerusalem?

10. According to your understanding of Christ's mission, as revealed in the Gospels, do you believe it is Christ's primary purpose to destroy America's enemies, eliminate America's slums, fill American's bank accounts, do away with America's national debt, and destroy America's diseases? Why or why not?

11. When Christ demands suffering (crucifixion to self-centeredness), sacrifice (giving to others in unselfishness), a cross (standing up for Christ amidst society's scorn and derision), and death (ego-slaying and willingness to suffer martyrdom for Christ's sake if necessary), what, instead of the popular cry of "Hosanna", does the cry of the crowd often become?

12. What were the popular nationalistic dreams of the Jewish people which Jesus deliberately sought to destroy, the result of which caused violent reaction on the part of the Jewish crowds soon after Palm Sunday?

13. What significance is attached to the fact that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey which no one had ever previously ridden on?

14. Tell how you would apply the truth of the following statements to the society (with its multiple problems) in which you live: "Jesus came not to establish a new order of society by overthrowing the Roman government, but He came rather to establish a new order in men's hearts which is characterized by love and not by hate." How would you apply these truths to specific societal problems which America as a people faces in our contemporary society.

15. Until one puts aside his self-sufficiency and acknowledges (like the lame and blind persons in the Temple) his own personal "spiritual loneliness and spiritual blindness", is it possible for him to recognize and to accept Jesus as the loving and healing Messiah?

16. Tell what each of the three following groups were primarily placing their hopes in, which resulted in blinding them to the person and mission of Jesus as God's true Messiah: (a) Jewish leaders, (b) the crowd, (c) money-changers.

17. Give your personal response to the following statements (in light of the small children's responses to Jesus in the Temple on Palm Sunday): "There are truths which only the simple in heart can see, and which are hidden from the wise and the learned and the sophisticated. There are many times when heaven is nearer the child than it is to the wisest of men."

CHAPTER 8

EASTER

CHAPTER 8

SUBJECT: THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 15: 12-20.

TEXT: ***"Because I live, ye shall live also."*** **(John 14: 19)**

INTRODUCTION: It is either on the basis of our belief or our denial of the Resurrection of Jesus that we are driven either to a life of hope or to a life of despair.

I. EVIDENCE OF RESURRECTION

a. Women Went To The Wrong Sepulcher.
b. Swoon Theory.
c. Thieves Stole The Body.
d. Disciples Removed The Body.
e. Roman or Jewish Authorities Took The Body.

II SIGNIFICANCE OF RESURRECTION

a. The Existence of God.
b. The Sonship of God.
c. Atonement.
d. Jesus' Victory Over Satan (Triumph of Righteousness).
e. The Doctrine of Salvation.
f. The Gift of the Holy Spirit.
g. The Victorious Life.
h. The Future Life.
i. Christ's Return and Triumphant Reign.
j. Transformation of Society and of Individuals.

CONCLUSION: There is convincing evidence that the resurrection story is not myth, but that Jesus really did rise from the dead to leave an empty tomb as a testimony to God's power and His divinity. The resurrection is at the very heart of the Christian faith.

The glory of the Christian religion is that it has at the heart of its faith an empty tomb. Christ is Risen!

CHAPTER 8

SUBJECT: **THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY**

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 15: 12-20.

TEXT: *"Because I live, ye shall live also."* (John 14: 19)

INTRODUCTION:

James Orr once said: "There is no stopping place for the human mind between the glory of a complete faith in Christ, and the bottomless abyss of pessimism and despair." (He Is Risen; pg. 124, 125) It is either on the basis of our belief or our denial of the Resurrection of Jesus that we are driven either to a life of hope or to a life of despair.

I. EVIDENCE OF RESURRECTION

Christianity is not unreasonable; it is just beyond reason. That is to say, Christianity is a rationally-based religion and can stand the tests of a rational examination, but, after a rational examination of it is made, there is much about Christianity that has not been touched. Even after one understands all the intellectual ingredients of Christianity, a 'leap of faith' still must be made to fully 'know' Christianity.

Let us look at the first phrase - 'Christianity is not unreasonable.' Peter exhorted Christians to *"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."* (1 Peter 3: 15). In a day when cults are growing rapidly through the propagation of their emotionally-based message, Christians need to proclaim their rationally-based message. Cults too speak much about the necessity of 'faith', but the 'faith' they proclaim is based on a subjective illusion. The 'faith' which the Christian proclaims is a reasonable faith - a faith that is based upon the objective historical fact of the Resurrection. 'Faith' based upon anything less is an illusion, and does not pass the scrutiny of reason. The fact of the Resurrection is what makes Christianity uniquely a reliable and reasonable religion. Deny the resurrection and one denies Christianity. Establish the fact of the resurrection and one establishes Christianity.

How does one authenticate Christianity? Both by experience and by reason, but experience that is not based on reason is an illusion. Christian experience must go beyond reason, but it must first go through the tests of reason. Otherwise a Christian's experience is no more valid than the experience of a cultist who is living a life of illusion.

Is the evidence for the Resurrection 'reasonable', or is the evidence for the Resurrection suspect? If it is suspect, then the Christian's 'faith' is suspect. In examining the Resurrection, the investigator must look, one by one, at the challenges that are given to disprove the Resurrection. If these challenges can be successfully met, and the Resurrection be proven to be 'reasonable', then the Christian's 'faith' which is based on the Resurrection is proven to be 'reasonable'. Let us look at the challenges put forth to discredit the Resurrection, and see if these challenges can be met.

a. Women Went To The Wrong Sepulcher.

It is said by some that the women went to the wrong sepulcher because it was dark and they were greatly grief-riven. There are several weaknesses to this theory. The following are two main weaknesses in the theory.

1. It was not completely dark. Luke says that it was *'at early dawn'* (Luke 24: 1), and Mark says that *'the sun had risen'* (Mark 16: 2).

2. These women were no fools. Two of the women who went to the sepulcher in the early morning, had previously watched the whole process of burying. There were at least five women who visited the tomb, and therefore if one started on the wrong path, she would be corrected by another. It is not likely that all would go to the wrong sepulcher. Mary Magdalene returned later in the full light of the day, and if she would have gone to the wrong place the first time, it is not likely that she would have made the same mistake the second time.

When these women came in the early morning, they came with a businesslike concern to anoint the body and were determined to complete their tasks. If they had gone to the wrong place the first time, they would not have given up until they had found the right tomb.

b. Swoon Theory.

Some way that Jesus did not die on the cross, but that he only fainted. He revived in the tomb, left it, and then showed Himself to His disciples. Incredible!

1. Only after Pilate was thoroughly convinced by the centurion that Jesus was dead, did he give Joseph permission to remove the body. The centurion probably was present when "one of the soldiers pierced his (Jesus') side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water."

2. It is inconceivable to believe that if Jesus fainted, he would be able to survive for thirty-six hours in a stone sepulcher without warmth or food, after He had experienced the pains of trial, mockery, flogging, and crucifixion. How could a weakling whose body was racked by pain, be able to move a large boulder, and that without disturbing the Roman guard?

3. How could a weak and sickly person give the disciples the notion that He was glorious in appearance and victorious over death? Would he not rather have a ghastly, deathly appearance, after going through such an ordeal? What happened to Jesus after the forty days? Could He have died without anyone knowing about it?

c. Thieves Stole The Body.

There is no evidence for this. How could thieves have escaped the attention of the guards to move the stone? Why would thieves have wanted the body in the first place, and why would they leave the clothes undisturbed.

d. Disciples Removed The Body.

It is argued by some that Jesus' disciples took the body while the guards slept. Incredible!

1. The soldiers were especially chosen to guard the tomb in order that the disciples might not steal the body and then claim that He arose from the dead. It is highly unlikely that all of the guards would have slept when they had a special assignment. How would guileless and defenseless women get past the guard to roll away the heavy stone?

2. The disciples preached about the resurrection and were willing even to suffer for preaching it. It is not at all likely that a group of men would suffer for a cause that they well knew was not genuine. "The Apostolic shout of the Resurrection made Christians of the first century worship Jesus with joy,

even when that worship meant martyrdom." (Sloan; pg. 122, 123)

e. Roman or Jewish Authorities Took The Body.

Some argue, that to avoid trickery the authorities took Jesus' body into safe custody. Again, this is incredible!

The preaching of the resurrection by the disciples caused great disturbance, both to the Jews and to the Romans. As Stott says, "The Jews feared conversions; the Romans riots." To avoid the disturbance which the preaching of the resurrection brought to both the Jewish authorities and the Roman authorities, the body of Jesus could have been produced, if it had been taken by the authorities. The authorities never attempted to produce the body of Christ. If they could have produced it, Christianity would have been destroyed before it even got a good start.

Further, many actually saw the Lord after the crucifixion and resurrection (I Corinthians 15: 3-8).

Says Phillips, "The evidence for the Resurrection does not rest on hysterical visions in the half-light of early dawn but on actual 'appearances', the last of which seems to have happened to Paul. I noticed the flat, matter-of-fact recital of known events. There is no attempt to persuade or prove, and certainly there is no artistic embellishment. Paul is, in effect, saying: these are the historic facts which we know." (Ring of Truth; pg. 32)

II SIGNIFICANCE OF RESURRECTION

The resurrection is not an isolated fact of the Scriptures. It is linked with all the great doctrines of the Bible. It is not possible to honestly believe other Christian doctrines without first believing the Resurrection. All other truths are built on the fact of the Resurrection.

a. The Existence of God.

There are those who say they want to believe in God but not in Jesus Christ. The fact of the matter is, if one does not believe in Jesus Christ, he cannot genuinely believe in the true God. One may entertain some illusionary concept of God, but he will not know the true God without knowing Jesus. The fact of the resurrection makes possible a knowledge of Jesus, which in turn enables one to know God. Wrote Peter, *"Through him (Jesus) you have*

confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." (I Peter 1: 21)

b. The Sonship of God.

Jesus claimed to be God. Jesus said that He and His Father were one (John 10: 30; 14: 9); Jesus claimed that all authority was given to Him (Matthew 28: 18); Jesus claimed to come from the Father to do the Father's will (John 6: 38; 8: 42, 58); Jesus claimed to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14: 6); Jesus claimed power to forgive sins and to heal (Matthew 9: 6); Jesus claimed power to give eternal life (John 6: 47); Jesus claimed to have authority to judge all men (John 5: 22).

Jesus' claims about Himself is one evidence that Jesus was truly the Son of God. A further evidence for Jesus' divine Sonship is seen in Jesus' sinless and perfect character. Jesus' friends who knew Him so well in all circumstances, asserted that He was without sin. (I Peter 2:22; II Corinthians 5: 21) Jesus' enemies even had to acknowledge that Jesus was innocent and just. (Matthew 27: 4, 24)

The conclusive evidence that shows the truth of Jesus' claim to divine Sonship is found in the fact of the Resurrection. "The resurrection was God's ratification of Christ's amazing claims to Sonship."

c. Atonement.

"Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." But Jesus' blood had to be pure - sinless - for His blood to be a perfect sacrifice for sin.

"Without the resurrection, death is but a human event. Jesus took the likeness of sinful flesh and became subject to death. Moral law here triumphant over natural law. The grave could not hold the sinless one. In His rising was the atonement for sin. 'Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.'" (Romans 4: 24, 25).

d. Jesus' Victory Over Satan (Triumph of Righteousness).

The Resurrection proved the reason for Christ's death. Satan thought he had his greatest victory when Jesus was crucified on the cross. What Satan did not realize was that death was only a prelude to the resurrection. Christ's death (followed by the Resurrection), actually signed Satan's death warrant and resulted in Satan's conclusive defeat and mankind's conclusive victory.

"Since we, God's children, are human beings - made of flesh and blood - he became flesh and blood too by being born in human form; for only as a human being could he die and in dying break the power of the devil who had the power of death." (Hebrews 2: 14; Living Bible)

e. The Doctrine of Salvation.

One cannot experience God's salvation without believing in the Resurrection. He who truly believes the Resurrection, also believes in the claims and the character of Jesus Christ. Such belief is not merely a mental assent but a life commitment to the Person of Christ. True belief in the Resurrection means total commitment to Christ. *"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."* (Romans 10: 9)

f. The Gift of the Holy Spirit.

"Pentecost was contingent upon the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. 'If I go not way, the comforter will not come, but if I go away, I will send him unto you" (John 16: 7, 28). Peter declared, after accusing them of killing the Lord, *"But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear."* (Acts 2: 24. 33)

g. The Victorious Life.

"As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6: 4). *"The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the (living) Son of God."* (Galatians 2: 20)

A mere memory of Christ and an attempt to merely imitate the character of Christ would not sufficiently give motivation or strength to live the Christian life. To live the Christian life, one needs more than ethics or philosophy; one needs an indwelling supernatural power. That needed power is made available through the indwelling Christ - the resurrected, contemporary Christ. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

"I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can see something of the future he has called you to share. I want you to realize that God has been made rich because we who are Christ's have been given to him I pray that you will

begin to understand how incredibly great his power is to help those who believe him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven, far, far above any other king or ruler or dictator or leader. Yes, his honor is far more glorious than that of anyone else either in the world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under his feet and made him the supreme Head of the Church - which is his body, filled with himself, the Author and Giver of everything everywhere." (Ephesians 2: 18-23)

h. The Future Life.

There is within the breast of every man a longing for immortality. Man is born with a thirst for infinity. Man is overbuilt for this world, and his aspirations call for a fulfillment that is beyond the scope of time.

Even in the Old Testament when men lacked a belief in immortality, there are some aspirations shown, aspirations which could only be fulfilled in some type of life hereafter. Job cried out,

"Still, I know One to champion met at last,
To stand up for me upon earth.
This body may break up, but even then
my life shall have a sight of God."
(Job 19: 25-27, Moffatt)

The Psalmist expressed the belief that a man could enter into such a close relationship with God in this life, that not even death could break that relationship.

"My flesh shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalms 16: 9-11)

"Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalms 73: 24)

Here we find a deep confidence that man's aspirations for immortality will not be frustrated, but that man's deepest aspirations will be fulfilled. However,

those deepest aspirations of man - aspirations for a life hereafter - can only find fulfillment because of the fact of the Resurrection. Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."* (John 11: 25) *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish."* (John 10: 28)

i. Christ's Return and Triumphant Reign.

"*God swore with an oath that He would raise up Christ to sit on His throne. 'He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, and made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ. Of his righteous reign there shall be no end. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven...We shall be like Him, for we shall see him as he is."* (I Thessalonoians 4: 14-18). "*Dear brothers, think! David wasn't referring to himself when he spoke these words I have quoted, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. But he was a prophet, and knew God had promised with an unbreakable oath that one of David's own descendants would [be the Messiah and] sit on David's throne. David was looking far into the future and predicting the Messiah's resurrection, and saying that the Messiah's soul would not be left in hell and his body would not decay. He was speaking of Jesus, and we all are witnesses that Jesus rose from the dead."* (Acts 2: 29-32)

j. Transformation of Society and of Individuals.

The risen Christ told the disciples that all power in heaven and in earth had been given to Him. The resurrected Christ has shown power over evil, and as such has shown His ability to defeat evil and ultimately to destroy evil altogether. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to transform lives and change society. Wherever resurrection power has touched individuals or society, things have drastically changed.

"One of the greatest stories of history is the account of the reforms the Christian Church produced during the first three and a half centuries of its existence. Paganism always did, and always will, do frightful irreverence to personality. Such an irreverence cannot be separated from its materialistic viewpoint, and its mood of self-assertion. Christianity's inevitable reverence for personality, as such, of necessity came into conflict with this viewpoint and mood. The Resurrection argued the imperishable worth of personality;

and Christians could not, therefore, be complacent in the presence of social institutions and customs which violated it."

This fact could be illustrated countless times throughout history. One incident will serve to illustrate this. "One of the great stories of the Christian Church is the story of Telemachus. He was a hermit of the desert, but something told him - the call of God - that he must go to Rome. He went. Rome was nominally Christian, but even in Christian Rome the gladiatorial games went on, in which men fought with each other, and crowds roared with the lust for blood. Telemachus found his way to the games. Eighty thousand people were there to spectate. He was horrified. Were these men who were slaughtering each other not also children of God? He leaped from his seat, right into the arena, and stood between the gladiators. He was tossed aside. He came back. The crowd were angry; they began to stone him. Still he struggled back between the gladiators. The perfect's common rang out; a sword flashed in the sunlight, and Telemachus was dead. And then suddenly there was as a hush; suddenly the crowd realized what had happened, a holy man lay dead. Something happened that day to Rome, for there were never any gladiatorial games any more. The one man had let loose something by his death that cleansed an empire of a sin. Someone must begin a reformation". (Barclay's Matthew, page 86) The power for that reformation is the power of the Resurrection. Power = Transformation of Individuals (Human Nature Before and After Conversion, I Corinthians 6: 7-11; Galatians 5: 19-26)

CONCLUSION:

There is convincing evidence that the resurrection story is not myth, but that Jesus really did rise from the dead to leave an empty tomb as a testimony to God's power and His divinity. The resurrection is at the very heart of the Christian faith.

"One day during the French Revolution, a man remarked to Talleyrand, who was Bishop of Autun: 'The Christian religion - what is it? It would be easy to start a religion like that.' 'Oh yes', he replied Talleyrand. 'One would only have to get crucified and rise again the third day.'" (Shoe-Leather Faith; No. 137)

The glory of the Christian religion is that it has at the heart of its faith an empty tomb. Christ is Risen!

CHAPTER 8

QUESTIONS

1. Give your interpretation and reaction to the following statement: "There is no stopping place for the human mind between the glory of a complete faith in Christ, and the bottomless abyss of pessimism and despair."

2. In seeking to understand the Christian Faith, what is the relationship between Faith and Reason? Tell what is meant by the statement: "Christianity is not unreasonable, but Christianity does go beyond reason."

3. When persons are told to make "a leap of faith" in order to become a Christian, does this requirement result in sacrificing all rationality and intellectual integrity? Why or why not?

4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The 'faith' which the cultists proclaim is based on a subjective illusion, but the 'faith' which Christians proclaim is a reasonable faith based upon objective historical facts. Christian experience must go beyond reason, but it must first go through the tests of reason. Otherwise a Christian's experience is no more valid than the experience of a cultist who is living a life of illusion."

5. What rational and objective response would you give to a skeptic who seeks to disprove the resurrection of Jesus by declaring that the women went to the wrong sepulcher because it was dark and because they were overwhelmed and stunned by their deep grief.

6. Explain the swoon theory, which seeks to disprove the resurrection of Jesus, and give your rational refutation to such an argument.

7. What response would you give to a skeptic who declares that Jesus did not rise from the dead, but that instead Jesus' body was either stolen by thieves or that Jesus' body was removed from the tomb and hidden by His disciples?

8. How would you respond to the skeptic who declares that to avoid trickery the authorities took Jesus' body into safe custody?

9. Is it possible to know the true and the living God without first knowing the resurrected Christ? Why or why not? (Note I Peter 1: 21)

10. Put a check beside those statements which reflect your personal convictions regarding the person and the identity of Jesus:

_____a. Jesus and His Father are One (John 10: 30; 14: 9)
_____b. Jesus has received all authority from His Father (Matthew 28: 18)
_____c. Jesus came from the Father to do the Father's will (John 6: 38; John 8: 42, 56).
_____d. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14: 6).
_____e. Jesus has power to forgive sins and to heal all sicknesses (Matthew 9: 6).
_____f. Jesus has power to give eternal life (John 6: 47).
_____g. Jesus has authority to judge all men (John 5: 22).

11. Which of the following is the most conclusive evidence that demonstrates the truth of Jesus claims to divine Sonship?

_____a. Jesus' amazing claims regarding His own unique person and work and power and authority.
_____b. Jesus' sinless and perfect character, as declared by Jesus' best friends and as acknowledged even by Jesus' worst enemies.
_____c. Jesus' bodily resurrection, as witnessed by a host of His followers.

12. Could a sinner be forgiven of His sins and enjoy the cleansing (atonement) from all sin without the resurrection of Jesus? Why or why not? (Note Romans 4: 24, 25)

13. According to Hebrews 2: 14, what did Jesus' resurrection accomplish?

14. According to Romans 10: 9, what must one do in order truly to be saved - to know God personally?

15. Why was the resurrection of Jesus necessary before the Holy Spirit could be "poured out" on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)? (Note Acts 2: 24, 33)?

16. Why is the resurrection of Jesus necessary if one is to live "a victorious Christian life"? (Note Romans 6: 4; Galatians 2: 20; Ephesians 1: 18-23)

17. Why is it impossible for man's longing for immortality, man's thirst for infinity, man's aspirations for eternal life, to be fulfilled without the resurrection of Jesus? (Note John 11: 25; John 10: 28)

18. Tell to what extent you believe the following: "Unless Christ arose bodily from the grave, one's faith that right shall eventually triumph over wrong, one's belief that Christ will return to earth someday, one's confidence that he shall reign eternally with Christ - these beliefs are all incredible and simply illusions of the mind!"

19. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statement: "The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to transform lives and to change society." (Note I Corinthians 6: 9-11; II Corinthians 5: 17: Galatians 5: 19-26)

20. What "connection" is there in one's belief in the resurrection of Jesus and one's belief in the imperishable worth of human personality? With paganism's disregard and denial of Jesus' resurrection, is it any wonder that paganism has a frightful irreverence for human personality and a cruel disregard for the life of the unborn child and the life of the physically and mentally handicapped person?

21. Do you believe that a renewed faith in the resurrection of Jesus could result in a broader and deeper transformation of society's institutions? Why or why not?

22. What makes the Christian "Religion" unique among all the religions of the world?

23. Give your response to the following: "The glory of the Christian religion is that it has at the heart of its faith an empty tomb!"

CHAPTER 9

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

CHAPTER 9

SUBJECT: **CALL FOR NATIONAL AND PERSONAL REPENTANCE**

SCRIPTURE: **Ephesians 5: 7-20.**

TEXT: ***"If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land."*** **(II Chronicles 7: 14)**

INTRODUCTION: **"National Day of Prayer" is a day in which all Americans should be on their knees in true repentance for sins ndividually and collectively committed. Depending upon the quality and quantity of prayers, America could have the beginning of a 'change of tide' morally.**

I. Historically It Has Been Proven That Repentance Is The Key To A Nation's Survival.

II. Experientially It Is True That Repentance Is Needed In Our Nation Today.

CONCLUSION: **Let us each, as sincere Christians and as loyal American citizens, commit ourselves to the following:**

(1) **Acceptance of Biblical Moral absolutes.**
(2) **Honest reflection upon our personal actions and attitudes to evaluate just how godly and responsible they are.**
(3) **Acceptance of personal moral responsibility.**
(4) **Personal healing which comes through confession.**
(5) **Redemptive involvement in society's ills.**

CHAPTER 9

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INTRODUCTION:

April 30, 1974, was designated by our national government as "National Day of Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer", reminiscent of Abraham Lincoln's call to repentance and humiliation over national sins during the Civil War years, over a century agO.

"National Day of Prayer" is a day in which all Americans should be on their knees in true repentance for sins individually and collectively committed. Depending upon the quality and quantity of prayers, America could have the beginning of a 'change of tide' morally.

The call for national repentance is not new. The Old Testament prophets from Amos (8th century B.C.) onward were heard announcing the combined message of judgement and hope. Listen to the hopeful proclamation of national healing, given by God to the early Israelites, as proclaimed in II Chronicles 7: 14: *"If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land."*

PROPOSITION:

This verse outlines the conditions for National Healing! Note them carefully: (a) Humility, (b) Prayer, (c) Seeking God's Face and Favor, (d) Turning from wicked ways. When these conditions are met, then God responds: (a) Forgiveness of sins, (b) Healing of land (nation). What a promise - how merciful and how hopeful for responsive, repentant people!

This verse has a message - both historically and experientially. The truthfulness of this verse has been proven historically, many times ever. HISTORICALLY IT HAS BEEN PROVEN THAT REPENTANCE IS THE KEY TO A NATION'S SURVIVAL. Also, when this verse is applied to our present national life, it can be said that it is EXPERIENTIALLY TRUE THAT REPENTANCE IS NEEDED IN OUR OWN COUNTRY TODAY.

I. HISTORICALLY IT HAS BEEN PROVEN THAT REPENTANCE IS THE KEY TO NATION'S SURVIVAL.

A brief survey of history will show this. Lack of repentance accompanied by a continuing disintegration in morals resulted in one nation after another dying.

Think of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah which were destroyed by God, because not even ten righteous souls could be found to morally preserve the cities. A plaque marks the one-time location of these ancient cities - now buried under the Dead Sea!

Think of the Flood that earlier had come upon the inhabited world because Noah and his family were the only righteous souls that could be found. (II Peter 2: 5-6)

Recall the successive downfalls of the ancient Kingdoms of glory and splendor, each of which reaped the judgment of destruction, brought about in no small part because of deterioration in morality! As Graham points out: "Before Rome fell, her standards were abandoned, the family disintegrated, divorce prevailed, immorality was rampant and faith was at a low ebb." And as Gibbon said, "There was much talk of religion, but few practiced it." (It Is Time To Seek the Lord; sermon pamphlet by Billy Graham; pg. 8) Before Rome, there was Assyria, Babylon, and Greece - each of which fell in its own turn.

History also has examples of nations which were spared the wrath of God, because there was national repentance. Wicked ancient Nineveh was slated by God to receive an awful judgment, but because of Jonah's warnings and the city's repentance, the ancient city was spared. Let's read the story from Jonah 3: 5-10: *"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the sea - decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water; But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."* (3: 5-10) Nineveh was spared the terrible outpouring of the wrath of God, because the entire city repented!

In more modern times, historians tell us that 18th century England was spared the blood-bath of the French Revolution because of the Wesleyan Revival which resulted in thousands of personal conversions and widespread social reforms.

The God of Jonah and the God of Wesley is the God of the twenty first century! Said Thomas Jefferson once: "I tremble for my country when I remember God is just." God is no respecter of persons or of nations. If He did not even spare His ancient people - Israel - from judgment, who is presumptuous enough to think that God will spare America, if it, like Israel, refuses to repent of its many similar sins of idolatry and selfishness?

But presently I believe God is sparing His wrath and extending His mercy to us - and calling us to deep repentance. Says modern-day prophet, Billy Graham, "It is not too late for us to repent. There is still time, and it could start with you if you are willing to repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior."
But repentance presupposes the fact of sin, a fact that has long been rationalized, explained away psychologically, or simply outrightly denied.

II. Experientially It Is True That Repentance Is Needed In Our Nation Today.

"Congress voted some years ago to require the President to proclaim each year a national day of prayer, and Truman began it in 1952. The following year (1953) President Eisenhower made his first proclamation and in it he made a reference to SIN. He borrowed the words for his proclamation from a called issued in 1863 by Abraham Lincoln, the country's first Republican and most theological President: (as follows)

> 'It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the ever ruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgression in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon.'

An article in 'Theology Today' has this to say about Eisenhower's use of the word 'sin':

> 'None of Eisenhower's subsequent calls to prayer mentioned 'sin' again. The word was not compatible with the Commander-in Chief's vision of a proud and confident people....Since 1953, no President has mentioned sin as a national failing. Neither Kennedy, Johnson, nor Nixon. To be sure, they have skirted the word. The Republicans referred to the problems of 'pride' and 'self-righteousness'. The Democrats referred to 'short-comings.' But none used the grand old sweeping concept of sin. I cannot imagine a modern President beating his breast on behalf of the Nation and praying 'God be merciful to us sinners' though experts agree this is one of the best

ways to begin'." (Menninger's 'Whatever Became of Sin?' Page. 14, 15)

Dr. Karl Menninger, famous American Psychiatrist, founder of the famous Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas, believes that even ministers in general are very hesitant to speak about sin from the pulpit. Remember, this is a psychiatrist speaking: "How often does a modern sermon deal with sin? Sin in general or in particular?.....Has the reader ever heard a sermon, for example, in which cigarette smoking or wildlife destruction or political lying or business dishonesty were dealt with as sins? Some members of the congregation would no doubt rebuke such a pastor for his lack of spirituality. 'One should not preach of such things', they told Micah when he became specific (Micah 2: 6)." (Menninger; pg. 193)

Why don't we talk about and repent of our corporate sin of cruel, inhuman warfare? But is war a sin? Are there not holy wars? Why do we remain unmoved and unrepentant when our wars produce as much pain, sorrow, loss, terror, blood, filth, immorality, screaming, burning children, half-dismembered soldiers?

Is there no place for repentance when we look at the extremely poverty-ridden sections of our country? "There are millions of people in our rich country who go to bed hungry every night, whose lives are pinched, harsh, meager, drab, miserable, and dangerous, and who rise in the dark to drag themselves to another dreary round of arduous toil." (Menninger's book; pg. 112)

Can we remain unmoved and unrepentant in the face of our environmental sins? "The world-wide threat to the survival of human life springing from uncontrolled technology, unregulated industry, unlimited population growth, and ruthless wastage and pollution, is a moral problem". (Ibid; 118)

Time would hardly permit to even briefly talk about the many personal sins which plight individual Americans (you and me), all of which call for repentance. The list is long and the sins are not beautiful to behold: Pride, Lust, Fornication, Adultery, Abortion, Pornography, Gluttony, Drugs, Smoking, Alcohol, Anger, Violence, Rudeness, Ingratitude, Laziness, Escape from redemptive involvement, apathy, Indifference, Hate, Envy, Greed, Avarice, Affluence.

Talking about the last named - Affluence - one observer notes that America's new way of 'getting rich' is through buying "things from one another that we do not want, at prices we cannot pay, on terms we cannot meet, because of advertisements we do not believe." (Menninger quote; 151, 152) Are not many in America slaves to our credit racket?

What about the sin of waste? One observer (Menninger) calls this "our greatest national sin." (Page 156) Add to these personal and national sins the so-called common-place sins of cheating, stealing and lying.

"Psychoanalysts do not use the word 'sin' because of its strong reproachful quality, its vague or nonspecific quality, and its corollaries and implications of guilt, reparation, and atonement." (Menninger; pg. 23)

Following suit, the common populace in America have used many psychological escape mechanisms, to avoid accepting personal moral responsibility for immoral actions. We try to relieve our uneasy conscience by projecting the blame on to others, ascribing the responsibility to a group, offering up scapegoat sacrifices, or performing or partaking in dumb-show rituals of penitence and atonement.

When as a Nation we threw into the moral wastebasket, false guilts and false conceptions of sin, we also threw away genuine guilt and sins. We no longer regard right as right and wrong as wrong, but we have explained away sin, and have evaluated all moral actions on the basis of a relative ethic.

The result of explaining away sin has been the deterioration in morals and a retreat from personal moral responsibility. Part of today's Scripture reading is Ephesians 5: 15: "Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do."

The best acceptance of personal moral responsibility assumes the acceptance of the Christian moral ethic, rooted in the fixed principles of the Bible.

We are presently experiencing national moral chaos because many of our leaders, as well as the common citizenry, have adopted a morality based on expediency rather than a morality based on moral absolutes. Leaders who have based their morality on expediency, make decisions on the basis of what will advance their particular cause at the moment, regardless of whether their actions are right or wrong. As Donald Bastian says, "This appealing approach can only lead to chaos in human relationships while leaving little possibility for healthy guilt and therefore the correction of wrong." A healthy sense of guilt leads to repentance, restoration, and moral health, but a wholesome sense of guilt can only come to the person who builds his life upon the moral foundation of the Bible.

Are there not religious-type sins that each of us have been guilty of? Sins of omission! "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Think of the following religious sins: (1) Negligence of the means of grace - sporadic prayer, Biblical illiteracy, unpredictable Church attendance, failure in fellowship. (2)

Non-involvement with people - isolationism and retreatism; (3) Failure to witness to unsaved; (4) Failure to tithe our money (1/10) to God's work; (5) Prayerlessness.

The 'sin of Prayerlessness' is too common. Said Samuel: *"God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."* (I Samuel 12: 23) Said Helen Shoemaker: "If we gave as little time and regularity to eating as we do to prayer, we should probably die of malnutrition."

CONCLUSION:

Here are the "Actions Steps" which will bring Healing:

(1) Acceptance of Biblical Moral Absolutes (Bible is 'North Star of Morality.')

(2) Honest reflection upon our personal actions and attitudes to evaluate just how godly and responsible they are.

(3) Acceptance of personal moral responsibility. "If the concept of personal responsibility and answerability for ourselves and for others were to return to common acceptance, hope would return to the world with it!" (Karl Menninger)

(4) Personal healing which comes through confession. Says Hobart Mowrer, psychologist, "The moment one begins to accept his guilt and his sinfulness, the possibility of radical reformation opens up; and...a new freedom of self-respect and peace." Remember 1 John 1: 9 and our text, II Chronicles 7: 14.

(5) Redemptive involvement in society's ills.

CHAPTER 9

QUESTIONS

1. According to II Chronicles 7: 14, what four conditions must be met by God's people, and what three promises will God fulfill if these four conditions are met?

2. Why do you think that many nations in past history died? (Note Genesis 18: 16-19: 28) Why were some places (like Nineveh)spared God's judgment? (Note Jonah 3: 5-10)

3. If God is no respecter of persons or of nations, and if God did not even spare His ancient people of Israel from judgment, do you think that God will spare modern America, if America, like ancient Israel, refuses to repent of its many similar sins of idolatry and selfishness? Why or why not?

4. Tell to what degree you agree or disagree with the following quotation from Abraham Lincoln (when he gave the following call to the United States in 1863):

> "It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon."

5. Why do national political leaders find in so difficult to call the people of the nations which they lead, to genuine repentance and to godly sorrow over the serious sins which are so obvious in national life? Why is the example of Abraham Lincoln (who expressed godly sorrow and repentance in serious personal prayer during the years of the Civil War) so difficult for American Presidents and other national leaders to follow?

6. Why, according to psychiatrist Dr. Karl Menninger, are so few Christian ministers fearful or hesitant to openly speak about Sin (and the need for genuine Repentance) from American pulpits?

7. According to Micah 2: 6, what response did the people of Israel give to the prophet where he specifically talked about sin?

8. Do you. believe there is a tendency on the part of even professing Christians (and regular Church attenders) to justify all American military involvements in overseas wars, rationalizing that all military engagements have been sanctioned by God (and are thus "Holy Wars")? Do you believe that War is a sin, or do you believe most wars

(including those in which America has been involved in for centuries) are "acceptable" to God? Why do we (as American Christians) remain so unmoved and unrepentant when our wars have produced so much pain and sorrow and loss and terror and blood and filth and immorality and screaming children and half-dismembered soldiers?

9. Why do so many professing Christians remain unmoved (and almost indifferent) when they regularly view on the television scenes the poverty-ridden areas of the world where thousands are dying of starvation? How do you believe your own conscience and moral sensitivities can be more awakened to the seriously hurting people around you?

10. As a Christian, can you remain unmoved and unrepentant in the face of our environmental sins?

11. Among the following list of Sins which are so rampant in American society, check those for which you have greatest concern (and about which you feel most sensitive):

_____ a. Pride
_____ b. Lust
_____ c. Fornication & adultery
_____ d. Abortion
_____ e. Infanticide
_____ f. "Mercy-Killing" of Elderly
_____ g. Pornography
_____ h. Drugs
_____ i. Gluttony
_____ j. Smoking
_____ k. Alcohol
_____ l. Violence
_____ m. Ingratitude
_____ n. Laziness
_____ o. Government Waste
_____ p. Hate
_____ q. War
_____ r. Poverty
_____ s. Greed
_____ t. Government Corruption

12. Give your response or reaction to the following statement: "America's new way of 'getting rich' is through buying things from one another that we do not want, at prices we cannot pay, on terms we cannot meet, because of advertisements we do not believe." Do you personally believe that most Americans are involved (almost trapped) in the "Credit Card Racket"?

13. Why do few psychoanalysts and psychiatrists and counselors use the word "Sin" in their counseling and therapy?

14. What are some of the "escape mechanisms" which the common populace of America uses, to avoid accepting personal moral responsibility for immoral actions?

15. Give your personal evaluation of the following statements, and tell why you agree or disagree with these assertions: "When as a Nation we threw into the moral wastebasket, false guilt and false conceptions of sin, we also threw away genuine guilt

We no longer regard right as right and wrong as wrong, but we have explained away sin and have evaluated all moral actions on the basis of a relative ethic."

16. How would you describe a morality which is based on 'Expedience", and what will be the result of making decisions in life solely on the basis of "Expediency"?

17. Which of the following "religious-type" sins do you personally feel most responsible for?

_____a. Negligence of daily Bible reading.
_____b. Sporadic or half-hearted praying.
_____c. Unpredictable Church attendance
_____d. Failure to be involved in Christian Fellowship.
_____e. Non-involvement with people, i.e. isolationism and retreatism.
_____f. Failure to witness to the Unsaved persons.
_____g. Failure to tithe my income to the Lord's Work (i.e., give one-tenth of my income to the local Church and other ministries.)
_____h. Failure to fast (i.e. going without food for spiritual purposes)

18. What is meant by the "sin of Prayerlessness"? (Note I Samuel 12: 23)

19. Tell what your reaction or response is to the following statement: "If we gave as little time and regularity to eating as we do to prayer, we should die of malnutrition."

20. Choose one of the following questions, asked by Dr. Karl Menninger, to answer openly and honestly in the presence of a small group of caring fellow Christians (in an attempt to evaluate your spiritual growth and to develop a closer relationship with the Lord Jesus):

_____a. "What have I done this week to hurt my neighbor, my sister or brother, my wife?
_____b. What have I done to hurt this Church or the ideals for which it stands?
_____c. What have I done to hurt this city, this land on which I live?
_____d. What have I done this week against the interest of the next generation?
_____e. What have I left undone for the suffering, damaged, polluted, exploited earth and its hungry, miserable, exploited population?

21. Tell to what degree you agree or disagree with the following statement by Karl Menninger:

> "If the concept of personal responsibility and answerability for ourselves and for others were to return to common acceptance, hope would return to the world with it."

22. Give Scriptural reasons (Biblical references) for the truthfulness of the following statement by Hobart Mowrer: "The moment one begins to accept his guilt and his sinfulness, the possibility of radical reformation opens up; and a new freedom of self-respect-and peace."

CHAPTER 10

GREAT COMMISSION

CHAPTER 10

SUBJECT: **THE GREAT COMMISSION**

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28: 16-20.

TEXT: *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* (Matthew 28: 19)

INTRODUCTION: Many earnest Christians are endeavoring to carry out the Great Commission. Yet the world's population is expanding at geometric proportions. If every person is to be reached with the Gospel, every Christian must become an evangelist to herald forth the message of salvation.

I. COMMAND TO GO.

1. Make Sure You Are A Christian.
2. Confess All Unconfessed Sins To God.
3. Make Sure You Are Filled With The Holy Spirit.
4. Make A Prayer List.
5. Determine To Put First Things First.

II. RESULTS IN GOING.

1. Bridges Of Friendship Built.
2. Souls Will Find Christ As Saviour.
3. Kingdom Of God Will Be Expanded.
4. Local Church Increased And Enlarged.
5. Fulfilled Christians.

CONCLUSION: The Great Commission is the commission to 'GO'. It is commanded by Christ and is a universal command given to all Christians, regardless of occupation - painter, plumber, or preacher. For even a small investment of time in witnessing, the benefits are so great! Will you determine at this very moment that you will allow God to use you as His witness.

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INTRODUCTION:

In all the clang and clamor of the world's strife and chaos, the Christian can still hear the voice of Jesus echoing though the ages, saying, *"Go, teach, baptize, and make disciples in all nations!'* Many earnest Christians are endeavoring to carry out the Great Commission. Christianity has encircled the globe and many backward tribes now are even receiving the Gospel in their own tongue. Yet the world's population is expanding at geometric proportions. If every person is to be reached with the Gospel, every Christian must become an evangelist to herald forth the message of salvation.

PROPOSITION:

The words of the Great Commission are repeated many times, both during the ministry of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, and in the message of the apostles as recorded in the Epistles. The Great Commission is the commission to Go to all people with the Gospel. Let us note the command to Go, the preparation needed for Going, and the Results of Going.

1. COMMAND TO GO.

Even in the Old Testament, the command to Go and Speak to people about God is given. When Isaiah had a vision of God and was cleansed of sin, he heard the voice of God saying, *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* Isaiah immediately responded, *"Here am I; send me."* Isaiah 6: 8) Ezekiel was commanded by God to warn sinners of the error of their ways, and to seek to persuade them to turn to God;

"*O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*" (Ezekiel 33: 7-9)

It is the will of Christ that every believer should go forth and bear fruit. *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."* (John 15: 16)

Obedience at the point of Going is imperative, and good intentions without action brings condemnation. *"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first."* (Matthew 21: 28-31a)

What should be the purpose of our Going? The parable of the Good Samaritan gives us the Answer. After telling about the compassionate actions of the Samaritan man, Jesus said, *"Go, and Do thou likewise."* (Luke 10: 37b) Expressing compassion is the purpose of going. Note the verbs of actions - 'Go' and 'Do'. Faith without works is dead. Faith demands expression. Right thinking and right doctrine are important, but both must culminate in right action, or good thinking and doctrine become barren. It is possible to contend for orthodox belief without involvement in practical redemptive actions. As one said, "The Church without a passion for souls is not a Christian Church, regardless of what it believes." (Walter S. Kendall)

A Church must be a soul-winning Church if it is truly a Christian Church. Listen to what Royal Nelson says, "The heart of the divine program is soul-winning, and the Church that is not a soul-winning Church has no more weight in the balances of eternity than a secular club." (Here's How; pg. 7)

We need not go to another continent to tell the Good News. We can witness at our doorstep and in our neighborhood. After Jesus healed a demoniac, the demoniac wanted to leave his home and travel with Jesus. But Jesus would not allow this. "'*Go home to your own people* ' he told him, '*and tell them what the Lord has done for you, and how kind he has been to you!* ' *So the man went off and began to spread throughout the Ten Towns the story of what Jesus had done for him. And they were all simply amazed.*" (Mark 5: 19, 20, Phillips)

The command of Jesus is serious and urgent: *"And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."* (Luke 14: 23)

The command of Jesus is to reach all men: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* (Matthew 28: 19)

The command of Jesus to Go is given to all Christians. "A decade ago one could hear people say, after a session on soul winning, 'That's what we pay our preacher for'. There are four weaknesses to this theory: (1) It is unscriptural. The Great Commission was to all Christians. (2) It is impossible to have an evangelistic Church without having evangelistic people. (3) It is physical impossibility for clergy to accomplish all of the tasks of evangelization. In this day they are burdened with a multiplied program of administration plus the constant crisis resulting from social breakdowns about them. (4) It is the ordinary laymen who holds the ideal position to contact society as a whole." (Go, by Delamarter and Kingsley; pg. 27) A survey was taken among people to determine the various reasons why people came to a local Church. Among the reasons (given in percentages) why people came to a local Church, 56% came because members of the Church invited them to come, and only 3% came because the pastor had called on them. Outsiders are greatly impressed and influenced when Church laymen visit them.

It is Christ Himself who sends us. After Jesus' resurrection, He said, *"Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."* (John 20: 21)

II. PREPARATION FOR GOING

1. Make Sure You Are A Christian. One cannot begin to be concerned genuinely in the salvation of others if he himself is not saved from sin. Make sure you have personally accepted the Savior into your life by faith. He who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

2. Confess All Unconfessed Sins To God. The Psalmist wrote, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* Psalms 66: 19) As a Christian, have you relapsed into sin or disobedience? What are some sins to which Christians are susceptible? Idle speaking, negligence in Church attendance, wastefulness in their use of time, indulgence in eating, negligence in daily devotions such as prayer and fasting, failure to pay the tithe to the Lord, cooling off in zeal for the Lord's work. Each sin must be faced and confessed to God. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins."* (I John 1: 9a) *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* (II Chronicles 7: 14)

3. Make Sure You Are Filled With The Holy Spirit. "From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit at all times. Through all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled (controlled and empowered) by the Holy Spirit." (Bill Bright)

4. Make A Prayer List. Pray Specifically and daily for individuals whom you would like to help lead to Christ. We ask and receive not because we ask amiss. One way to ask amiss is to ask for nothing specifically and everything in general.

5. Determine To Put First Things First. Establish priorities. Determine by the grace of God that soul-winning will take first place in your priorities. Let this be your vision, burden, and prayer: "I must win souls if I never do anything else." Realize that it won't always be easy to put soul-winning first in your priorities. For what is the Cross of the Christian? The cross to the Christian is bearing reproach and risking danger for the sake of sharing Christ with a needy and sometimes hostile world. Said Jesus to His followers: *"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in the synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."* (Matthew 10: 16-20)

There are times when one feels a strong desire to witness. Said Jeremiah, *"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) The disciples said to the authorities who tried to quiet their witness: *"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."* (Acts 4: 20)

However, one must not witness simply on the basis of feeling or conscious desire, but rather one must witness systematically out of a sense of obedience, duty, and faith. This is not always easy, therefore one must decide that witnessing is so important that he will do it as a way of life, regardless of feeling or emotion. One may at times feel a definite leading of the Spirit to witness, but many times one will not feel that leading and therefore he must go ahead and witness out of a sense of mere obedience and faith.

Just as Paul prayed for courage to speak for Christ, so we too need to pray for courage to speak for Christ. *"Pray also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak."* (Ephesians 6: 19)

Witnessing as a way of life is not easy because it require consistency and persistency. I asked Bishop Kendall how long I should take the initiative in going to people to speak to them concerning their relationship with God. The Bishop answered that I should go back and go back to people's homes, regularly and systematically,

continuing to express concern over a long period of time. Jesus never gave up on people. Wrote Paul, *"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."* Galatians 6: 9) *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."* (I Corinthians 15: 58)

Don't wait until you find time to witness and to visit, for you will find little time to do it. Rather, make time to witness. That may mean scheduling a certain time each week to visit and to witness. It may mean giving up some activities that rob you of time that should be spent in sharing Christ with others. God asks Christians to tithe their money. Would it not be reasonable to ask a Christian to tithe his time for God and the Church - to give a certain choice portion of time each week to visit and to witness for the cause of Christ and the local Church?

I repeat: Witnessing is (1) Associated with cross-bearing and bearing reproach obedience for Christ's sake. Witnessing must (2) be carried on consistently out of a sense of obedience when we feel a strong desire to witness and even when we don't feel any conscious desire to witness. (3) Witnessing must go on even when there is no quick, visible results. Man is trained to carry on activities only when there are immediate or quick results. Witnessing is not easy (4) because it takes time, and therefore many Christians will have to give up less important activities. Although witnessing is not easy, it is of utmost importance. Therefore, Christians must determine in their minds and wills to put witnessing first in their priorities, regardless of the cost.

All that has been said in this section of the message relates to the Preparation for Going. Preparation, however, is not enough; we must actually Go. Good intentions and plans must find fulfillment in Actions.

What should we do when we Go? Talk about Jesus and, in talking about Jesus, expect results. Let us look at some of the results we can expect from going and sharing Christ.

III. RESULTS IN GOING

1. Bridges Of Friendship Built. Many people are lonely and depressed and in need of friends. When you take time to visit with people, people are impressed that you are a person who really cares. In being attracted to you, they will eventually be attracted to the Christ you love. Try to read some Scripture and have prayer in every home you visit. Be a good listener. Cultivate friendship.

2. Souls Will Find Christ As Saviour. If you consistently show concern for people, there will be many who will respond to the call of Christ and will become genuine

followers of Christ. The greatest privilege in life is to lead someone to a personal knowledge of Christ. *"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."* (James 5: 19-20)

3. Kingdom Of God Will Be Expanded. The existence of a kingdom depends upon two factors - reign of a king and a realm with subjects. God is the King. Christians are the subjects that compose the King's realm. Christ is very interested in the realm of God's Kingdom being increased and expanded. This expansion comes when Christ receives the loyalty of another human heart. As Christians, we are given the ministry of reconciliation - influencing people to give their lives to Christ. To change the analogy, we are given the opportunity to be harvesters in the Lord's vineyard. When we go forth, we are going forth for an ultimate purpose - to harvest souls for Christ. We will not see this accomplished every time we go forth. Sometimes we will sow the seed of God's Word. Sometimes we will water the seed with inner tears of intercessory prayer. Sometimes we will warm the soil of men's hearts through acts of thoughtful friendship. Sometimes we will have the great joy of harvesting souls for the Saviour. *"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I (Christ) say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." (John 4: 35) "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."* (Psalms 126: 6)

4. Local Church Increased And Enlarged. A New Christian needs a place to fellowship and to worship. What more natural place is there for him to fellowship and to worship than in the Church of the one who led him to Christ? As an outgrowth of visitation and witnessing and soul-winning, the local Church will grow.

Numerical growth in a local Church is desirable and is often times a sign of spiritual growth. When one great pastor of a large Church (Dr. Lee Robertson) was asked about numbers, he answered, "Sure I'm interested in numbers. One is a number. Too often ministers say they are interested in quality and not quantity. One soul is a number and I am interested in reaching as many souls for Jesus as possible." (Ten Largest S.S. by Towns; pg 133) This same pastor said that the churches which placed emphasis on numbers actually had a quality ministry.

Dr. Vick of Temple Baptist Church justified his emphases on numbers by pointing to the Scriptures. He pointed to the fact that Jesus had twelve disciples, later in the Book of Acts there were 120 people, next an emphasis was made on 3,000 conversions and finally over 5,000 souls were added to the Church. Dr. Vick concluded, 'I place emphasis on numbers because the Bible does.'" (Ibid; pg. 134)

5. Fulfilled Christians. Christianity is a "social religion", that is, it is a religion that can't be lived in a vacuum or aloof from people. During Wesley's search for spiritual

reality, one counselor advised Wesley: "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." (Blueprint For A Christian World; Tenney pg. 83)

A Christian who does not share becomes an ingrown, frustrated, static Christian. Nothing brings greater satisfaction and delight than sharing Christ with people, for such a person is investing not only in time but also in eternity. *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."* (Proverbs 11: 30). Who are the wise? Soul-winners. What shall the wise (soul-winners) enjoy? *"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."* (Daniel 12: 3)

CONCLUSION

The Great Commission is the commission to 'GO'. It is commanded by Christ and is a universal command given to all Christians, regardless of occupation - painter, plumber, or preacher.

Preparation for going includes the following: (1) Make sure you are a Christian, (2) Confess all unconfessed sins, (3) Make sure you are filled with the Holy Spirit, (4) Make a prayer list, (5) Determine to put first things first. Witnessing for Christ must be first in a Christian's priorities. Then Go Forth, speak about Christ, and expect results.

When one obeys Christ's Great Commission, great results will happen: (1) Bridges of friendship will be built, (2) Souls will find Christ as a Saviour, (3) Kingdom of God will expand, (4) The local Church will increase and enlarge, (5) Christians will be deeply fulfilled, and overflow with joy.

For even a small investment of time in witnessing, the benefits are so great! Will you determine at this very moment that you will allow God to use you as His witness? Is the desire of your heart expressed in this prayer?

Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God."
(by Amy Carmichael)

QUESTIONS

1. From your own personal involvements and your observations and your personal reading (or research), share with your group members some examples of how Jesus' "Great Commission" (Matthew 28: 19-20) is being 'fulfilled' in this present age.

2. Share a time in your own personal life when you, like Isaiah (in Isaiah 6:1-8), as a result of a spiritual encounter with God, felt an unusual urgency to become involved in sharing the Good News of God's love and compassion with a friend or relative or even a stranger.

3. According to Ezekiel 33: 7-9, what must you (and other believers like yourself) do, in order for you "to deliver your soul" in the future day of God's Judgement in the Hereafter?

4. According to John 15: 16, what 'factual reality' is the basis for your personal confidence and boldness and authority, in your efforts in witnessing to others?

5. What, according to Matthew 21: 28-31, truly demonstrates our loyalty and obedience to the Heavenly Father?

6. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Right thinking and right doctrine are important, but both must culminate in right action, or good thinking and orthodox belief become barren." (Note James 2: 14-20; I John 3: 17-19; Matthew 5: 15-16)

7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "The Church without a passion for souls is not a Christian Church, regardless of what it believes. The heart of the divine program is soul-winning, and the Church that is not a soul-winning Church has no more weight in the balances of eternity than a secular club."

8. What response would you give to a believer who compares himself very unfavorably to missionaries and evangelists, and who "envies" the dramatic ministries of believers in other places? (Note Mark 5: 19-20)

9. In terms of "urgency" and "intensity" in witnessing to others, give your interpretation of Luke 14: 23.

10. Give your response to the person (a professing Christian) who would say the following: "I don't need to witness. That is what we pay our preacher for!"

11. Why do you believe that there is such a small percentage of the people who are members of an average local Church who came initially to the Church as a result of an invitation by the local Church pastor? Why is the "witness" of a laymen objectives much more effective than the "witness" of a clergyman?

12. As you - a sincere believer - search your own heart and life, in an attempt to prepare yourself to be a more effective witness for Christ, which of the following sins or weaknesses do you sense that you must confess to God?

_____a. Idle speaking (gossiping or uncontrolled use of the tongue) James 3: 5-6).

_____b. Negligence in Church attendance (Hebrews 10: 25)

_____c. Wastefulness in the use of time (Ephesians 5: 15-16).

_____d. Critical and judgmental spirit (James 3: 1-2) .

_____e. Negligence in prayer (I Thessalonoians 5: 17) .

_____f. Ingratitude and complaining (I Thessalonoians 5: 18).

_____g. Indulgence in eating (gluttony).

_____h. Failure to pay the tithe (Malachi 3: 8-10).

_____I. 'Cooling off' in zeal for the Lord's work.

13. Why is a spirit of condition and confession and repentance and humility so important, if a believer expects God effectively to use him as a vital witness for Christ? (Note I John 1: 9; II Chronicles 7: 14; Psalms 126: 6)

14. Cite Scriptural references which document the truth of the following assertion by Bill Bright: "From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit at all times. Though all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled (controlled and empowered) by the Holy Spirit."

15. From a Scriptural and experiential viewpoint, what does it mean to be "filled with the Holy Spirit"?

16. Tell what you think is meant when the Bible says that "we ask and receive not because we ask amiss" (James 4: 3)? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "One way to ask amiss is to ask for nothing specifically and for everything in general." Share with members in your group the benefits which you have derived

form using a "Prayer List', as you have sought to develop a more effective "prayer life".

15. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A Christian must not witness simply on the basis of feelings or conscious desire, but rather a believer must witness systematically out of a sense of obedience, duty, responsibility, and faith."

16. Give illustrations and examples of how a believer can witness to unbelievers as "a way of life."

17. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Even if a Christian does not sense a special leading of the Holy Spirit to witness to an unbeliever, a believer should nevertheless go ahead and witness to a sinner regarding his need for Christ, for such a witness demonstrates a commitment to obey Christ's Great Commission even when a believer has no strong and conscious desire to witness."

20. According to Ephesians 6: 19, what great need did the great apostle Paul have, as he endeavored to witness for Christ to unbelievers?

21. How persistent should a believer be, in his attempts to witness to unbelievers about their need for personal salvation?

22. From your own personal experiences in taking initiative to "reach out" to the unsaved persons around you, in an attempt to win them to the Saviour, share some of the positive benefits in the following areas:

    a. Bridges Of Friendship Have Been Built.

    b. Souls Have Found Christ As Their Personal Saviour.

    c. The 'Kingdom of God' Has Been Expanded.

    d. A Local Church Has Increased And Enlarged In Size.

    e. I Have Experienced Great Satisfaction As A Believer Who Has Sought To Obey Christ's Great Commission.

23. Is it a "sign of selfish and proud ambition" for a Christian to desire that his local Church grow numerically? Why or why not?

24. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following counsel which was given to John Wesley during his search for 'spiritual reality': "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion."

25. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A Christian who does not share with others becomes an ingrown, frustrated, and static Christian."

26. Tell to what extent you personally identify with the following prayer:

"Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God."
(by Amy Carmichael)

CHAPTER 11

MOTHER'S DAY

CHAPTER 11

SUBJECT: **WHAT MAKES A WOMAN GREAT?**

SCRIPTURE: **Proverbs 31**

TEXT: ***"She is a woman of strength and dignity. When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule for everything she says." (Proverbs 31: 25-26)***

INTRODUCTION: **What makes a woman great? Is it education? Is it physical beauty? Is it material wealth and great material possessions? No! There are certain traits that set a woman apart as truly great - traits which are descriptions of true godliness in her attitudes and in her relationships and in her priorities.**

I. A GREAT WOMAN PUTS GOD FIRST IN HER LIFE.

II. A GREAT WOMAN RESPECTS HER PARENTS.

III. A GREAT WOMAN SUBMITS TO HER GODLY HUSBAND.

IV. A GREAT WOMAN RAISES GODLY CHILDREN AND ORGANIZES A GODLY HOUSEHOLD.

V. A GREAT WOMAN CULTIVATES A QUIET AND REVERENT SPIRIT.

VI. A GREAT WOMAN CULTIVATES THE SPIRIT OF HOSPITALITY.

VII. A GREAT WOMAN CULTIVATES A SIMPLE LIFESTYLE.

VIII. A GREAT WOMAN IS LOVINGLY INVOLVED IN HER LOCAL CHURCH.

IX. A GREAT WOMAN PROVIDES A GODLY EXAMPLE FOR YOUNGER WOMAN TO FOLLOW.

X. A GREAT WOMAN FEARLESSLY AND HUMBLY USES HER GOD-GIVEN GIFTS AND TALENTS TO SERVE HER CHURCH AND HER WORLD.

CONCLUSION: How can a great woman be described? Proverbs 31: 25-26 says, ***"She is a woman of strength and dignity. Where she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule for everything she says."***

CHAPTER 11

SUBJECT: WHAT MAKES A WOMAN GREAT?

SCRIPTURE: Proverbs 31.

TEXT: *"She is a woman of strength and dignity. When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule for everything she says." (Proverbs 31: 25-26)*

INTRODUCTION:

What makes a woman great? Is it a great education? Education is fine, but knowledge is temporary, and knowledge without wisdom leads to pride. And, besides, there are many great women who have had very little formal education.

What makes a woman great? Is it physical beauty? Physical beauty is not to be despised, but physical beauty is temporary, and some of the women who appear to be beautiful on the outside may be ugly on the inside! *"Charm can be deceptive and beauty doesn't last, but a woman who fears and reverences God shall be greatly praised."* (Proverbs 31: 30, Living Bible)

What makes a woman great? Is it material wealth and great material possessions? There is nothing inherently wrong with having money and some of the nice things of this world which money can buy, but a woman's true value is not determined by the largeness of her bank account or the number of her possessions. Some of the greatest women in history have been financially poor.

PROPOSITION:

What makes a woman great? There are certain traits that set a woman apart as truly great - traits which are descriptions of true godliness in her attitudes and in her relationships and in her priorities.

I. A. GREAT WOMAN PUTS GOD FIRST IN HER LIFE.

No one must come before God in a woman's life! Said Jesus, *"Anyone who wants to be my follower must love me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters - yes, more than his own life - otherwise he cannot be my disciple."* (Luke 14: 26, Living Bible)

One godly women, Anne Ortlund, comments on this most important point:

> "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these 'other' things shall be added to you" says the Bible (Matthew 6: 33). We're to be seekers after Jesus, first. Everything else must flow out of the first. And really first! Top of the list in our lives!
>
> Don't think of yourself first as a wife or a single person or a mother or a worker in some field: you will some day stand before God all by yourself.

Says Proverbs (9:12) *"If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it."* Shed all relationships, all functions from your thinking, and consider yourself first as a woman. What will God have you be and do? He will not say at the Judgment, "I excuse you from this or that because your husband didn't cooperate," or "I understand that you didn't have time to know my Word because of your job..." No one, nothing must keep you from putting God first in your life. You would have all eternity to be sorry.

How single, God, are You - how whole!
One Source are You, one Way, one Goal.
I tend to splinter all apart
With fractured mind, divided heart;
Oh, integrate my wand'ring maze
To one highway of love and praise.

O single, mast'ring Life of peace
At Whose command the ragings cease,
Keep calling to me "Peace, be still,"
To redirect my scattered will.
Keep gath'ring back my heart to You.
Keep cent'ring all I am and do.

O focused Spot of holy ground,
Silence which is the Source of sound,
I drop the clutter from my soul,
Reorganized by Your control;
Then single, whole, before Your throne,
I give myself to You alone.
(Disciplines of The Beautiful Woman; Anne Ortlund; pg. 24, 25)

II. A GREAT WOMAN RESPECTS HER PARENTS.

It is not always the case, but many times it is the case that a woman's greatness in womanhood has its roots in the obedience of her childhood. Most great women were first obedient children. Showing respect for others is generally learned in one's childhood.

Young girls if you wish to become a great woman, then learn how greatly to obey your parents when you are still young. *"Children, obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over."* (Ephesians 6: 2, Living Bible)

A great woman, whether she is very young and single, or whether she is older and the daughter of elderly parents, respects her parents and brings honor to her parents! A wise and godly woman will rise up and call her parents blessed! She will take to heart all of her parents' advice, keeping in mind everything they tell her. (Proverbs 8: 21)

A great woman listens carefully to the counsel and instructions of her parents. The author of Proverbs writes: *"Take to heart all of their advice: keep in mind everything they tell you. Every day and all night long their counsel will lead you and save you from harm; when you wake up in the morning, let their instructions guide you into the new day. For their advice is a beam of light directed into the dark corners of your mind to warn you of danger and to give you a good life." (Proverbs 6: 21-23, Living Bible)*

Wise is the single woman who submits to the counsel of her parents before she even considers marriage. She will save herself many heartaches if she listens and obeys and waits and prays.

III. A GREAT WOMAN SUBMITS TO HER GODLY HUSBAND.

It is a clear violation of Scripture for a woman to marry a man who is not a believer. She must not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. She needs to wait upon God to bring to her the husband of God's choice! God know best, and God alone knows which godly man would best be suited to her physical and social and spiritual needs.

After she unites at the marriage altar with the godly husband of God's sanction, she must learn the importance of willing submission to her husband's authority and leadership. Wrote Paul, *"You wives must submit to your husbands' leadership in the same way you submit to the Lord. For a husband is in charge of his wife in the same way Christ is in charge of his body the Church. So you wives must willingly obey your husbands in everything, just as the Church obeys Christ."* (Ephesians 5: 22-24,

Living Bible) Not servility, but submission!

IV. A GREAT WOMAN RAISES GODLY CHILDREN AND ORGANIZES A GODLY HOUSEHOLD.

Proverbs 31: 27 (Amplified) describes the godly mother and loving wife: *"She looks well to how things go in her household, and the bread of idleness (gossip, discontent and self-pity) she will not eat."*

Physical nourishment, social communication, intellectual enlightenment, spiritual instruction - to accomplish these high goals will engage the prime time of the wife and mother in her household! Can there be a higher calling than the calling to be God's tool for the careful shaping of the life of her children - physically, socially, intellectually, spiritually?

Becoming resourceful in homemaking skills such as home decorating, and cooking, and crafts is a worthy goal for every mother and wife. The woman who is energetic in her general household tasks is described in Proverbs 31: 17 - *"She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks."* Such a woman plans her work and then she works her plans.

The wise woman who is described in Proverbs 31 sees no incompatibility in making money and in living a godly life (Proverbs 31: 16, 18, 24). Such a woman is never lazy but industrious, never wasting her time. She spends long hours daily in domestic duties and some of her time is spent in commercial ventures. Lydia was a successful businesswomen (Acts 16: 14-15).

We often today speak of the husband as the breadwinner, and so he should be. But even in Old Testament days, the woman of the house used her skills to make money also. Perhaps the idea of two wage earners in a family is not an altogether modern idea! However, the woman of Proverbs 31 never sacrificed the interests and needs of her husband and children in order to make money. Her commercial interests never overshadowed her domestic responsibilities!

To raise godly children involves the proper blend of discipline, correction, instruction and loving affirmation.

Never should parents be overly-strict in their treatment of their children. Wrote Paul to parents, *"Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Father, bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord himself approves, with suggestions and godly advice."* (Ephesians 6: 4, Living Bible)

Show appreciation for your children, and focus your attention on the cultivation of

godly traits in their lives. Positive reinforcement for good behavior is one of the keys to modeling godly character in the lives of your children. However, when there is deliberate disobedience, strong discipline must be administered. *"If you refuse to discipline your son, it proves you don't love him; for if you love him you will be prompt to punish him."* (Proverbs 13: 24, Living Bible)

V. A GREAT WOMAN CULTIVATES A QUIET AND REVERENT SPIRIT.

Wrote Peter, *"Wives, fit in with your husbands' plans; for if they refuse to listen when you talk to them about the Lord, they will be won by your respectful, pure behavior. Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on jewelry, or beautiful clothes, or hair arrangements. Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God. That kind of deep beauty was seen in the saintly women of old, who trusted God and fitted in with their husbands' plans."* (I Peter 3: 1-5, Living Bible)

VI. A GREAT WOMAN CULTIVATES THE SPIRIT OF HOSPITALITY.

Wrote the author of Hebrews: *"Don't forget to be kind to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!"* (Hebrews 12: 2, Living Bible)

Wrote Paul, *"When God's children are in need, you be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night."* (Romans 12: 13, Living Bible) Think of the number of large houses, with several bedrooms, which are seldom used!

"These pastors must be men of blameless lives because they are God's ministers. They must not be proud or impatient; they must not be drunkards or fighters or greedy for money. They must enjoy having guests in their homes and must love all that is good. They must be sensible men, and fair. They must be clean minded and level headed. (Titus 1: 7-8, Living Bible) All believers are to be hospitable; but some have a special gift of Hospitality.

Wrote Peter: *"Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay for the night."* (I Peter 4: 9, Living Bible)

VII. A GREAT WOMAN CULTIVATES A SIMPLE LIFESTYLE.

It is still true that a wife can financially "make or break" her husband. The woman who is "greedy for gain", and a "lover of pleasure", is the woman who can spend her

husband's paycheck faster than he can earn his paycheck! The woman who is a "lover of money" will not only ruin her own soul, but she likely will pull down her entire family into financial and spiritual disaster (I Timothy 6).

The woman who has an ambition to buy everything that appeals to her, is the woman whose worldly spirit will cause her to make "shipwreck" of her faith. (I John 2: 15-16) Preparing simple nutritious meals, enjoying wholesome and inexpensive pleasures, buying attractive but reasonably priced clothes, driving an economical car, living in a modest house - these are a few ways a man and his wife can demonstrate their commitment to a simple lifestyle. Every wife (or single woman) ought to write the following verse on the tablet of her fleshly heart: *"Stay away form the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, 'I will never, never fail you.'"* (I Hebrews 13: 5, Living Bible)

As a woman, are you presently content, i.e., satisfied with what you have? Are you enjoying financial freedom, experiencing the joys of the simple lifestyle?

VIII. A GREAT WOMAN IS LOVINGLY INVOLVED IN HER LOCAL CHURCH.

In her helpful book "Disciplines of The Beautiful Woman", Anne Ortlund notes the importance of the Christian Woman's involvement in her local Church. It is important that every woman - married or single - be involved in group prayer, in Bible studies, in regular corporate worship. Listen to what Anne Ortlund says:

> Be committed to public worship of God every week whether you feel like it or not, whether the preaching is great or isn't! We go for what God gets out of it. He wants us to be there, not via television or radio, but personally with the Body of Christ (Hebrews 10: 25).
>
> The second highest priority of your life must be commitment to this very Body. That's one reason why you must never fail to worship with them. Your physical family is precious, but they are temporary - for this world only. Your spiritual family is eternal. There is much we haven't learned yet about how to function as spiritual fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, single aunts and uncles, and daughters and sons, and we're the poorer for it. This doesn't put down that precious, unique physical family of yours; it simply raises in your thinking the level of the spiritual family! A deep prayer life with, and accountability to, some close members of the spiritual family can help make your relationship with your physical family what it ought to be.
>
> There's a lot of talk these days which pits the Church against the

family - a cruel thing to do, like trying to make two friends into enemies. This kind of talk makes the Church the spanking boy every time, implying that it's "spiritual" to refuse to usher, sing in the choir or teach a Sunday school class, so that we can sit home with our families in front of the television with our feet up and munch corn chips.

Do you have a physical family? Then snuggle close together and enjoy the warmth, food, and love hopefully provided there. But recognize that your true source of godly love, warmth, nourishment, and togetherness should come from the larger family, the eternal family. Look carefully at the emphasis of the New Testament epistles, God's directions for us in this Church age. They tell us to use our gifts to nourish the Body of Christ, and draw our nourishment from the Body, so that all the adult singles, young people without Christian parents, and married without Christian spouses will feel just as cared for and loved and nourished as anyone else in God's beautiful forever-family. And when we're loved and fed and prayed for there, our lacks and needs in our physical family relationships will be wonderfully met.

Whatever Church God has guided you to, whoever your Christian family is, get your heart together with theirs! Guard your unity! Attend to them, love them, care for them! Help them, strengthen them in God, teach them, be taught by them. And every time you're confronted by an area of painful differences, crash through!

The third priority of our lives, after God and his people, must be the needy people of our world. We mustn't turn them off! A "God-bless-us-four-no-more" kind of life will soon make us introverted and provincial. The beautiful woman of Proverbs 31 "*extends her hand to the poor; and she stretches out her hands to the needy*" (v. 20).

Most people admire philanthropy, missions, and witnessing - but they leave them to the super people on whom they look with not a little awe and reverence. That's ridiculous! There are people all around us in deep trouble and desperately floundering, and they would welcome us as angels if we lent them some money, told them about Jesus, or met whatever their need happens to be.

We know this, then why don't we act? Because if you are like me, I'm naturally - well, "chicken" is the word. I need a group of Christians to whom I'm regularly accountable, to whom I can lay out the needs of those around me, and who will be responsible for seeing

that I act.

One day in the beauty parlor I sat down as usual under the hair dryer and was approached by a cute redhead.

"Hi," she said, "I'm Barbara. Your manicurist quit last week, and I'm taking over her patrons."

"Hello, Barbara," I said, and five minutes later she was sharing that her husband had left her, that she was afraid of being at home alone at night, that the children all thought it was her fault and not his - soon tears were falling all over my nail polish.

"Barbara," I said, "do you go to Church?"

"No," she said. "And if I don't get my head together soon something terrible is going to happen."

"Would you go with me next Sunday?"

"Of course!"

I screwed up my courage. "Would you go to an adult Sunday School class, too?"

"Sure," she said, "I'll do anything!"

This was so easy. I decided to shoot the works.

"Barbara," I said, "if you really want the whole treatment, you need to do a third thing, too."

"Well, you need to go to Sunday School, and you need to go to Church, and then afterward you need to just hang around!"

Do you know all the wonderful things that can happen to the churchgoers who hang around afterward? The ones who bolt for the parking lot miss half the goodies. I'm thankful for my heritage of being raised by parents who were the last to leave the Church, Sunday morning and Sunday evening! Even a newcomer can find their way into hearts of the people if they hang around!

Through the weeks Barbara followed the one-two-three formula, and

there was also an invisible foundation being laid under what was happening that she knew nothing about. Every week my group of sisters would ask, "What can we pray for, for Barbara? What's happening in your relationship with her? Are you having effective conversations with her about the Lord? And then they'd pray - with me and for me.

Well, that kind of prodding from the rear is what any Christian needs who doesn't naturally have the gift of evangelism. And so it wasn't surprising that several months later, sitting beside me in Church, Barbara confessed her faith in Jesus Christ as her Savior. (Ya-hoo! Three cheers)! Fireworks in heaven!) (Disciples of The Beautiful Woman; pg. 9-34)

IX. A GREAT WOMAN PROVIDES A GODLY EXAMPLE FOR YOUNGER WOMAN TO FOLLOW.

Every woman can be godly, but the older a woman becomes, the more mature and experienced she should be in spiritual matters. Older women particularly have a great responsibility to model godly living before younger women. How wise it is for a younger Christian woman to seek out an older woman who is very godly, and whose counsel can guide a younger woman during the difficult decisions of her life. Wrote Paul to Titus (a pastor): *"Teach the older women to be quiet and respectful in everything they do...These older women must train the younger women to live quietly, to love their husbands and their children, and to be sensible and clean minded, spending their time in their own homes, being kind and obedient to their husbands, so that the Christian faith can't be spoken against by those who know them."* (Titus 2: 3-4, Living Bible)

X. A GREAT WOMAN FEARLESSLY AND HUMBLY USES HER GOD-GIVEN GIFTS AND TALENTS TO SERVE HER CHURCH AND HER WORLD.

How dreary and dull and barren our world would be if all Christian women were removed from places of leadership in our world and in the Church. There are thousands of women who serve faithfully in government, in business, in medicine, in education, in missions, in administration, in pastoral ministry, in evangelistic outreach, in pulpit preaching.

After making a serious Biblical study of the place of women in ministry and in the local Church, the founder of the Free Methodist Church, B. T. Roberts, wrote a powerful book in 1890 entitled "Ordaining Women." I quote from the concluding page of this interesting study: "In the New Testament Church, woman as well as man,

filled the office of Apostle, Prophet, Deacon or preacher, and Pastor. There is not the slightest evidence that the functions of any of these offices, when filled by a woman, were different from what they were when filled by a man." (Ordaining Women; B. T. Roberts; pg. 159)

My heart is excited when I think of the number of women who preach and teach and evangelize and plant new churches on the hundreds of so-called "mission fields" of the world! There are many ordained women who fill hundreds of pulpits in America, including my own beloved friend, Martha Sloan, who, as an ordained minister, effectively pastored the Korean Church for ten years (1997-1997), in Fort Collins, Colorado. Her weekly preaching was greatly so appreciated by her Korean parishioners, many of whom were men who were pursuing an advanced degree at Colorado State University.

This godly woman and faithful minister is strongly supported by her mature husband - a lay person and a prayer particular with his wife. Martha is a humble servant of the Lord. She graduated from a theological seminary in Korea, and she is a powerful and compassionate preacher of the Gospel of Christ. She is well acquainted with several languages, including Japanese, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, English, and, of course, her native language of Korean! She is definitely called to the ordained ministry of preaching, as any man has been called to preach!

The restrictions which Paul placed on women in the days of the New Testament, were given because of the special problems which were rampant in those times (I Corinthians 14: 34-35; I Timothy 2: 11-12). Jesus came to establish total equality between all persons. Wrote Paul, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Galatians 3: 28)

As believers, we are all united in Christ, and each member of Christ's Body is to serve the other members of the Body. As is the case with all the gifts, the gift of preaching or the gift of administration is to be used to edify others, not to usurp authority or to be domineering. Each gift, whether expressed by a man or a woman, must be expressed and exercised with a spirit of humility. Thus, a woman who is gifted to preach, must never usurp authority or be domineering. But as, B. T. Roberts notes, "When a woman is properly authorized to teach she does not usurp authority. The authority duly given her she has a right to exercise in a proper manner and within the proper limits." (Ordaining Women; pg. 67)

Catherine Booth, wife of William Booth, is called the "Mother of the Salvation Army." She lived from 1829-1890. She, along with her husband, provided strong leadership to this great soul winning movement. It is my understanding that when a man becomes an ordained minister in the Salvation Army, his wife is also ordained with him. Both assume strong leadership responsibilities within the Church.

Catherine was an aggressive and brilliant leader in the Salvation Army, and was most supportive of her husband. Even though she was a mother of 8 children, she did not sacrifice her responsibilities to her Church. She raised godly children, several of whom became great leaders in the Salvation Army. She was highly esteemed both as a great mother and as a great spiritual leader, and, even though she suffered great physical pain for many years, she was very effective in the fulfillment of her various God-given roles. In 1890 she died of cancer; 36,000 people attended her funeral at Olympia.

If God has gifted a woman to be a minster or a missionary, none should forbid her to preach or to evangelize or to lead a Church. Gifted women should be given opportunity to exercise their gifts in God-honoring and humble leadership. Even though it is God who truly calls and who actually ordains a person, it is proper for a Church to ordain a person - male or female. The Early Church laid hands on God's servants, and so should the Modern Church.

Obviously, most women will never desire or chose to be ordained. Women - even wives and mothers - need to be heavily involved in God's Kingdom. Of course, no woman should sacrifice her family to do so-called "Ministry." Her greatest ministry is raising godly children and being a supportive wife. But, she must be liberated to express her spiritual gifts within the Church and within the world in general.

"In the April 9, 1990 issue of 'Christianity Today' magazine, an organization called 'Christians for Biblical Equality' published a two-page advertisement titled 'Men, Women and Biblical Equality;...The main claim of the advertisement is that 'the Bible teaches the full quality of men and women in Creation and in Redemption (Genesis 1: 26-28; 2: 23; 5: 1-2; I Corinthians 11: 11-12; Galatians 3: 13, 28; 5: 1).' The manifesto goes on to point out that 'the Bible teaches that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came on men and women alike. Without distinction, the Holy Spirit indwells women and men, and sovereignly distributes gifts without preference s to gender (Acts 2: 1-21; I Corinthians 12: 7, 14-31).' According to the manifesto, 'The Bible teaches that both women and men are called to develop their spiritual gifts and to use them as stewards of the grace of God to the whole Body of Christ, under His authority (Acts 1: 14; 18: 6; 21: 9; Romans 16: 1-7, 12-20: 17-18...).' Later the manifesto cites a number of New Testament texts that teach that 'women as well as men exercise the prophetic, priestly and royal functions.' These passages include Acts 2: 17-18, 21: 9; 1 Corinthians 11: 5; 1 Peter 2: 9-10; and Revelation 1: 6; 5: 10'...Paul stated in I Corinthians 14: 5, 13 that EVERYONE in Corinth may speak in Church. These verses refer to prophesying and praying in the Church...In I Corinthians 11: 5, Paul explicitly mentions women who prophesy in the Church. Since women may prophesy, how can there be anything wrong with their teaching or preaching?....(For one leading 'equalitarian'), McClelland, it is clear that everything Paul says in I Timothy 2 must be reconciled with Galatians 3: 28. This leads him to say the 'Paul's clearly enunciated principle of equality (Galatians 3: 28) was evidently modified only when either the manner or the type of women's participation in

Church life had negative cultural implication (I Corinthians 11: 14), or when a specific heretical problem involving women was involved (I Timothy 2.)." (Great Divides by Ronald H. Nash; several quotes from chapter two)

In the 'Vital Ministry' magazine (Nov./Dec. 1998), distributed by Group Publishers from Loveland, Colorado, there is a very significant article entitled 'Some Leaders Are Born Women' in which several female ordained ministers share their personal insights into their God-given calls to the preaching ministry in local churches. One 'key' quote in the article is as follows: "We must get away from this gender thing and find the best, most equipped, most talented leaders who are called by God to move our churches into the next century."

In spite of all the various controversies and interpretations regarding the role of women in Christian ministry, I believe that throughout the Christian movement worldwide there will increasingly be a greater number of God-anointed women who will take their place as humble and effective leaders in local churches, including the ministry of preaching and local Church administration. For many years, women have taken decisive leadership responsibilities on the 'Mission Fields' of the world - in medicine and as teachers and evangelists. In the decades ahead, not only in America, but in most countries of the world, we will see thousands of women heeding God's call to pastoral ministry in preaching and evangelism and in teaching - and they will assume these roles without usurping the legitimate place of men in their churches. **In his classic book on ministry, entitled** 'Freed to Serve', popular writer and New Testament scholar, Michael Green, offers a thought -provoking chapter 'Women In Ministry?'. In his brilliant treatment of this controversial subject, Dr. Green writes: "As for deacons, the word is used both of men and women in the Greek New Testament.....Clearly, it will not do to suppose women had no role in the Church of the first century...Galatians 3: 28 is the fundamental presupposition against which all Paul's other teaching about women must be seen...If, then, women could lead the prayers, evangelize, prophesy, engage in social relief, teach and hold the office of a deacon in the early Church, is there any reason why they should not be ordained presbyters?...Churches which have ordained women have found that, once the novelty wears off, it is seen as the most natural thing in the world that women should take their place alongside men within the shared presbyterate...Women's ministry was validated by Jesus, and was a noteworthy feature of the early Church...When you come to think of it, it is crazy that the ministry of the Church should for so long have excluded half the human race which God made to be complementary...The main thing which the New Testament teaches is that God uses both men and women in his ministry. We need to do the same. And when both are working together in a team, it makes for a roundedness, a balance, and a maturity which one sex alone could not hope to embody."

CONCLUSION:

In summary, how can a great woman be described? Proverbs 31: 25-26 says, *"She is a woman of strength and dignity. When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule for everything she says."* (Living Bible)

CHAPTER 11

QUESTIONS

1. Tell why the following characteristics do NOT make a woman truly great:

   (a) Formal Education
   (b) Physical Beauty
   (c) Material Wealth

2. What is the single most important priority of a woman's life? (Note Luke 14: 26; Matthew 6: 33)

3. As one important step in the process of becoming a truly great woman, what advice is given in Proverbs 8: 21 and in Proverbs 6: 21-23)?

4. Is it a clear violation of Scripture for a woman to marry a man who is not a true believer in Christ?

5. According to Ephesians 5: 22-24, what responsibility does a wife have to her husband? What is the difference between submission and severity?

6. Can there be a higher calling from God for a woman (mother) than the calling to be God's tool for the careful shaping of the life of her children - physically, socially, intellectually, spiritually?

7. According to Proverbs 31: 16, 18, 24, is it possible for a woman (mother) to be involved in business pursuits (the making of money) and at the same time to be involved in developing a godly lifestyle? (Also note Acts 16: 14-15)

8. As a parent of young children, what is your response or reaction to the following words from the Apostle Paul:

   "Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord himself approves, with suggestions and godly advice." (Ephesians 6: 4, Living Bible)

9. What place does positive reinforcement and decisive punishment have in the raising of a godly child? How can you tell when this is a proper blending of these two important ingredients in the raising and training of your child? (Note Ephesians 6: 4 and Proverbs 13: 24)

10. What does it mean for you as a married woman to cultivate a quiet and reverent spirit? (Note I Peter 3: 1-5) Why is it rather difficult, in the society in which we live, for wives - even Christian wives - to "fit in with their husbands' plans" (I Peter 3: 5)?

11. According to Hebrews 12:2 and Romans 12: 13 and I Peter 4: 9 and Titus 1: 7-8, what ministry can a woman be involved in which brings great glory to God and great blessings to needy persons?

12. Tell to what degree of conviction you (as a woman) believe the following statement: "The woman who is a "lover of money" will not only ruin her own soul, but she will likely pull down her entire family into financial and spiritual disaster."

13. Give your personal response or reaction to the following statement: "Preparing simple nutritious meals, enjoying wholesome and inexpensive pleasures, buying attractive but reasonably priced clothes, driving an economical car, living in a modest house - these are a few ways a man and his wife can demonstrate their commitment to a simple lifestyle."

14. As a woman, are you presently content, i.e., satisfied with what you have? Are you enjoying financial freedom, experiencing the joys of the simple lifestyle? (Note Hebrews 13: 5)

15. As a "busy" mother and wife, give your personal response to the following advise from Anne Ortlund: "Be committed to public worship of God every week whether you feel like it or not, whether the preaching is great or isn't. We go for what God gets out of it. He wants us to be there, not via television or radio, but personally with the Body of Christ (Hebrews 10: 25)."

16. As a mother and wife who is deeply committed to your family, give your response or reaction to the following statement by Anne Ortlund: "A deep prayer life with, and accountability to, some close members of the spiritual family can help make your relationship with your physical family what it ought to be. Your physical family is precious, but they are temporary - for this world only. Your spiritual family is eternal."

17. For a young Christian woman who desires to become more mature in her faith and closer in her walk with God, what advice does the Apostle Paul give to women in Titus 2: 3-5?

18. Give your personal response or reaction to the following statements by B. T. Roberts: 'In the New Testament Church, women as well as man, filled the office of Apostle, Prophet, Deacon or preacher, and Pastor. There is not the slightest evidence that the functions of any of these offices, when filled by a woman, were different form what they were when filled by a man.

19. Give your personal response or reaction to the following statements: "The restrictions which Paul placed on women in the days of the New Testament, were given because of the special problems which were rampant in those times (I Corinthians 14: 34-35; I Timothy 2: 11-12). Jesus came to establish total equality between all persons. Wrote Paul, *'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'* (Galatians 3: 28)."

20. Why do you believe there is such a widespread fear among Christian men (and even among many Christian women) regarding well-trained and deeply-committed Christian women becoming ordained as local Church pastors and teachers and missionaries.

21. Give your personal response or reaction to the following statements: "If God has gifted a woman to be a minster or a missionary, none should forbid her to preach or to evangelize or to lead a local Church. Gifted women should be given opportunity to exercise their gifts in God-honoring and humble leadership. Even though it is God who truly calls and who actually ordains a person, it is proper for a Church to ordain a person - male or female. The Early Church laid hands ono God's servants, and so should the Modern Church."

CHAPTER 12

PENTECOST

CHAPTER 12

SUBJECT: THE POWER OF THE SANCTIFYING SPIRIT

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2: 1-21

TEXT: "Suddenly there was a sound from heaven like the rushing of a violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were seated. Before their eyes appeared tongues like flames, which separated off and settled above the head of each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 2: 1-4a)

INTRODUCTION: To become sanctified one must consecrate his all to God - time, talents, money, influence, relationships, past, future, everything. It is man's duty to consecrate; it is God's duty to sanctify. Consecration is the outward expression and evidence of inner faith. Faith is taking God at His Word, believing God's promises, accepting God's Gift which is the Holy Spirit. Faith is the condition for becoming sanctified, and consecration is the evidence of faith. Acts 2: 2-4 is the account of the first Pentecost following Christ's ascension. The permanent work of the Holy Spirit is Purity and Power.

1. PURITY

It is the Holy Spirit who helps the Christian to cultivate Christlike fruits in his life - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, tolerance, and self-control.

To be sanctified is to be purified, and to be purified is to be made truly Christlike in ones nature and in ones disposition.

II. POWER

A. The Holy Spirit Gives Power To Live.
B. The Holy Spirit Gives Power To Love.
C. The Holy Spirit Gives Power To Witness.

CONCLUSION: The "tongues like flames" symbolizes the Spirit's ministry of cleansing. The "rushing of a violent wind" symbolizes the Spirit's ministry of empowering. What happens when you become sanctified? You receive the Holy Spirit in His fullness and blessedness!

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INTRODUCTION:

John 17: 17 (Jesus' High Priestly Prayer for His disciples) says: *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."* 'Sanctification' is a Biblical term, but not clearly understood by many. It essentially means two things: (1) Separation - Whatever is sanctified is set aside as holy, as different, as unique, and for a divine purpose. For example, the Bible is a unique book and is set apart by God; the Church is a unique house called the House of Worship; Sunday is a unique and special day, set apart by God for holy purposes of worship and rest. All of these are sanctified by God. Every Christian is a separated person, separated from worldliness and sin, and separated unto God's purposes and will. Every Christian in that sense, is sanctified by God.

The second meaning of 'sanctification' is Cleansing. The verse from John 17: 17 ('Sanctify them through thy truth') has this meaning. It is a further sanctification than mere 'separation'. The disciples were already sanctified in that sense, for they had been separated by Jesus for special service for 3 years. What the disciples needed was a deeper sanctification - an inner cleansing. A short time before Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples manifested this need for heart cleansing of motivations. Luke 22: 24 records: *"And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest."* They fought for status, position, and honor, with comparative, competitive, contemptuous attitudes.

Later, Paul dealt with Christians - that is, people who were set apart by God for special service, and thus sanctified in the first sense. They were Christians at Corinth. But these Christians had problems. They were not sanctified in the second sense - that is, they were not yet cleansed of their carnal attitudes. Wrote Paul: *"And, I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ....For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"* (I Corinthians 3: 1, 3)

They were sanctified in one sense (that is, set apart and separated unto God), but they were not sanctified in a deeper sense - that is, cleansed of carnality. Paul wrote: *"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. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (I Thessalonians 5: 23, 24)

Concerning Entire Sanctification as the gift of God to consecrated believers, the astute British Methodist preacher, William Sangster, notes John Wesley's emphasis on this subject: "Wesley believed and taught this; that, in an instant, and by a simple act of faith, perfection was 'wrought in the soul'. It was, indeed, the second of two distinct stages in the Christian experience of Salvation as he conceived it: the first consisted of justification and the second of sanctification; the former being a change in our relations with God, our pardon and reconciliation: the latter a change in ourselves wrought by the Spirit of God. In the first stage, a new heart is given to us, so that we now love God and desire to please Him, and will not willingly sin against Him in anything...The second state, with which we are now chiefly concerned, is entire sanctification, which comes as an immediate gift of God, entirely cleansing the heart from sin and 'slaying the dire root and seed' of it. Wesley believed that this perfection was plainly taught in the Bible...he finds no lack of pertinent references capable of passing the most sensitive expositional test...Wesley contended that no close student of the New Testament could deny that the doctrine had emphatic scriptural warrant....A man perfected in the sense for which Wesley contended was still liable to infirmity, ignorance and mistake, but he was not now guilty of sin. His heart being full of love to God, 'every evil temper is destroyed: and every thought, and word, and work springs from, and is conducted to the end by, the pure love of God and our neighbor'." (Daily Readings; by William Sangster; pg. 36)

There is initial sanctification which describes every Christian - for every Christian is a person who is set apart and separated unto God for service. There is entire sanctification which describes the Christian who is cleansed of carnal striving and carnal ambitions and attitudes. Such a Christian is a spiritual Christian rather than a carnal Christian.

Man needs forgiveness for what he does, but more than this, man needs deliverance from what he is. Writes Watchman Nee: "When God's light first shines into my heart my one cry is for forgiveness, for I realize I have committed sins before Him, but when once I have received forgiveness of sins I make a new discovery, namely, the discovery of sin, and I realize not only that I have committed sins before God but that there is something wrong within. I discover that I have the nature of a sinner. There is an inward inclination to sin, a power within that draws to sin. When that power breaks out I commit sins. I may seek and receive forgiveness, but then I sin once more. So life goes on in a vicious circle of sinning and being forgiven and then sinning again. I appreciate the blessed fact of God's forgiveness, but I want something more than that: I want deliverance. I need forgiveness for what I have done, but I also need deliverance from what I am." (Normal Christian Life; pg. 10)

It is a universal experience of man that he is possessed of an evil nature. Man is a sinner by nature as well as by choice. Man is born with a corrupted, warped nature, with evil tendencies and propensities. As children of Adam, all of humanity possesses a rebellious nature. Who has not felt the inner gravitational pull downward to sin? Who has not observed

mankind's universal problem - that problem of innate selfishness and self-centeredness? Who hasn't felt the 'bent to sinning'?

Is there any solution to this human predicament? Paul tells us that the answer is found in Identification with Christ's death! The answer to life is death! Death to self! Alive to Christ! "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Romans 6: 3-8)

Wrote Paul in Galatians 2: 20: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

To be sanctified wholly or entirely - in the deeper sense of cleansing - one must consecrate his all to God - time, talents, money, influence, relationships, past, future, everything. It is man's duty to consecrate; it is God's duty to sanctify. Consecration is the outward expression and evidence of inner faith. Faith is taking God at His Word, believing God's promises, accepting God's Gift which is the Holy Spirit. Faith then is the condition for becoming sanctified, and consecration is the evidence of faith.

	CONSECRATION		SANCTIFICATION
1.	Work of Man.	1.	Work of God.
2.	Man's giving to God what he owes.	2.	God giving to man what He promised.
3.	Placing oneself on the altar without reserve.	3.	Descent of God's purging fire upon the offering.
4.	Laying oneself upon the surgeon's table.	4.	Removal of the cancer of sin.
5.	Human exposure to the cleansing action.	5.	Expulsion of sin by the cleansing action of God.

by J. Paul Taylor (Holiness, the Finished Foundation; 52)

PROPOSITION:

Understanding what the relationship is between man's consecration and God's sanctification, what can the believer expect when God sanctifies him wholly? Act 2: 1-4 is the account of the first Pentecost following Christ's ascension. The permanent work of the Holy Spirit is

Purity and Power.

1. PURITY

From the text we learn that one phenomenon on the Day of Pentecost was "tongues like flames." This descriptive phrase has been taken to refer to the Spirit's ministry of cleansing in the lives of Christians. When the Holy Spirit sanctifies a Christian. He cleanses and purifies the life of the Christian. Ethical purity is one work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian.

Christ came to make the Church holy, and holiness involves purity. "Christ gave himself to make her (the Church) holy, have cleansed her through the baptism of his Word - to make her an altogether glorious Church is his eyes. She (the Church) is to be free from spots, wrinkles or any other disfigurements - a Church holy and perfect." (Ephesians 5: 25-27, Phillips)

To be sanctified holy is to be dead to selfish ambition. Paul wrote *"If our lives are centered in the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit. Let us not be ambitious for our own reputations, for that only means making one another jealous."* (Galatians 5: 24-26, Phillips)

It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to cleanse us from all insincerity and duplicity of character. "The Greek word that is translated sincere means literally 'sun-tested' or 'sun-judged'. Among the ancients, we are told, were slipshod sculptors who would produce statues from blemished stone, filling the cracks with wax and painting them over. But eventually the sun would peel the paint, melt the wax, and reveal the cleverly covered ugliness. Without wax: Free from sham, pretense, false fillings, complications: 'The idea of the Greek word,' says Bishop Moule, 'Is that of clearness, disengagement from complications.' He observes further that the Latin word from which our English 'sincere' is derived is the equivalent of our 'unadulterated'. It reminds one of St. Paul's word in Romans 12: 9, 'let love be without dissimulation', and elsewhere, you remember, the apostle speaks of it as 'love unfeigned'." (Prayer and Life's Highest; pg. 44)

II. POWER

Another phenomenon of the Day of Pentecost, besides the flaming tongues, was "the rushing of a violent wind." This manifestation of God's presence has been taken to be the fulfillment of Jesus' promise: *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."* (Acts 1: 8a) When the Holy Spirit sanctifies a Christian, He gives power to a Christian.

A. The Holy Spirit Gives Power To Live.

The Holy Spirit enables a Christian to cope successfully with life. The apostles could sing despite the depressing circumstances about them. Peter sang while in prison during the midnight hour. The apostles could rejoice amidst persecution. They had learned how to cope with life. "The early disciples did not go around registering the current pessimism; they changed them. They didn't go around saying, 'Look at the problems,' but 'Look at the Savior.' Their emphasis was not on sin abounding, but on grace much more abounding. And they spoke with transforming force." (Abundant Living; pg. 154) Is your life like a the thermometer or like a Thermostat? Does it simply record the heat or does it control the heat?

We must see that in the abundant life of Christ's indwelling fullness, through the Holy Spirit, there are two ranges of power. One is related to the active side of the Christian's - or, if we may think collectively - of the Church's life. Here we achieve, venture, preach, sing, organize, administer. The other is related to the passive side of life. Here we submit, endure, suffer, wait. The history of Christian sanctity shows, I think, that not infrequently the critical test comes to us in this passive area of our experience. Here it is crucially revealed whether or not we are appropriating the full measure of strength offered us by our might Lord. Power to do and to dare? Wonderful! Power to be and to bear? Perhaps even more wonderful!" (Prayer and Life's Highest; Paul Rees; pg. 70)

The Christian need not be shaped by his circumstances, but instead he can shape his circumstances. In the midst of sorrow, the Christian can know joy. In the midst of turmoil, the Christian can know peace. The Christian doesn't look for his joy and peace in the external world, but rather he experiences them in the internal recesses of his soul.

Says Paul Rees, 'In Calcutta I visited the Lee Memorail Orphanage. Many years ago, Mr. And Mrs. Lee went out form the states to India under the Methodist Board. Once, when they had taken a cottage in the foothills of the Himalayas to escape the best of the plains, they left their six children for a few hours while they were away in the Master's service. A landslide occurred, the house was crushed, and the lives of all the children were taken. It was out of that devastating experience that these undefeated, unembittered, still thankful missionaries arose to say; 'God has taken one family from us; He will give us another.' Thus bean the glorious work among Indian orphans that continues to this day. A dear friend of mine said that he once heard Mrs. Lee, addressing a large gathering of missionaries and national Christians, say, 'I thank God for every sorrow that has come into my life' My friend remarked, 'There were tears in her eyes as she said it, but they were radiant tears!'" (Ibid; pg. 71)

B. The Holy Spirit Gives Power To Love.

Notes William Sangster: 'It is by love that the saint becomes free - free of that awful self-centeredness which is the mark of most mortals. Not only is he free to accept or reject the love which God offers him (and which will not be withdrawn though he spurn it), but the love which leaps out of him in free response to the love of God is the very means by which he can escape the bondage of pride, of passion, and of self. Passion enslaves us; the love which God gives sets us free. Passion blinds us to the defects of the loved one; this love sees the defects in other mortals, but loves just the same. Passion is demanding, hungry, exclusive; this love is generous, releasing, eager to be shared. Passion can turn to sudden anger and destroy the object of its fierce desire; this love is never ungovernable and always creative. It is by love that man comes to freedom, and there is no other way." (Daily Readings by William Sangster; pg. 224)

Jesus said, *"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."* (John 15: 12) The pagans looked with astonishment on the Christians and said, "Behold, how they love one another." Not only did the Christians learn to love one another; they learned to love their enemies and persecutors. Paul wrote, *"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."* (Romans 5: 5) The greatest power in the universe is love - not hate or might. Jesus said, "*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)

Even though John Wesley was one of the most scholarly men in all of Christian History, he nevertheless rightly observed the simplicity of true and genuine religion - the religion of Christianity - when he wrote: "Religion is the most simple thing that can be conceived. It is only humble, gentle, patient love."

One of the most respected and early leaders in the Salvation Army movement was Commander Brengle. He was a true saint of God - a love-filled and kind-hearted man of God. "He begins his little book...with the startling sentence 'On January 9th 1885, at about nine o'clock in the morning, God sanctified my soul', and then goes on: 'It was a heaven of love that came into my heart. I walked out over Boston Common before breakfast, weeping for joy and praising God. Oh, how I loved! In that hour I knew Jesus, and I loved Him till it seemed my heart would break in love. I loved the sparrows. I loved the dogs, I loved the horses, I loved the little urchins on the streets...I loved the whole world.' The heart of the experience is love - and love is a gift. When the moralist, in keen defense of ethical principle, asserts that holiness cannot be given, this is the reply. The heart of holiness so conceived is supernatural

love - and love is a gift. Love is the key to holiness." (Daily Readings by William Sangster; pg. 53)

Baptism in the Holy Spirit - as what happened on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 - is baptism in God's holy love. Notes William Sangster: "When the Holy Spirit fills a human heart and Christ is being formed within, it is impossible to conceal it. Supernatural love streams from it. Joy bubbles out of it. Peace and serenity shine in it. Saintliness is the most winning and attractive thing in the world. It cares. It is so unselfcentered, so sincere, so guileless, so radiantly good...Most of us have known someone with this quality of life, and their memory stays with us through all the years." (Daily Readings by William Sangster; pg. 110)

The story of Phocas, the Gardener Saint is fascinating and revealing. "Belonging in the fourth century, he lived in a little cottage outside the city gate of Sinope. Travelers passed his door almost all hours of the day and night. By the holy ingenuity or love he stopped as many of them as possible. Were they not weary? Let them rest themselves, sitting in his well-tended garden. Were they in need of a friendly word? He would speak it to them - in the dear Master's name. But then, quite suddenly one day, life was all changed for Phocas. Orders went out from Emperor Diocletian that the Christians must be put out of business. When the persecutors entered Sinope, they were under orders to find a man by the name of Phocas and put him to death. About to enter the city one hot afternoon, they passed in front of the old man's cottage and garden. In his innocence he treated them as though they were his warmest friends, begging them to pause a while and rest themselves. They consented. So warm and gracious was the hospitality they received that when their host invited them to stay the night and go on their way refreshed next day, they agreed to do so. 'And what is your business?' said Phocas, unsuspectingly. They then told him that they would answer his question if he would regard it as a secret. It was obvious to them by now that he was a man to be trusted. Who were they> why, they were the lictors of Rome, searching for a certain 'Phocas', who was a Christian. And please, if their kind host knew him would he bo so good as to help them to identify him. After all, he was a dangerous follower of Jesus about whom the Christians talked, and he must be executed immediately.

'I know him well,' said Phocas quietly. 'He is quite near...Let us attend to it in the morning.'

His guests having retired, Phocas sat thinking. Escape? That would be easy. He had only to leave under cover of darkness. At daybreak he could be at least twenty miles away. He knew fellow Christians who would give him hospitality by hiding him. When the persecution had passed, he could reappear and once again cultivate his garden.

The decision to flee into safety or to stay unto death was apparently made without struggle or delay. Out into his garden Phocas went and began digging. Was there any earthly thing he loved better than this little plot of ground - the odor of the humus, the 'feel' of the soil, the miracle of fertility. What were his thoughts as he went on digging? There was still time to run away. But the Saviour did not run - neither from His Gethsemane nor His Calvary. Or, perhaps he thought of his fellow Christians to whom he might go for asylum. Would not his coming endanger them? As for these executioners that now were soundly sleeping under his roof, they were, after all, only men who were carrying out orders. If they failed to find their man, their own lives, likely as not, would be taken.

Deeper and deeper Phocas dug. Before dawn he was done. There it was - his own grave.

Morning came, and with it the waking of the executioners. 'I am Phocas,' he said calmly. We have it on the word of the Christian bishop who recorded the story for posterity, that the men stood 'motionless' in astonishment. They couldn't believe it! And when they did believe it, the obviously were reluctant to perform an execution without mercy on a man who had shown them nothing but mercy.

It was the persuasion of Phocas himself that overcame their reluctance. They had a duty to perform. He knew it. He was not bitter at them. Besides, death did not terrify him, he assured them. Toward them he bore nothing but the love of Christ.

Moments later it was all over. The sword had done its work. And the body of Christ's love-mastered man lay in the stillness of death in the garden he loved so dearly." (Ibid; pg. 47-49)

The Holy Spirit Gives Power to Love - even enemies.

C. The Holy Spirit Gives Power To Witness.

Diognetus was true when he said in his ancient "Epistle": "What the soul is to the body, so the Christians are to the world. They hold the world together." (Ibid.; pg. 55) Christians are to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the adhesive for society.

"A little boy when asked what the Holy Spirit means, replied, 'I suppose it is what puts the "oomph" in Christianity.' He is, but very much more. For He puts everything - everything which a Christian needs for abundant living - into Christianity." (Abundant Living; pg. 155)

One need a Christian has is power for witnessing. Jesus promised to give that

power: *"But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses."* (Acts 1: 8) A witness is one who tells and who lives what he believes. When we think of a witness, we first think of a verbal testimony. The apostles verbally testified of what they had seen and heard.

After Peter and John had healed the lame man, and the Jewish rulers inquired into the episode, Peter testified boldly to the rulers: *"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole."* (Acts 4: 10) What was the rulers' response? *"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."* (Acts 4: 13)

Many are the episodes throughout the Book of Acts which demonstrate the powerful verbal witnessing of the apostles.

Witnessing is telling, but witnessing is also living. We are reminded of the old adage: "What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you say." Words which are backed by a holy life are powerful and penetrating. What one is, is as important as what one says, and usually has more ultimate consequences.

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 which 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 kalos has a character which is lovely and pleasing to the eyes of others.

The Christian needs times of intimate fellowship with God in order to see the glory of God and become enraptured by it. Every Christian needs the Mountain of Transfiguration in his life. However, to always remain on the Mountain of Transfiguration, is to never share the glory of God with the men of the world. It is the radiance of the Christian life which the sinner must see in order to be attracted to Christ. Susanna Wesley had this prayer: "Help me, Lord, to remember that religion is not to be confined to the Church or the closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation but that everywhere I am in thy presence." (Barclay's Matthew, v. 2, pg. 180) "The saints are the most convincing answer to atheism and agnosticism...In some mystic way they make it impossible for others to live near them and disbelieve. In the mixed character of Voltaire - nobility and cynicism strangely blended - there was

much mockery of religion. But a contented atheist he could not be. Asked by a skeptical friend one day if he had ever met anyone like Jesus Christ, he lapsed into silence and then answered with awe-full seriousness: 'I once met Fletcher of Madeley.'" (William Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 74)

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 al all. The radiance of Livingstone's life was self-evident.

CONCLUSION:

What Happens When I Am Sanctified? The "tongues like flames" symbolizes the Spirit's ministry of cleansing. It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to make the Christian truly Christlike in attitude, purpose, and nature, and to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit in the Christian's life.

The "rushing of a violent wind" symbolizes the Spirit's ministry of empowering. The Holy Spirit gives a Christian power to cope effectively with life, power to love even the persecutor, and power to boldly witness for Christ in word and by character. What happens when you become sanctified? You receive the Holy Spirit in His fullness and blessedness!

QUESTIONS

1. What are the two distinct meanings of the word 'Sanctification'?

2. Following your personal experience of being forgiven of your sins (converted from a life-style of sinning to a life-style of seeking to please God), have you (like Watchman Nee) made the discovery that you have an "inward inclination to sin, a power within that draws to sin"? Tell if you agree with the following statement by Watchman Nee: "I need forgiveness for what I have done, but I also need deliverance from what I am."

3. Give your explanation of the following statement: "Man is a sinner by nature as well as by choice."

4. Acknowledging the universal problem of all mankind - the problem of innate selfishness and self-centeredness - what 'solution' does Paul offer in dealing with this serious human malady, according to Romans 6: 3-8 and Galatians 2: 20?

5. What is the difference between 'Consecration' and 'Sanctification'?

6. According to Galatians 5: 24-25, what is the tragic consequence when a person - even a professing Christian - is 'ambitious for his own reputation'?

7. How would you describe a Christian person who is said to be truly 'Sincere'?

8. If the 'perfection' which the Holy Spirit wishes to produce in the Christian is not 'absolute' perfection, or 'legal' perfection, or 'service' perfection, or 'behavioral' perfection, or 'sinless' perfection, then what kind of perfection is it that the Holy Spirit intends to produce in the life of the consecrated believer?

9. How could Paul, without being guilty of contradiction, claim that the 'fruit of the Spirit' is self-control (Galatians 5: 22, 23) and yet acknowledge that a believer could be 'angry' without sinning (Ephesians 4: 26)?

10. Is your life like a thermometer, passively recording the circumstances around you, or is your life like a thermostat, actually and actively influencing and changing the circumstances around you? Why does being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' decide the difference in your life?

11. How would you describe the two opposite 'sides' of the life of the Spirit-filled life - that is, the Active Side and the Passive Side of the fully surrendered believer?

12. According to William Sangster, how would the difference between human 'Passion'

and divinely-imparted 'Love' be described?

13. According to Matthew 5: 44, how are you, as a Spirit-filled believer, to treat your 'enemies'?

14. Tell what your personal reaction is to the following statement: "Religion is the most simple thing that can be conceived. It is only humble, gentle, patient love."

15. Do you agree that 'saintliness is the most winning and attractive thing in the world'? Why or why not?

16. How would you describe the 'most godly person' whom you have ever known?

17. Give your interpretation of the following statements, and cite Scriptural references which support these statements: "What the soul is to the body, so the Christians are to the world. They hold the world together."

18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement, as it refers to witnessing for Christ: "What one is, is as important as what one says, and usually has more ultimate consequences."

19. What is the meaning of the Greek New Testament word 'Kalos'?

20. Tell what is meant by the following statement: "Every Christian needs the Mountain of Transfiguration in his life."

21. Tell to what extent you identify with the following prayer by Susanna Wesley: "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."

22. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "The saints are the most convincing answer to atheism and agnosticism."

CHAPTER 13

FUNERAL

CHAPTER 13

SUBJECT: CHRIST'S POWER OVER DEATH.

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 15: 16-19.

TEXT: *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?'....He gives us the victory through our Lord JESUS CHRIST." (I Corinthians 15: 55, 57)*

INTRODUCTION: One of the great tests of any philosophy is what it makes of death. All those who die with faith in Christ will live forever in heaven!

I. The Inevitability Of Physical Death.

II. The Tragedy Of Death Without Christ.

III. The Glory of Life After Death With Christ.

CONCLUSION: *"Our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever. When this happens, then at last this Scripture will come true - 'Death is swallowed up in victory'. O death, where then your victory? Where then your sting? For sin - the sting that causes death - will all be gone; and the law, which reveals our sins, will no longer be our judge. How we thank God for all this! It is he who makes us victorious through Jesus Christ our Lord! So, my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection."* (I Corinthians 15: 53-58)

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TEXT: *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?'....He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Corinthians 15: 55, 57)*

INTRODUCTION:

"However hard a recession bites, the undertakers are not going to go out of business. Death is the unwelcome fact at the end of the road. Thus, one of the great tests of any philosophy is what it makes of death. (Why The Resurrection Matters by Michael Green; Christianity Today; March 17, 1989; pg. 28)

PROPOSITION:

If death is inevitable, then is there any hope of life after death? There is no hope of life after death except for those who have placed their faith in the Deathless One - Jesus Christ!

Why does the resurrection of Christ matter so much to you and to me? Because all of us must someday die! Because all who die without Christ will perish eternally! Because all of those who die with faith in Christ will live forever in heaven! These are three reasons why the resurrection of Christ means so much to us.

I. The Inevitability Of Physical Death.

The Bible says, *"It is appointed unto men once to die!"* (Hebrews 9: 27a)

"Death is the one certain fact. Philip of Macedon had a slave to whom he gave standing order. The man was to come in to the King every morning of his life, no matter what the King was doing, and to say to him in a loud voice; 'Philip, remember that thou must die.'....Death is the only prediction which we can make about human history with absolute certainty." (Christian Doctrine; Whale; pg. 172)

Death is the common denominator of life!

Notes the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes: *"No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death."* (Ecclesiastes 8: 8)

Wrote the Psalmist: *"What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?"* (Psalms 89: 48)

"When as a child, I laughed and wept,
Time crept;
When as a youth, I dreamed and talked,
Time walked;
When I became a full grown man,
Time ran;
When older still I daily grew,
Time flew;
Soon I shall find in traveling on
Time gone." (Author Unknown)

"For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4: 14)

"You (O God) have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath." (Psalms 39: 5)

"As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 103: 14, 15)

II. The Tragedy Of Death Without Christ.

All must die, sooner or later. The old must die, and the young may die! That is the one prediction that we can make with absolute certainty. Only those believers who go up in the Rapture will be excluded from physical death.

If death is certain and sure, then the most important thing you can do is to prepare yourself for death. But, as important as it is to prepare for death and for the final judgement, there are those who live as if they are never going to die, or they live as if there is no judgment after their death! Is it any wonder that Jesus called such persons 'fools'? (Luke 12: 20)

Asked Jesus, *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16: 26, NIV)

We must never forget Jesus' 'Parable of the Rich Fool'. "And he told them this parable: *'The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, "What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops." 'Then he said, "This*

is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy: eat, drink and be merry.'" 'But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" 'This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.'" (Luke 12: 16-21)

> *Said one perceptive person, "Either we despair, or we believe. There is no middle course, no razor-edge of non-committal on which to balance precariously." The man who has no faith in God is likely to say the same thing as the man of the world, who said regarding death: "The wise man is remembered no longer than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply, all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death! So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind."* (Ecclesiastes 2: 16-18)

> *"Only he who believes in God wins the victory over despair. Only the infinite mercy of the Eternal Love, incarnate, suffering, dying, rising from the dead, is big enough for the tragedy of human existence." This is what one theologian wrote. The Christian with strong faith in God knows that death does not end it all, but that the perish ability of death will someday be swallowed up in the imperishability of eternal life. With the Apostle Paul, the true Christian declares: "This perishable being must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal must be clothed with immortality. And when our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying of Scripture will come true: 'Death is swallowed up; victory is won!' 'O Death, where is your victory? O Death where is your string? The sting of death is sin; and sin gains its power from the law; but, God be praised, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (I Corinthians 15: 53-57, NEB)

> Death will inevitably cause you to say one of two things, either "all is emptiness and chasing after wind", or "God be praised, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death compels men to choose between faith and despair.

III. The Glory of Life After Death With Christ.

There is within the bosom of every man a longing for immortality. Man is born with a thirst for infinity. Man is overbuilt for this world, and his aspirations call for a

fulfillment that is beyond the scope of time.

Even in the Old Testament when man's understanding of immortality was very limited, there are some aspirations shown, aspirations which could only be fulfilled in some type of life hereafter. Job in the Old Testament cried out, *"Still, I know One to champion me at last, to stand up for me upon earth. This body may break up, but even then my life shall have a sight of God."* (Job 19: 25-27, Moffatt)

The Psalmist expressed the belief that a man could enter into such a close relationship with God in this life, that not even death could break that relationship. The Psalmist wrote: *"My flesh shall rest in hope, for Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."* (Psalms 16: 9-11) Also, the Psalmist wrote: *"Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalms 73: 24)*

Here we find a deep confidence that man's aspirations for immortality will not be frustrated, but that man's deepest aspirations will be fulfilled.

The very existence of aspirations is a clue that man is not merely a product of nature, but that he is a spiritual creature whose true greatness is found in a supernatural. Says Harold Sloan, "In nature, then, man aspires, but he merely aspires and dies. The universe provides no fulfillment for his outreaches. Two courses only are open to him. He can surrender to disillusionment, despair and cynicism, or he can turn from the natural to the supernatural, discovering the answer to his need in forces which transcend nature...Shall man, then, whose faculties lift him so high above the beast, deny the actuality of everything those higher faculties need for fulfillment, and shut himself up to the universe of the beasts?....Man's aspirations belong to his inner world; and it is this inner world which he knows most immediately, and therefore best." (He Is Risen; Sloan; pg. 22, 27)

Birth, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, and Old Age - these are the passing stages of life. One may be abruptly introduced to the next stage, but more often, one enters the next stage gradually and slowly. The tenderness of Spring gradually changes into the fragrance of Summer, followed by the ruggedness of Fall and the aging of Winter. So each of life's stages is followed by a more mature and experienced stage. Death signals finality for this earthly realm of existence, but out of the darkness of death comes the dawn of eternity. Death seals the end for one realm of existence, only to introduce an infinitely more glorious realm of existence.

Death may be filled with mystery and clouded with uncertainty, but for the Christian the sting of death is removed. Because Christ trod the terrifying road of death, his

followers may now travel the road of death without fear and without terror. *"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."* (Psalms 23: 4)

Jesus said, *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* (John 14: 1-3)

The Bible tells us that it has not even entered into the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love Him! Heaven is a place of indescribable joy and beauty!

When C. S. Lewis lost his wife in death because of cancer, his life was greatly devastated! But God brought great comfort to him, and he reaffirmed anew that real life begins in heaven!

This life here on earth is like the prelude to a song, like the introduction to a book, like the front porch of a house. Real life begins in heaven! As important as this earthly life is, it is only a 'dressing room' for the real celebration which is in heaven!

"When we've gone the last mile of the way,
We will rest at the close of the day,
And I know there are joys that await me,
When we've gone the last mile of the way!"

"Onward to the prize before us!
Soon His beauty we'll behold;
Soon the pearly gates will open,
We shall tread the streets of gold."

"When we all get to heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,
We'll sing and shout the victory."

"When all my labors and trials are o'er,
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,
Will thro' the ages be glory for me."

"O that will be glory for me,
Glory for me, Glory for me;

When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory for me."

Said Jesus to His disciples: *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."* (Luke 12: 32) Jesus has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but He does have pleasure in taking His children home to heaven! "The King (Jesus) will say to those on his right, *'Come, you are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"* (Matthew 25: 34)

To the repentant thief on the Cross, Jesus gladly said, *"Today, thou wilt be with me in Paradise!"* Even to deathbed sinners who deeply repent of their sins, Jesus will say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father! Enter the portals of heaven!"

There is within every person a desire to live forever. The very thought of death is repulsive to us. A well-known atheist in France confessed his most deep-seated urge. "I have in myself a great need of permanence. I mean a need of believing that there are products not subject to decay and degradation, works on which temporal changes have no influence." However, there is no permanence without faith in Jesus Christ. All is darkness, gloom and despair without personal faith in the resurrected Christ.

To help you anticipate your future resurrection life, think of life's stages. "The unborn child is up under his mother's heart, well taken care of, well fed, and happy. He likes it there. Suppose then, that someone could come to the baby and tell him, 'You're going to be born. You're not going to stay here.' And he would learn that by being born, he would leave his warm secure place. That would not be being born to him, that would be dying for him. Dying is an end. And the baby would say, 'I don't want to be born. I don't want to die. I like it here. I'm warn. I feel love all around me. I'm happy and content. Just leave us alone. I don't want to leave this nice place.'

"But there comes a day when he is born. Or, looking at it from his angle, when he dies out of that place, and is born into our world.

"What happens to him? He feels soft, tender, loving hands gently holding him. He looks up into a wondrous face, that is full of love, and it is shining down at him. Then as he grows, he has the glorious experiences of childhood, and young manhood, and the future is before him. He feels strong and it is good to be alive. He marries and raises children. He becomes middle aged. He is creative and happy, and life is good. The world is good. And the years begin to add up. His hair becomes white, and his from a bit feeble. He knows he has to die, to leave all here. I love to feel the warmth of the sun on my face, the softness of the rain, the sting of snow. I love to see great mountains, shouldering out the sky. I love to watch the ocean washing upon soft

shores of sand. I love to be with my family, and my friends. Life is good; I don't want to leave here.'

But one day he does die, to this world.

"Do you mean to tell me that all of a sudden God changes? Isn't it reasonable to believe that the first thing he will feel is the touch of great loving hands; that he will look up into a face that is infinitely loving? He will look around him, and his breath will be taken away by the beauties that he sees. All tears will be wiped from his eyes. And he will say, 'Why was I so afraid of this thing called death, when as I now see, it is life!'

"And the Christian will live forever!" (Quoted by Robert Andrews on the 'Light and Life' Hour; April 22, 1973)

"Sometimes when I try to picture the effect His resurrection had on the populace living then, I see in my mind a very rare and very old Spanish coin. The coin, minted in the fifteenth century, was imprinted with a drawing of the narrow strait between Europe and Africa near Gibraltar, called the Pillar of Hercules. Inscribed at the bottom were the Latin words, Ne Plus Ultra, meaning 'No More Beyond'. To the Spanish of that time, that was it, there was not anything else out there. Then along came Columbus, and when he proved that a new world lay beyond, they had to remove the Ne from all the coins. From that time forward they read Plus Ultra - 'More Beyond'.

"It is no wonder that you and I are thrilled to celebrate Easter Sunday, to praise and thank God for the marvelous privilege of saying, 'Why, this mortal life is only the beginning. This is only a little bit of the whole; there is More Beyond!'" (Daily GUIDEPOST; 1983; pg. 104)

One person in my childhood who greatly influenced me to be a Christian was my great aunt (my grandmother's sister). She was a cripple all of her life, but she lived to be an old person. Only hours after she was born, she was stricken with polio and therefore she never knew what it was to walk without leg braces. She never married and was dependent upon other family members, including my grandmother, to care for her. She was one of the kindest Christians I ever knew. She gave me my first Bible in which she wrote, "*My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.*" (Psalms 62: 5) My 'Aunt Mary' was no stranger to pain and disappointment, as she hobbled along in life. But she was always sweet in her spirit and faithful to her Lord. My grandmother, who was caring for her at the time, wept when 'Aunt Mary' died. The sorrow she felt in her loneliness was great, and comfort in her loss was hard to find. One night God gave my grandmother a vision of 'Aunt Mary'. 'Aunt Mary' was with Jesus. Suspended in mid-air, looking upwards towards

heaven, 'Aunt Mary' seemed to be saying to my grandmother, 'Come on up, Edna'.

Remember: The resurrection of Jesus is your upward call from God to a new life and to a new body!

"*'If a man keep my saying he shall never see death'* (John 8: 51); '*Whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die'* (John 11: 26) It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning that Christ intended to convey was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality.

"'Jesus Christ hath abolished death', wrote Paul many years ago, but there have been very few since his day who appear to have believed it. The power of the dark old God, rooted no doubt in instinctive fear, is hard to shake, and a great many Christian writers, though possessing the brightest hopes of 'Life Hereafter' cannot, it seems, accept the abolition of death. 'The valley of the shadow', 'Death's gloomy portal', 'the bitter pains of death', and a thousand other expressions all bear witness to the fact that a vast number of Christians do not really believe what Christ said. Probably the greatest offender is John Bunyan, writing in his 'Pilgrim's Progress' of the icy river through which the pilgrims must pass before they reach the Celestial City. Thousands, possibly millions, must have been influenced in their impressionable years by reading 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Yet the 'icy river' is entirely a product of Bunyan's own fears, and the New Testament will be searched in vain for the slightest endorsement of his idea. To 'sleep in Christ'', 'to depart and be with Christ', 'to fall asleep' - these are the expressions the New Testament uses. It is high time the 'icy river', 'the gloomy portal', 'the bitter pains', and all the rest of the melancholy images were brought face to face with the fact: 'Jesus Christ hath abolished death'.

"The fact seems to many to be too good to be true. But if it does seem so, it is because we have not really accepted the revolutionary character of God's personal entry into the world. Once it dawns upon us that God (incredible as it may well sound) has actually identified Himself with Man, that He has taken the initiative in effecting the necessary Reconciliation of Man with Himself, and has shown the way by which little human personalities can begin to embark on that immense adventure of Living of which God is the Center, death - the discarding of a temporary machine adapted only for a temporary stage - may begin to seem negligible." (The Newborn Christian; Phillips pg. 212, 213)

Christians who die do not lose their identity in eternity. I believe that the believer's new body will be similar to Jesus' body after the resurrection, just prior to His ascension. A tangible body, yet a spiritual body - a body not confined to limitations of the material world. When Jesus arose, He was seen and known. We, too, in

heaven will have our personal identity. We shall be known and recognizable. Notes Sam Shoemaker, "'Because I live, ye shall live also'. He pioneered the way for us. His Resurrection made clear to us what Christian immortality is - not the vague wandering on of lonely and orphaned spirits, floating somewhere between earth and heaven - but the continuation of ourselves, in communion with Him and with one another. We are not a drop that falls into the sea of being and is lost in it; we are individual and responsible souls that return to their Creator. Christ's Resurrection has immeasurably strengthened our faith in the resurrection of the human soul." (Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching; vol. 11; pg. 83)

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale tells of his feelings after his mother's death. This is what he says: "I remember when my dear mother died in a little town in upstate New York. We took her body back to Ohio for burial. On the journey we had to change trains at Buffalo. I was walking down the platform and saw on a truck the shadowy outlines of a box. I walked over, almost fearing to read what was there. It said, 'Remains of Anna Peale'. That was rather a crude statement, and it might have struck me as repulsive. But the more I thought about it, the more it carried a glorious message to me! What was in that box was merely a physical from that I loved and my brothers loved and my father loved and many people loved. But my mother herself was not there. And when I walked out of the cemetery, having left her body there, these words from the Gospel of Luke rang through my mind: *'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' When our loved ones leave us, we lay away their physical bodies, no longer needed, like coats that are worn out. But at the time of death the person is released into a heavenly body."*

Death is simply a bridge that spans the gulf between time and eternity. One who is a true believer in Christ goes over that bridge into the nearer presence of Christ. For all eternity the believer will praise and glorify Christ. Heaven is a place of indescribable joy, as all the hosts of heaven join in corporate praise to God. The apostle John had a vision of heaven: *"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb."* (Revelations 7: 9, 10)

Death for the Christian is the end to earth's labors, and is the beginning to heaven's eternal development and labor. Said Victor Hugo: "For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode and song - I have tried them all. But I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work'. But I cannot say, 'I have finished my life'. My day's work will begin again next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open with the dawn."

CONCLUSION: *"Our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever. When this happens, then at last this Scripture will come true - 'Death is swallowed up in victory'. O death, where then your victory? Where then your sting? For sin - the sting that causes death - will all be gone; and the law, which reveals our sins, will no longer be our judge. How we thank God for all this! It is he who makes us victorious through Jesus Christ our Lord! So, my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection."* (I Corinthians 15: 53-58, Living Bible)

What About The Dead Who Die In Christ?

"No, not cold beneath the grasses,
All-forgotten in the tomb:
Rather, in my Father's mansion,
Living, in another room.

"Living, like the one who loves me,
Like yon child with cheeks abloom,
Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,
Busy in another room.

"Nearer than the youth whom fortune
Beckons where the strange lands loom;
Just behind the hanging curtain,
Working in another room."

CHAPTER 13

QUESTIONS

1. Tell what is meant by the statement: "One of the great tests of any philosophy is what it makes of death."

2. Why does the Resurrection of Jesus matter so much to you? (Note I Corinthians 15)

3. Name some of the analogies which the Bible uses to describe or emphasize the brevity of man's physical existence? (Note James 4: 14; Psalms 39: 5; Psalms 103: 14, 15)

4. Why, according to Luke 12: 20, did Jesus call some persons "fools"? (Also note Matthew 16: 26)

5. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statements: "Only he who believes in God wins the victory over despair. Only the infinite mercy of the Eternal Love, incarnate, suffering, dying, rising from the dead, is big enough for the tragedy of human existence."

6. How is it possible for God to give you personal victory over death through the Lord Jesus Christ? (Note I Corinthians 15: 53-57)

7. Why can it be said that Death will compel you to choose between faith and despair?

8. Share your response and interpretation of the following statements: "Man is overbuilt for this world, and his aspirations call for a fulfillment that is beyond the scope of time. The very existence of aspirations is a clue that man is not merely a product of nature, but that he is a spiritual creature whose true greatness is found in a supernatural."

9. Why is the confidence and faith of Job (in Job 19: 25-27) and of David (in Psalms 16: 9-11 and Psalms 73: 24) in life after physical death, such an unusual phenomenon?

10. What is the "secret" of walking through the valley of the shadow of death with no fear (Psalms 23: 4)?

11. From reading John 14: 1-3, what do you learn about Heaven?

12. When thinking about Heaven, what is meant where existence on this planet is described as "the prelude to a song", "the introduction to a book", "the front porch of a house", "a mere dressing room"?

13. According to Luke 12: 32, what gives the Heavenly Father great pleasure?

14. What can persons who maintain faith in Jesus Christ anticipate when they die? (Note Matthew 25: 34)

15. What lessons can one derive from the story of the thief on the cross who called out in repentance to Jesus shortly before he died?

16. Tell why, with great confidence, you can declare the following: "This mortal life is only the beginning. This is only a little bit of the whole; there is more Beyond."

17. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "The resurrection of Jesus is your upward call from God to a new life and to a new body."

18. Why should physical death, for the true follower of Jesus Christ, be "a completely negligible experience"?

19. When Christians die, do they lose their identity in eternity? Why or why not?

20. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "When our loved ones leave us, we lay away their physical bodies, no longer needed, like coats that are worn out. But at the time of death the person is released into a heavenly body."

21. Tell with what degree of conviction you personally agree with the following testimony of Victor Hugo: "When I go down to the grave I can say like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work', but I cannot say, 'I have finished my life'. My day's work will begin again next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open with the dawn."

22. As you acknowledge your own personal mortality and face your own inevitable death, what comfort can you derive from the truths which are declared in I Corinthians 15: 53-58)?

CHAPTER 14

CHILDREN'S DAY

CHAPTER 14

SUBJECT: THE CHALLENGE OF BALANCED GROWTH

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2: 40-52

TEXT: *"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." (Luke 2: 52)*

INTRODUCTION: Jesus' growth was perfect growth because it was God-controlled and balanced growth. Should it not be the goal of every child to grow in wisdom (mental growth), to grow in stature (physical growth), to grow in favor with God (spiritual growth), and to grow in favor with man (social growth)? To be a truly happy child, there needs to be balanced growth.

I. INTELLECTUAL GROWTH ("Grew in Wisdom").

II. PHYSICAL GROWTH ("Grew in Stature").

III. SPIRITUAL GROWTH ("Grew In Favor With God").

- **A. To be strong in spirit, a child must experience the forgiveness of sins.**
- **B. To be strong in spirit, a child must experience the Heavenly Father's love.**
- **C. To be strong in spirit, a child must be knowledgeable of God's Word.**
- **D. To be strong in spirit, a child must learn to cope with temptation.**

IV SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ("Grew In Favor With Man")

CONCLUSION: As children and as parents of children, let us commit ourselves to the challenge of balanced growth. Wholeness and health is our goal, and the Holy Spirit is committed to helping us find wholeness and health. God wants us to grow in body, in mind, in spirit, and in relationships. Commit yourself to the lordship of Christ and grow, grow, grow!

CHAPTER 14

SUBJECT: THE CHALLENGE OF BALANCED GROWTH

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2: 40-52

TEXT: *"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." (Luke 2: 52)*

INTRODUCTION:

To live is to grow. Physical growth is apparent, not always from day to day, but surely from year to year. One of the first things my daughters did when they arrived at their grandparents' home in Nebraska was to measure their heights and proudly place a new piece of masking tape above the previous pieces of tape. Each tape on the kitchen wall had a date and height in feet and inches marked on it. How satisfying for a child to see evidence that he has grown during the last six months. All parents know about the frustrations of keeping properly fitted clothes and shoes on fast-growing school children.

Jesus' growth was perfect growth because it was God-controlled and balanced growth. Should it not be the goal of every child to grow in wisdom (mental growth), to grow in stature (physical growth), to grow in favor with God (spiritual growth), and to grow in favor with man (social growth)?

PROPOSITION:

To be a truly happy and fulfilled child, there needs to be balanced growth. Let us together consider growth in the four areas mentioned, and commit ourselves to such growth.

Because it is Children's Day, I will direct many of my comments to children, and to the parents of children, but many of the truths I wish to express apply equally to all persons of all ages.

Let us now consider the challenge of balanced growth.

I. INTELLECTUAL GROWTH ("Grew in Wisdom").

Growth in knowledge and information and skills is important and phenomenal. But more important than growth in knowledge is growth in wisdom.

The book of Proverbs exhorts sons and daughters to seek wisdom. *"I want those already wise to become the wiser and become leaders by exploring the depths of*

meaning in these nuggets of truth." (1: 6) *"How does a man become wise? The first step is to trust and reverence the Lord! Only fools refuse to be taught. Listen to your father and mother. What you learn from them will stand you in good stead; it will gain you many honours."* (1: 7-9)

"Wisdom shouts in the streets for a hearing....Come here and listen to me! I'll pour the spirit of Wisdom upon you, and make you wise." (1: 20, 23)

"*Every young man who listens to me and obeys my instructions will be given wisdom and good sense. Yes, if you want better insight and discernment and are searching for them as you would for lost money or hidden treasure, then wisdom will be given you and knowledge of God Himself; you will soon learn the importance of reverence for the Lord and of trusting Him. For the Lord grants wisdom! His every word is a treasure of knowledge and understanding. He grants good sense to the godly - His saints. He is their shield, protecting them and guarding their pathway. He shows how to distinguish right from wrong, how to find the right decision every time. For wisdom and truth will enter the very center of your being, filling your life with joy."* (Proverbs 2: 1-10)

"My son, never forget the things I've taught you. If you want a long and satisfying life, closely follow my instructions. Never forget to be truthful and kind. Hold these virtues tightly. Write them deep within your heart. If you want favor with both God and man, and a reputation for good judgment and common sense, then trust the Lord completely; don't ever trust yourself. In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success. Don't be conceited, sure of your own wisdom. Instead, trust and reverence the Lord, and turn your back on evil; when you do that, then you will be given renewed health and vitality." (3: 1-8)

"The man who knows right from wrong and has good judgment and common sense is happier than the man who is immensely rich! For such wisdom is far more valuable than precious jewels. Nothing else compares with it. Wisdom gives: A long, good life, Riches, Honour, Pleasure, Peace. Wisdom is a tree of life to those who eat her fruit; happy is the man who keeps on eating it." (3: 13-18)

"Have two goals' wisdom - that is, knowing and doing right and common sense. Don't let them slip away, for they fill you with living energy, and are feather in your cap." (3: 21-22)

"'Learn to be wise,' he said, 'and develop good judgment and common sense! I cannot over-emphasize this point.' Cling to wisdom - she will protect you. Love her - she will guard you."

II PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT ("Grew in Stature").

We who have children should be concerned about our children's physical development. The body is sacred to God. The body is not to be despised. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

We need to appreciate the complexities of the human body. By example and by precept, parents should teach their children to honour their body. This means parents should not smoke, or drink, or abuse their body through the harmful use of drugs. It is difficult for parents to ask their children not to smoke, or drink, or use drugs, if, at the same time, the parents are engaging in one or more of these habits in the presence of their children. One of the leading factors that influences children to smoke is the example of their parents smoking!

Children who smoke, drink or use drugs cannot expect physically to develop properly.

Further, children need proper exercise if their bodies are to develop physically. We can be most grateful for community and school-sponsored recreational programs. There seems to be a new emphasis upon active participation in sports rather than merely being passive spectators of sports. This, generally speaking, is a healthy trend. There are great benefits from rigorous participation in sports - increasing the child's physical stamina, enhancing his personal self-esteem, developing his social communication skills. Proper exercise is a 'must' if children are properly to develop physically.

As already mentioned, sports can help a child to develop physically. There are two dangers however, connected with something so good as sports. One, idolization of sports heroes. Some children 'eat', 'sleep', and 'talk' sports almost continuously! Some children are amazingly knowledgeable of all the great sports heroes of today and of yesterday. Some children visualize themselves as professional athletes - as great sports heroes - and they will sacrifice almost anything in their pursuit to be 'successful' as a sports hero. The competitiveness in school sports is unbelievable. Some youngsters feel that they cannot be successful in life unless they are successful in sports and athletics!

But, can every child be successful in sports? Can every boy become a professional football player? Is competitiveness in sports more important than compassion for the 'underdog' in life? Is the pride which comes with athletic heroism more important than the humility which comes from learning to care and to share with one's peers? Is life based upon competition or upon compassion and caring?

The second problem I have with an overemphasis on sports and athletics is a misplacement of priorities. To some children and their parents, sports and athletics are more important than academic achievement or spiritual development. Some children sacrifice good grades in school simply to be competent in athletics. Other children

miss Church services or Christian Youth activities, simply to be in sports!

As your pastor, may I be daring enough to make a request of all parents on this Children's Day? Be sure to allow your children to participate in sports and athletics if your children are so inclined and talented. Also make sure, as parents, that you take time to play with your children. But, also, as parents, make sure that you always put spiritual development and Christian training above participation in athletics. Help your children not to allow athletics to become their God! If your child has to make a choice between being in sports and being in the Church's youth club, put your child's spiritual development above his physical development. Sports are a 'supplement to' spiritual training, never a 'substitute for' spiritual training! If you allow your child to participate in sport at the same time that he should be participating in his weekly Church youth clubs, you, as a parent, are communicating to your child that group athletics are more important than group Bible study!

So, with all the good that can come to your child through participation in group sports and athletics, guard against two traps: (1) Idolization of sports heroes, (2) Misplacement of priorities, putting sports before God and the Church.

Concerning physical development of our children, one more thing needs to be mentioned. We have thus far mentioned the need for avoidance of harmful habits (smoking, drinking, drugs). We have also talked in some detail about the benefits of exercise, sports and athletics, and have pointed out a couple of dangers to be avoided. We must also mention the need for proper diet in the child's life. 'Junk food' seems to be the kind of food that children naturally like. Or should we say, that junk food is the kind of food that children are trained to like? I am guilty, along with millions of other parents, of rewarding my children with candy, ice cream, pop, potato chips, and a variety of other so-called 'junk foods'. Why haven't we as parents rewarded our children with fresh strawberries, apples, oranges, celery sticks, carrot juice, peanut butter delights, cheese squares, alfalfa sprouts?

The mere mention of such foods as rewards or after-school snacks, brings a groan from our children! Why? Because we as parents have taught our children to enjoy sweet 'junk food' rather than to enjoy delicious health food. Americans have long learned to value foods which are high in fats, sugars, salts, and cholesterol - all of which are either useless or outrightly harmful to the body. Some diseases are probably caused by poor diet. Many children are hyperactive because of too much sugar in their diets. Many school children are listless intellectually and inactive physically because candy bars compose their breakfasts.

As Christian families, let us learn the importance of nutritious well-balanced meals. Remember, prepared foods are often expensive foods and they often lack nutritious qualities. The abundant life is more than proper diet, but without proper diet there

cannot be a truly abundant life! Help your child to grow in 'stature' - physically.

III. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT - ("Grew In Favour With God").

Of Jesus it is written, *"The little child grew up and became strong in spirit."* (Luke 1: 80, Phillips) *"And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him."* (Luke 2: 40, NIV)

A child is not really growing stronger unless he is growing stronger in his spirit! He may be able to flex his muscles, but unless he is strong in his spirit, he is weak altogether!

A. To be strong in spirit, a child must experience the forgiveness of sins. Even a child shall be known by his ways. A child soon learns that he is selfish by nature and that he is a sinner by choice. A child needs early in life to learn that he is born in sin and in need of a Savior! Found in John's epistle are these important words, *"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."* (I John 2: 12) Make sure your child has been saved. Religious education without religious conversion can only lead your child into self-deception or religious cynicism!

B. To be strong in spirit, a child must experience the Heavenly Father's Love. John continues, *"I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father."* (I John 2: 13) The child who sees God as a loving Father - personal and caring and yet disciplining when necessary - is the child who is making great strides in his spiritual development. A child's concept of God is largely formed around the pattern of his concept of his human father! To see God as one whom he lovingly serves and with whom he joyously shares is to see a realistic picture of God. Said Jesus to His own parents when they found Him in the temple. *"Do you not know that I must be about my Fathers business?"* The child who is concerned to do His Heavenly Father's business is the child who is well on his way to spiritual maturity!

C. To be strong in spirit, a child or youth must be knowledgeable of God's Word. Says John in his epistle, *"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you."* (I John 2: 14) To young Timothy, Paul wrote, *"Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."*

Knowledge of and obedience to God's commandments is absolutely essential if a child is to have a meaningful life! The Word of God, hid in the child's life, will keep the child from sinning against God (Psalms 119:11). Meditating on God's Word, day and night, will cause the child to grow like a tree that is

planted by streams of cool water (Psalms 1: 3).

Every parent must teach his children to love the Lord their God. God's instructions to Jewish parents is good instruction for modern parents.

> *"THE LORD YOUR God told me to give you all these commandments which you are to obey in the land you will soon be entering, where you will live. The purpose of these laws is to cause you, your sons, and your grandsons to reverence the Lord your God by obeying all of his instruction as long as you live; if you do, you will have long, prosperous years ahead of you.*
>
> *Therefore, O Israel, listen closely to each command and be careful to obey it, so that all will go well with you, and so that you will have many children. If you obey these commands you will become a great nation in a glorious land 'flowing with milk and honey,' even as the God of your fathers promised you.*
>
> *"O Israel, listen: Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone. You must love him will all your heart, soul, and might. And you must think constantly about these commandments I am giving you today. You must teach them to your children and talk about them when you are at home or out for a walk; at bedtime and the first thing in the morning. Tie them on your finger, wear them on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house!* (Deuteronomy 6: 1-9)

It is a sad thing when children - especially children in Christian homes - are more knowledgeable of science than they are of the Bible, are more knowledgeable of Hollywood than they are of Holiness, are more knowledgeable of the heroes of baseball than they are of the heroes of faith! Biblical illiteracy is great even though opportunities for biblical knowledge are greater now than ever before! Every child must grow in his knowledge of God's Word if he is to grow in his spirit!

D. To be strong in spirit, a child or youth must learn to cope with temptation. John believes that it is possible for young people to be victorious over temptation! *"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."* (I John 2: 14)

There are two traps to avoid in talking about Satan. First, it is possible not to take Satan seriously at all. There are those who outrightly deny his existence, which is great folly. There are others who are ignorant of his evil devices, and thus they are often entrapped in his subtle snares. Paul warned us not to be ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2: 11). There are still others who believe that if they never think of Satan or mention Satan by name that Satan will leave them alone. All of these responses are responses which show that the persons involved are not taking Satan seriously.

There is a second trap to avoid in dealing with Satan. It is possible to be overly-preoccupied with Satan. Someone wisely said, "What gets your attention, gets you!" Don't give credit to Satan if you can help it. Don't give Satan undue attention by talking too much or too often about him. Don't focus your attention or interest on Satan; focus your attention on Jesus Christ! Glance at Satan but gaze on Jesus Christ! Recognize that, while Satan's power abounds, Jesus' power super abounds! Be knowledgeable of Satan's tactics, but be more knowledgeable of the Holy Spirit's works! Never forget that you do not work for a victory, but you work from a victory! Jesus has already won the victory on the Cross and through the empty tomb! Satan's head has been crushed! Satan's death sentence has been pronounced and his execution date has been set. He is a defeated foe! The victory is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ! Know that no temptation is a sin, and know that with every temptation God has provided a way to escape (I Corinthians 10: 13). Never forget that "*the Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from satanic attacks of every kind.*" (II Thessalonoians 3: 3, Living Bible) Always remember that if you resist the devil, he will flee from you (James 4: 7). If you stumble and fail and sin, remember that you have an advocate - Jesus Christ the Righteous One - who will plead your case before the Father and who will forgive you and cleanse you from every sin (I John 1: 7- 2: 2).

There is much that is involved in a child's spiritual development - much more than what can even be mentioned within the scope of a single message. But the least that can be said about spiritual development is what we have shared: (1) To be strong in spirit, a child must experience the forgiveness of sins. (2) To be strong in spirit, a child must experience the Heavenly Father's love. (3) To be strong in spirit, a child must be knowledgeable of God's Word. (4) To be strong in spirit, a child must learn to cope with temptation.

IV. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT - ("Grew In Favour With Man")

Jesus grew mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. Jesus grew in favour with God through obedience, and He also grew in favour with men through submission.

Jesus lived in proper submission to God and to man. As a child, Jesus was obedient to his parents: *"Then he returned to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them."* (Luke 2: 51, Living Bible)

Paul wrote, *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that is may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."* (Ephesians 6: 1-3)

To learn obedience, submission, and respect is the first duty of all children, and is the most important lesson of childhood. Why? For life itself, in all of its social relationships, is based on the law of mutual submission. *"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."* (Ephesians 5: 21) This is the guiding principle for all meaningful relationships. *"Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. None of you should think only of his own affairs, but consider other people's interest also."* (Philippians 2: 3, 4, Phillips)

There is no maturity unless there is maturity in love. There is no social maturity until submission is practiced and love is expressed in human relationships.

Even Jesus, sinless though He was, "learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Suffering can benefit a child! A child needs to experience the suffering of punishment if he is to learn obedience to his parents and respect for authority. There is also the suffering of disappointment which can produce steadfastness and persistence in a child. There is the suffering of peer pressure which can produce moral strength and integrity in the life of the child who refuses to conform to the world's standards. Paul warns the Christian against allowing the world to squeeze him into its mold. Social conformity to the world's standards brings God's disfavor. Whoever makes himself a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. But whoever makes himself a friend of God, makes himself a true friend to needy people. It is impossible to grow in favour with God (spiritual growth) without growing in favour with men (social growth). He who is in love with God is also in love with men. He who loves the Father also loves the Father's children.

He who loves others will find that he himself is loved! He who lives in self-forgetful ways will find that he is not forgotten by men! He who is willing to die that others may live, will discover that he is forever lovingly enshrined in the minds and hearts of men!

Social growth is growth in love, growth in service, growth in respect. Is there any greater lesson that a child can learn than the lesson of respect? The Ten Commandments can be summarized in one word - Respect! Respect for God's sole existence which demands total surrender! Respect for God's nature which demands

spiritual worship! Respect for God's name which demands reverent treatment! Respect for God's special day which demands restful and creative observance! Respect for father and mother who deserve obedient submission! Respect for life! Respect for human property! Respect for fidelity in marriage! Respect for human reputation! Respect, respect, respect! Respect for the identity of others with no coveting of what belongs to others.

Respect for authority! Show me a child who has not learned respect for authority, and I will show you a child who is crippled, if not paralyzed, in his social development! The child learns first to respect the authority of his parents. Then, from his first lesson in respect, respect for school authority, respect for civil authority, respect for governmental authority and respect for religious authority! But, like a series of falling dominoes, the child who has defied the authority of his parents will soon learn to defy all other authorities - finally even learning to defy the highest of all authorities, the authority of God Himself!

The first duty of children is to learn to respect authority. This is the key to proper social development! The child's spirit must not be destroyed by over harsh treatment, but the child's will must be molded by loving discipline. The self-willed child is both unhappy and potentially dangerous to society! The disciplined child is happy and productive and socially strong!

CONCLUSION:

As children and as parents of children, let us commit ourselves to the challenge of balanced growth. Wholeness and health is our goal, and the Holy Spirit is committed to helping us find wholeness and health. God wants us to grow in body, in mind, in spirit, and in relationships. Commit yourself to the lordship of Christ and grow, grow, grow!

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 14

1. Do you agree that growth in wisdom is more important than growth in knowledge? Why or why not?

2. According to Proverbs 1: 7-9, what is the first step in one becoming truly wise?

3. According to Proverbs 2: 1-10, where is the source of wisdom to be found, and with what attitude does one seek for wisdom, and what is the glorious benefit one experiences when he finds wisdom?

4. After carefully reading the following passage of Scripture from Proverbs 3: 1-8 (in the Living Bible version of the Bible), list the "Conditions To Be Met", and the "Benefits To Be Enjoyed" -

> "My son, never forget the things I've taught you. If you want a long and satisfying life, closely follow my instructions. Never forget to be truthful and kind. Hold these virtues tightly. Write them deep within your heart. If you want favor with both God and man, and a reputation for good judgment and common sense, then trust the Lord completely; don't ever trust yourself. In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success. Don't be conceited, sure of your own wisdom. Instead, trust and reverence the Lord, and turn your back on evil; when you do that, then you will be given renewed health and vitality."

"CONDITIONS TO BE MET"	"BENEFITS TO BE ENJOYED"
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.

5. According to Proverbs 3: 13-18, what constitutes true happiness, and what are some of the specific characteristics of true happiness? (Read this Scripture in several different Bible translations, including The Living Bible)

6. According to Proverbs 3: 21-22 and Proverbs 4: 5-6, what should your goals in life be, and what are some of the benefits in reaching these goals? (Note these Scriptures especially in The Living Bible)

7. As a parent, how would you evaluate your child's "success" in his physical development - in the following areas?

_____a. My child has been taught that his body is created by God (Psalms 139: 13-16) and that his body is the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 6: 19).

_____b. My child understands the harmful affects which smoking and drinking alcohol and taking non-prescription drugs has on the human body, and has chosen to refrain from participation in such harmful habits.

_____c. As a parent, I have chosen to set a wise example for my child (or children) by personally choosing totally to abstain from use of tobacco and alcohol and all non-prescription drugs.

_____d. My child regularly exercises vigorously, either through school-related physical activities (P.E. classes and/or organized sports programs) or through family-oriented organized physical activities.

_____e. As a parent, I have regularly trained my child (or children) to beware of the dangers of idolizing "sports heros", and I have sought to teach my child that cooperation and compassion are far more important than competition in human interpersonal relationships, even in the area of organized "sports".

_____f. Without prohibiting my child from participation in organized sports, as a parent, I have made academic and spiritual pursuits a much higher priority than athletic pursuits, in terms of my child's activity involvements.

_____g. As a parent, I consciously attempt to guard my child against the consumption of so-called 'junk foods' which contain large amounts of refined sugar and fats and salts and cholesterol, and encourage my child to consume a lot of fresh fruits and raw vegetables.

_____h. As a parent, I believe there are great benefits (potentially) in my child's participation in organized sports - benefits like increasing my child's physical stamina, enhancing my child's personal self-esteem, developing my child's social communication skills, increasing my child's capacity to be a team player rather than being a self-centered isolationist.

8. Put an A beside those statements with which you agree, and a D beside those statements with which you disagree.

_____a. A child needs early in life to learn that he is born in sin and that he is in need of the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

_____b. Religious education without religious conversion can only lead your child into self-deception or religious cynicism.

_____c. A child's concept of God is largely formed around the pattern of his concept of his human father.

_____d. The child who is concerned to do His Heavenly Father's business is the child who is well on his way to spiritual maturity.

_____e. The child who sees God as a loving Father - personal, and caring and yet disciplining when necessary - is the child who is making great strides in his personal spiritual development.

_____f. A child should never be taught the 'doctrine of God's wrath', for such teaching always perverts the true concept of God and would greatly depress a child.

_____g. A child should be taught to see God as one whom he lovingly serves and with whom he joyously shares, for such a concept of God is a realistic concept of God, and fully supported by the Biblical revelation.

_____h. Knowledge of and obedience to God's commands is absolutely essential if a child is to have a meaningful life.

_____I. It is a sad and tragic thing when children - especially children from Christian homes - are more knowledgeable of science than they are of the Bible, are more knowledgeable of Hollywood than they are of Holiness, are more knowledgeable of the heroes of baseball than they are of the heroes of faith.

_____j. Considering the evil world in which we live, where temptation is so strong, it is, practically-speaking, impossible for young people to remain totally pure and free from sinning.

_____k. Children should never be taught about the person and strategies of the evil personality called Satan, for such teaching is both depressing and theologically suspect.

_____l. If a child or teenage never thinks about Satan or never mentions him by name, then Satan will leave such a person alone untempted.

_____m. Children and teens should be taught that, while Satan's power still abounds, Jesus' power superabounds, and that Jesus' death and glorious bodily resurrection actually brought ultimate defeat to Satan and his evil kingdom of darkness on the earth.

_____n. Children and teens must be taught that temptation is universal, and that temptation is not a sin, and that every temptation is resistible with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

9. What should a Christian child or teen be told to do if he should fail to resist some temptation and should disobey God's established moral laws, according to I John 1: 7 - 2: 2?

10. According to Ephesians 6: 1-3, what are some blessings which obedient children are likely to enjoy?

11. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To learn obedience, submission, and respect is the first duty of all children, and is the most important lesson of childhood." Tell why you agree or disagree with the above statement.

12. According to Ephesians 5: 21 and Philippians 2: 3-4, what attitude best demonstrates maturity in the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, and when and where and from whom is this attitude best learned by a child?

13. Why can competitiveness, comparison, and covetousness be considered the great 'trinity of evils' in interpersonal relationships, and what remedy is available to deal with these destructive attitudes of a self-centered ego? (Note Romans 12: 1-2; Galatians 2: 20; Galatians 5: 22-26)

14. Put an A beside those statements with which you agree, and a D beside those statements with which you disagree.

_____a. There is no social maturity until submission is practiced and love is expressed in human relationships.

_____b. A child needs to experience the suffering of punishment if he is to learn obedience to his parents and respect for authority.

_____c. When a child experiences the suffering of disappointment, he should be taught positively to accept his losses and to learn lessons in steadfastness and persistence and humility and dependence on God from his losses and disappointments, rather than falling into the traps of despair and self-pity.

_____d. A child must be taught to "stand alone" rather than to succumb to peer pressure and to yield to sin and to fall into moral compromise.

_____e. A child must be taught to shun evil habits and self-centered attitudes and sinful companions, and to keep himself "unspotted from the world."

_____f. It is impossible for a child to grow in favour with God (spiritual growth), without at the same time that child also growing in favour with his fellow human beings, for the Bible teaches that he who is in love with God is also in love with the 'crown of God's creation' - human beings.

_____g. The child who loves others in a self-forgetful ways will find that he in turn will be greatly love by others.

_____h. There can be no true social growth in the life of a child or teen without growth in love and growth in service and growth in respect.

15. Tell how each of the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus 20: 1-17, teaches various lessons in Respect. Tell how you, as a parent or as a teacher, have sought to teach your children or students the important lessons of Respect, as stated specifically in the Ten Commandments.

16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Like a series of falling dominees, the child who has defied the authority of his parents will soon learn to defy all other authorities - authorities such as school authorities, civil authorities, governmental authorities, religious authorities, and finally even God's ultimate authority."

17. Give your personal interpretation of and reaction to the following statement: "The child's spirit must not be destroyed by over harsh discipline, but the child's will must be broken and molded by loving discipline, for the self-willed child is both unhappy and is potentially dangerous to society."

CHAPTER 15

FATHER'S DAY

CHAPTER 15

SUBJECT: WHAT CAN A FATHER DO?

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 6: 1-9

TEXT: *"And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* (Ephesians 6: 4)

INTRODUCTION: If there was ever a time when there was a great need for godly men, and especially for godly husbands and fathers, that time is NOW! Considering the vital role which a father plays in the life of his children, the conscientious father will ask himself "What Can A Father Do?" A father can, under the leadership and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, do many good and important things, in his attempt to raise godly children. What does it mean, practically-speaking, for a father to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6: 4)?

I. HE CAN PROVIDE A CONSISTENT EXAMPLE TO HIS CHILDREN IN GODLY LIVING.

II. HE CAN SPEND QUALITY AND QUANTITY TIME WITH HIS CHILDREN.

III. HE CAN DISCIPLINE HIS CHILDREN LOVINGLY.

IV. HE CAN BE AUTHENTIC AND TRANSPARENT BEFORE HIS CHILDREN.

V. HE CAN LOVE HIS CHILDREN'S MOTHER.

VI. HE CAN TEACH HIS CHILDREN TO WORK AND TO BE RESPONSIBLE PERSONS.

VII. HE CAN TEACH HIS CHILDREN TO RESPECT THE MORAL LAWS OF GOD.

VIII. HE CAN SEEK TO LEAD HIS CHILDREN TO CHRIST WHEN HIS CHILDREN ARE VERY YOUNG.

IX. HE CAN ALLOW HIS CHILDREN TO EXPERIENCE AND TO EXPRESS THEIR UNIQUENESS AND THEIR OWN CREATIVITY.

X. HE CAN LOVE HIS CHILDREN UNCONDITIONALLY, EVEN IF THEY FAIL TO FOLLOW THE CHRIST THAT HE, AS FATHER, SERVES.

CONCLUSION:

A Father's Prayer

Lord, who am I to teach the way
to these my children day by day -
So prove myself to go astray?

I teach them power to will and do
Then I only learn anew - my own
great weakness thru and thru.

I teach them love for all mankind
Then lo! I find my own love lags
far behind.

Lord, if their guide I still must be
Oh! Let these my children see
Their father leaning hard on thee.

(Author Unknown)

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TEXT: *"And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* (Ephesians 6: 4)

INTRODUCTION:

If there was ever a time when there was a great need for godly men, and especially for godly husbands and fathers, that time is NOW! Survey any typical public school classroom, and you will probably find that a large percentage (probably more than one-half) of those children are being raised without their father in their home! There are millions of children and teens who are fatherless - i.e., children and teens who are being raised without the daily presence of a father - and, tragically, many children whose fathers are physically present in their homes are not socially affirming of their children and are not providing strong godly leadership to their children! The influence - either positive or negative - which a father exercises in his home can hardly be over-estimated. A child is shaped and molded, not only by the words he hears from his father, but by the actions and attitudes of his father. Although there are notable exceptions, most children are the 'products of their upbringing' by their parents.

Just recently, printed in large type and mounted in a very large frame, I observed the following well-known writing, on the wall of my family doctor:

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility,
She learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule,
He learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame,
She learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with tolerance,
He learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement,
She learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise,
He learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,
She learns justice.
If a child lives with security,
He learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval,
She learns to like herself.
If a child lives with acceptance
and friendship, he learns
to find love in the world.

PROPOSITION:

Considering the vital role which a father plays in the life of his children, the conscientious father will ask himself "What Can A Father Do?" A father can, under the leadership and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, do many good and important things in his attempt to raise godly children. What does it mean, practically-speaking, for a father to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6: 4)?

I. **HE CAN PROVIDE A CONSISTENT EXAMPLE TO HIS CHILDREN IN GODLY LIVING.** He can take his children to Church - not send them. He can read the Bible with his children, instructing them in the ways of godly living. He can pray with his children, teaching them to call upon God at all times - in plenty or in want, in success or in failure, in health or in sickness. He can teach, by example and precept, the importance of explicit obedience to God's moral laws. He can show his children how to worship God, in Church and at home, through private and family devotions and through effective teaching in the local Church. He can openly share with his children the things of God, especially the ways of God as revealed in the Bible and illustrated in his own personal life. He can live honestly before his children, demonstrating to his children what a life of integrity is all about. He can show compassion in the way he acts and reacts to others. He can show his sense of spiritual priorities - putting people before things, putting God's interest before his own interest. There is a story of four boys, arguing as to which of their dads was the greatest, and the last boy said, 'My dad is greatest of all, for he knows God!'

TODAY

by Henry Matthew Ward

When I got mad and hit my child
"For his own good," I reconciled,
And then, I realized my plight

Today, I taught my child to fight.

When interrupted by the phone,
I said, "Tell them I'm not at home."
And then I thought, and had to sigh....
Today, I taught my child to lie.

I told the tax man what I made,
Forgetting cash that I was paid;
And then I blushed at this sad feat...
Today, I taught my child to cheat.

I smugly copied a cassette,
To keep me free of one more debt,
But now the bells of shame must peal....
Today, I taught my child to steal.

Today, I cursed another race.
Oh God, protect what I debase,
For now, I fear it is too late.
Today, I taught my child to hate.

By my example, children learn
That I must lead in life's sojourn
In such a way that they are led
By what is done, not what is said.

Today, I gave my child his due
By praises for him instead of rue.
And now I have begun my guide:
Today, I gave my child his pride.

I now have reconciled and paid
to IRS on all I made.
And now I know that this dear youth
Today has learned from me, of truth.

The alms I give are not for show,
And yet, this child must surely know
That charity is worth the price;
Today, he saw my sacrifice.

I clasp with in a warm embrace

My neighbor of another race -
The great commandment from above.
Today, I taught my child to love.

Someday, my child must face alone
This world of fearsome undertone,
But I have blazed a sure pathway:
Today, I taught my child...to pray.

Probably the power of influence is the greatest power there is - especially in terms of the relationship between a father and his children. As important as wise and godly words are (and there is no substitute for loving counsel), nevertheless, the example in terms of behavior is even more important than the speaking of many words in the home environment. Children probably 'catch' what we do, more than what they 'hear' what we say! Our children could so easily say to us as parents, "Your actions are speaking so loud to me that I can't hear what you are saying." As important as godly words are, we must remember that all godly words (advice) must be 'backed' by consistent godly actions. What we, as parents, value in our lives - as demonstrated by the way we spend our time and money - is soon 'caught' by our children. Is it not time for the home life in America - even the home life of Christian homes in America - to be 'Christianized'? Several years ago a man by the name of Cathorn (in his book entitled 'Politics, Americanism, and Christianity') noted that more Americans have television in their homes than have indoor plumbing or telephones. He said, "Not only do people watch shows with almost religious regularity, but they invest a great deal of emotion and empathy in them. They strongly identify with the heroes and heroines of film and television. Each weekday, for example, millions of housewives become emotionally engrossed in one or more soap operas...By the time the average child enters the first grade, he has received more hours of instruction from television than he will receive from professors during four years of college." During my pastorate in one local Church for over 25 years, I had some very dedicated parishioners - many of whom were rather young couples who were outstanding parents of young children. Some of those consecrated parents - without judging other parents who were not in agreement with them - made a thoughtful decision to remove all television sets from their homes. They felt that, while there was nothing inherently wrong with television as technology, their children were too distracted by the invasion of television in their homes. Some of these same parents decided to do 'home schooling' of their children, and, as a result, these undistracted children (with unusual attention given to them by their home school parents) developed amazingly through the years that I knew them - academically and socially and spiritually! One mother in my congregation shared with me that, as growing Christians, she and her

husband became convicted about some of the books which they had in their home. They went through their books and made a bonfire of those books which were incompatible with their Christian profession! Yes, making a full surrender to Christ means that we must 'Christianize' our homes - cleansing them of all that is unChristlike. It is altogether shocking how many professing 'Christian' fathers 'flirt' with pornography in their homes! Such 'Christian' fathers who indulge in pornography should not be surprised to have teenage sons who follow their dad's example, and, like their father, become trapped in the snare of lust! Paul told young Timothy to *'flee youthful lusts'* - but how hard that is for teenage sons to do if they discover in their home 'hidden' pornographic magazines which belong to their father! Wrote James, *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstrained from the world."* (James 1: 27) One father in my congregation who, with his lovely wife, were raising seven sons, made it a practice to go with his large family each Sunday night to visit in the home of a shut-in and crippled widow - a godly lady who suffered great physical pain but who was full of the joy of the Lord! By example, that father was teaching his young children the importance of visiting widows. So much did those impressionable children learn about compassion for precious suffering people!

Yes, children learn best through the godly examples of godly parents!

II HE CAN SPEND QUALITY AND QUANTITY TIME WITH HIS CHILDREN.

Fathers who have to be away from wife and children for lengths of time because of their work, must make it up to their children in other ways. If a father must choose between taking a better-paying job that involves him being away from his wife and children for days or for weeks at a time, and a lesser-paying job that allows him to be home with his family every day, there should be no question as to what job he chooses. He should stay home with his family - especially if he has teenagers. Of course, a father must provide monetarily for his family, for the Bible says "If a man does not provide for his own household, he is worse than an infidel or an unbeliever." But, it is better for a man to live a simpler lifestyle and be able to stay home with his children than to live a more luxurious lifestyle and seldom see his children! Communication involves our presence and our affection, as well as our words. "Have You Hugged Your Kid Today?" is not only a good bumper sticker but it is a penetrating question that demands a positive answer! A parent's open affection expressed to his kids must be combined with his open ears to listen to his children's concerns. If, as fathers, we are too busy to listen to our children, then we are plainly too busy!

One minister notes that he has "talked with young people who have said, 'I can't get my dad's time long enough to have a good talk. He's so busy in his work. Mother's so busy with her clubs, her tennis, even her Christian work.' In a situation like that Harold Mallet suggests that a young person write a note to his parents and he suggests wording it something like this:

> Dear Folks:
>
> Do you mind if I make a suggestion? We don't talk enough. I realize how much 'Go' and 'Do' there is in your lives, and I know it's important. But frankly, I need some of your time. It's not that I'm in a jam, or intend to be, but somehow it seems that we belong to different denominations! I go my way and you go yours. We get along fairly well, but I'm like a roomer.
>
> I'd like to discuss dating with you, and some problems that come up about school, parties, drinking, and such. I really need to know what you would say and do.
>
> Could we agree on a time, soon, to fix other times when we can 'get with it' more? Yours for the talking!"

A good father is one who gives his children a 'listening ear' when they want to 'pour out their hearts'. A father must never belittle a child and he must never minimize a child's problems. Listen sympathetically to a child or to a teen, be slow to offer advice or 'pat answers', and build a warm and enduring relationship with your child as you offer Biblical counsel and continuing guidance to your troubled child.

III. HE CAN DISCIPLINE HIS CHILDREN LOVINGLY - never too harshly and never too leniently, molding the child's will to obey proper authorities but never breaking the child's spirit to despair with life. Never abusive, but never indulgent. Just wholesome and loving discipline!

One of the saddest stories in the Old Testament is that of Eli the High Priest who, although he was basically a good and godly man, failed properly to discipline his sons. *"Then the Lord said to Samuel, "I am going to do a shocking thing in Israel. I am going to do all of the dreadful things I warned Eli about. I have continually threatened him and his entire family with punishment because his sons are blaspheming God, and he doesn't stop them. So I have vowed that the sins of Eli and of his sons shall never be forgiven by sacrifices and offerings."* (I Samuel 3: 11-14, The Living Bible) 'Dotting fathers' are fathers who are too easy on their children. They fail to

restrain their children, and they allow them to be wild and disrespectful in their behavior. Being permissive as parents is a great disservice to our children. Perhaps you have heard of the little girl who said, "My parents don't love me for they never spank me!"

"Proverbs 13: 24 reads, *'He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.' And the writer of Proverbs goes on to make this tongue-in-cheek statement, 'Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you beat him with the rod you will save his life from Sheol'* (Proverbs 23: 13-14)

"I personally believe the Bible teaches that we should apply firm discipline to our children. However, James Dobson in his book 'Dare To Discipline' warns against going to extremes. On the one hand, some of us are too harsh, totally dominating our children and leaving them in a constant state of fear. On the other hand, some of us are too permissive. Dr. Dobson notes that firm discipline develops respect for a parent, and this is important because it determines all the future relationships of that child's life. He urges that spankings be reserved for a direct expression of self-will when the child says 'I will not' in rebellion against the parent's authority. Firm, loving punishment, instead of closing channels of communication, actually opens freedom of expression. Immediately following firm discipline, the average child is most open to expressions of love, understanding, and the warm embrace of the parent." (Becoming a Whole Family; Huffman; pg. 97, 98)

IV HE CAN BE AUTHENTIC AND TRANSPARENT BEFORE HIS CHILDREN.

He can be authentic and transparent before his children, allowing his 'humanity' to show and asking his children forgiveness when he sins against them. Children don't expect parents to be 'perfect', but children do expect parents to be humble enough and authentic enough to ask forgiveness of their children when their parents are unfair and when they fail.

V. HE CAN LOVE HIS CHILDREN'S MOTHER - his wife - tenderly and openly - thus demonstrating the strength of marital love, and giving security to his children. Children need to know that their home is solid and that their parents' marriage is enduring. The insecurity which children feel, because of a lack of marital harmony in the home, is great. And the damage caused to children because of the divorce of their parents is incalculable! Children deserve to be raised in a secure environment where they daily see parents who love each other with an unbreakable love. A man should avoid open conflict with his wife, in the presence of his children. One

of the greatest gifts a father can give to his children is to show love for their mother!

VI. HE CAN TEACH HIS CHILDREN TO WORK AND TO BE RESPONSIBLE PERSONS, learning the value of money without becoming greedy or materialistic in the use of money. Notes E. Stanley Jones, nothing that you can do for your children will be more harmful than to leave so much to them that they will not have to struggle and work. The surest way to flabby, irresponsible character is too much money." (Abundant Living; pg. 300) A father mut teach his children, by precept and by example, to tithe. The small child who early learns consistently to tithe on his small allowance and earnings, will likely become the teenage who will not hesitate to tithe on his summer earnings. Foolish is the teen who becomes self-preoccupied in his spending habits. (An example of this is the teen who spends all of his money making car payments, paying car insurance, buying gasoline, and paying for mechanical repairs). Regarding teen employment - a parent should seldom, and perhaps never, allow his teen to take a job which keeps him away from Church services on Sunday or from youth meetings on Wednesday evenings.

VII. HE CAN TEACH HIS CHILDREN TO RESPECT THE MORAL LAWS OF GOD and remind his children that this universe is a 'moral universe' with definite 'rights' to be affirmed and definite 'wrongs' to be avoided. And he can help provide a positive environment for his children, doing everything in his power to protect his children from involvement in a negative and sinful environment.

It is important for a father to teach his children that we live in a 'moral universe' where right is regarded and where wrong is punished. A child must learn that, even though there is pleasure in sin for awhile, eventually sin brings misery and heart-ache. It is the way of the transgressor that is hard. Taking Jesus' way - living by His laws and submitting to His authority - brings untold happiness and true fulfillment. Jesus said, "*I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are burdened down with the load of sin, and I will give you rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light!*" (Matthew 11: 28-30)

Children must learn the truth of Galatians 6: 7: "*A man sows what he reaps.*" Children must learn that God's laws were given, not to make people unhappy, but to show people how to be truly happy and healthy. Obedience and discipline bring true freedom - freedom from the bondage of sin and selfishness!

A father must protect his children from needless evil influence in the world.

Such a father may be blamed by others of overprotection of his children. Say some rather careless fathers: "Let your children see the 'real' world. After all, kids have to live in the 'real' world eventually. Let kids make their own decisions. Don't protect them. Let them have their 'fling' if they want to. Let them make their own mistakes and learn from those mistakes! Let them sow their own 'wild oats'. They will eventually 'grow up'. Don't try to protect them, and don't force your own religion 'down their throat'. Remember, this is a 'free country' and therefore kids ought to make up their own mind if they want to go to Church!"

Christian Fathers must see that these careless statements were 'born in hell'. A Christian father can't force his kids to be Christians, but he must expose them to the best possible and positive environment that he can. Requiring children to go to Church is no worse than requiring them to brush their teeth after each meal or requiring them to go to school five days a week!

A Christian father must not put his child into 'the lions' den' of the world. Some fathers may be too protective of their children, but most fathers in our world today - including Christian fathers - are not protective enough. As fathers, we must protect our children against needless ungodly influence. Remember, the Bible says "Evil companions corrupt good manners!" Give your children a 'controlled environment'. Be careful what you allow them to watch on T.V. and at the theater. Give them positive 'up-beat' music to listen to. Send them to Church summer camps. Encourage them to pick the best friends they can possibly find. Help them to stand up against negative peer pressure - learning to be a 'Daniel' for the Lord. Keep them involved in wholesome recreational activities - sports, etc. Why not encourage your children to join the 'Boy Scouts' or 'Girl Scouts', or '4-H' club?

A godly father can do much to keep a child away from evil practices and from negative persons.

I like Question 2 among the questions that parents answer when baptizing their small children, in the denomination where I pastored for many years.

"Do you, so far as you are able on his/her behalf, renounce the devil and his works, the lure of the world and the sinful desires of fallen man, so that in the training of this child you will not be led by them and so that, so far as you are able, you will keep this child from following them?"

VIII. HE CAN SEEK TO LEAD HIS CHILDREN TO CHRIST WHEN HIS CHILDREN ARE VERY YOUNG. Make this a top priority in your duties as a father. Use every 'teachable moment' you can find to talk about the Lord

"THE LORD YOUR GOD told me to give you all these commandments which you are to obey in the land you will soon be entering, where you will live. The purpose of these laws is to cause you, your sons, and your grandsons to reverence the Lord your God by obeying all of his instructions as long as you live; if you do, you will have long, prosperous years ahead of you. Therefore, O Israel, listen closely to each command and be careful to obey it, so that all will go well with you, and so that you will have many children. If you obey these commands you will become a great nation in a glorious land 'flowing with milk and honey,' even as the God of your fathers promised you. O Israel, listen: Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone. You must love him with all your heart, soul, and might. And you must think constantly about these commandment I am giving you today."
(Deuteronomy 6: 1-6)

Never become 'preachy' or 'judgmental', and don't force your own personal convictions upon your children. Make a clear distinction between moral absolutes which are vital for children and youth early to accept, and personal convictions (the moral 'gray areas') which are negotiable and secondary and subject to change and personal interpretation.

IX. HE CAN ALLOW HIS CHILDREN TO EXPERIENCE AND TO EXPRESS THEIR UNIQUENESS AND THEIR OWN CREATIVITY. Don't force your children into your own pre-conceived molds, but allow them instead to develop and to use their own talents and gifts. Teach them to serve others, discovering and using their own unique cluster of spiritual gifts and abilities. Teach them the truths regarding spiritual gifts - I Corinthians 12. Never compare your children favorably or unfavorably with each other. Love them all equally and never show favoritism (story of Isaac's favoritism toward Esau and Rachel's favoritism towards Jacob, and the tragedy this caused in the home).

Accept each child for his or for her own unique abilities, and don't try to force them into your own mold. I like what John Huffman says about this: "Joe Senior is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Yale Law School. Joe Junior is seventeen. Joe Senior's dream is that Joe Junior will work into his law firm. There's only one problem: Joe Junior has no apparent aptitude for law. In fact, he has very little inclination toward academic pursuits of any kind. Joe Senior constantly rides him, trying to motivate him to academic excellence. He has used pressure, insult, compliment, and even bribery to

achieve his goal, but nothing works. On the other hand, Joe Junior has a special talent. He can lift the hood of a car, take the engine apart, and put it back together again. He's a brilliant mechanic, but never once has Joe Senior given him recognition for his abilities. In his own way this young man is gifted - gifted by God! He, too, needs recognition." (Becoming A Whole Family; pg. 73)

Affirm your child's unique gifts and encourage him in the development of those gifts.

X. HE CAN LOVE HIS CHILDREN UNCONDITIONALLY, EVEN IF THEY FAIL TO FOLLOW THE CHRIST THAT HE, AS FATHER, SERVES. Youth who rebel cause their parents unspeakable heartache. Fathers are tempted to love their children conditionally - with 'strings attached'. "I will love you if you behave, or if you get good grades, or if you go to a certain college or train for a certain profession, or if you are a Christian." Children must know that they are loved just because of who they are and even when they fail morally or professionally.

God loves us, regardless of our lack of achievements and in spite of our moral failures. God loves us even when we are unlovely. God hates sin and so should we, as fathers, hate sin even when it is discovered in our own children, but God loves sinners and He seeks always to save them. The Parable of the Prodigal Son shows vividly the way God treats the rebellious son. The father must train the child in the ways of God, b ut the father must recognize that a time comes when a child must decide for himself to either live obediently or to live rebelliously. Not even the loving father can force the rebellious son to remain 'at home'. (Note: We are not talking about normal expressions of adolescent independence, but we are speaking about moral rebellion against God and against God-ordained authority such as parental authority and civil authority. Even though it 'breaks the father's heart', the father must allow his rebel son to leave the warm atmosphere of the home to go into a 'far country' to live a wild and loose life. While the son is away - out of fellowship and into 'his own thing' - the father continues to love the wayward son. The father does not force the son to stay at home and the father does not follow the son into the far country and the father does not go on a personal 'guilt trip' and blame himself for his son's rebellious lifestyle. But the father's unconditional love, be it a love that is hurt ever so deeply, is a love nevertheless that waits and watches and prays and hopes. When the once-rebellious son 'comes to his senses' and reveals his true repentance by returning home to plead with his father to make him a 'hired servant', the forgiving father runs to meet the returning prodigal. The father who loves

unconditionally forgives quickly and reconciles totally. He restores dignity to the prodigal and he restores him to the status of full sonship!

CONCLUSION:

A Father's Prayer

Lord, who am I to teach the way
to these my children day by day -
So prone myself to go astray?

I teach them power to will and do
Then I only learn anew - my own
great weakness thru and thru.

I teach them love for all mankind
Then lo! I find my own love lags
far behind.

Lord, if their guide I still must be
Oh! Let these my children see
Their father leaning hard on thee.

(Author Unknown)

CHAPTER 15

QUESTIONS

1. Without allowing yourself to become too introspective or guilt-ridden or overly-conscientious, evaluate yourself as a father by carefully thinking about the following statements (put a check mark in the appropriate places):

	Most of the time	Part of the time	None of the time
a. I am tolerant with my child (that he may learn to be patient).	_____	_____	_____
b. I encourage my child (that she may learn confidence).	_____	_____	_____
c. I praise my child for accompli-ments (that he may learn to appreciate).	_____	_____	_____
d. I am fair with my child (that she may learn justice).	_____	_____	_____
e. I give my child a secure and predictable environment (that he may learn to have faith).	_____	_____	_____
f. I give my child approval (that she may learn to like herself)	_____	_____	_____
g. I fully accept my child with unconditional love and friendship (that he may find love in the world).	_____	_____	_____

2. In seeking to provide a consistent example in godly living for your children, put a check by those statements which reflect an 'area' in which you wish to make a great emphasis (focus) in your 'fathering' practices:

_____a. I will consistently take my children to Sunday School and Worship services.

_____b. I will read the Bible daily to my children.

_____c. I will regularly and lovingly give instructions to my children in the ways of godly living.

_____d. I will pray daily with my children, and will endeavor regularly to teach my children to call upon the Lord at all times (in plenty and in want, in success and in failure, in health or in sickness).

_____e. I will regularly teach my children, by example and precept, the importance of explicit obedience to God's moral laws.

_____f. I will regularly attempt to teach my children the meaning of worship, by practicing reverent behavior before my children and by conducting a short daily 'worship time' (family devotional period) with my family, as well as teaching my children to be worshipful in behavior and attitude at our local Church worship services.

_____g. I will earnestly try to live honestly and to speak truthfully before my children at all times in my home.

_____h. I will attempt to show compassion for others, giving generously of my time and financial resources, and I will encourage my children to learn the ways of compassion through their active involvement with hurting or poor persons.

_____I. I will try consistently to demonstrate before my children, in word and by action, a sense of spiritual priorities - putting God's interests before my own interests..

3. If a man - a father - must choose between taking a better paying job that involves him being away from his wife and children for days or for weeks at a time, and a lesser paying job that allows him to be home with his family every day, what advise or counsel would you give that man in helping him to make such a decision between the two job offers?

4. Do you, as a father, regularly cultivate a close relationship with your children through openly expressed affection, combined with open ears to listen carefully to your children's personal concerns? Do you seek to listen to your children as much as you verbalize your opinions, convictions, and advice? Why or why not?

5. As a father, do you try hard never to belittle or criticize your children, and do you try hard never to minimize or trivialize your children's problems and concerns?

6. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe in the advice given to parents in the following statement: "Listen sympathetically to a child or to a teen, be slow to offer 'pat answers', and build a warm and enduring relationship with your child as you offer Biblical counsel and continuing guidance to your troubled child."

7. What do you think is the difference between molding a child's will and breaking a child's spirit? How can you tell the difference between natural (and wholesome) searching for adolescent independence and identity and self-expression on one hand, and unwholesome and hurtful adolescent rebellion against God-ordained authorities on the other hand? When a teen questions "authority", is this always a sign of wrongful "rebellion"? Why or why not.

8. What important lesson should Christian fathers learn from a careful reading of I Samuel 3: 11-14?

9. Give your personal interpretation and application of Proverbs 13: 24 which reads: "*He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.*" Do you think that the statement of Proverbs 23: 13-14 is really a "tongue-in-check" statement and should not be taken too seriously?

10. If the goal of applying firm discipline to a younger child is to invoke a deep respect in the heart of the child towards his parents, what benefit does such discipline have in preparing a child to live his life eventually as an adult?

11. Do you, as a parent, believe that the application of firm and fair and loving punishment to a child who has defied a parent's authority, will likely result in deepening the love relationship between the parent and the corrected child? Why or why not?

12. When you, as a father, become aware that you have failed your child and needlessly offended or hurt your child by your actions or reactions or speech or decision, do you make it your practice to go to your child and ask forgiveness and reconcile your relationship to your child?

13. Because each of your children have their own unique personalities and strengths and weaknesses and temperaments, have you, as a father, learned properly and sensitively to apply the right kind of discipline to each of your children, avoiding both harshness and permissiveness in the form of discipline you apply towards each of your unique children? According to Ephesians 6: 4, what specific pitfall must every parent avoid?

14. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A man should avoid open conflict with his wife, in the presence of his children. One of the greatest gifts a father can give to his children is to show love for their mother."

15. Share your personal reaction or response to the following statements: "Nothing that you can do for your children will be more harmful than to leave so much to them that they will not have to struggle and work. The surest way to flabby, irresponsible character is too much money."

16. Should a Christian father teach his child, both by precept and by example, to tithe his money (i.e., to give 10% of his income to his local Church)? Why or why not?

17. Should a Christian father allow his teenage son to take a job which interferes with his time that he could be at Church Services and/or Church Youth Meetings?

18. Should Christian fathers teach their sons and daughters that there are "absolute moral laws of God" which God expects His creatures to acknowledge and to obey (such as the Moral Laws of the Ten Commandments)? (Note Ecclesiastes 12: 1; Proverbs 13: 15; Matthew 11: 28-30; Galatians 6: 7) Tell what you think is meant by the statement: *"If you sow to the wind, you shall reap the whirlwind."* (Hosea 8: 7)

19. As a father, how do you intend to teach your children that God's laws were given, not to give people bondage and to make them unhappy, but to show people how to be truly happy and healthy and free form sin's bondage and enslavement? Why is it dangerous to teach children moral laws without teaching them first to accept the Lawgiver into their hearts and lives? (Note Galatians 2: 16 and Galatians 3: 11; Romans 5: 1-2, 8-11)

20. Carefully evaluate the following statements which are a reflection of the way many parents think, regarding the allowance of "free expression" by their children and teens. Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following philosophy of "child rearing", and tell why you agree or disagree:

> "Let your children see the 'real' world. After all, kids have to live in the 'real' world eventually. Let kids make their own decisions. Don't protect them. Let them have their 'fling' if they want to. Let them make their own mistakes and learn from those mistakes! Let them sow their own 'wild oats'. They will eventually 'grow up'. Don't try to protect them, and don't force your own religion 'down their throats'. Remember, this is a 'free country' and therefore kids ought to make up their own mind if they want to go to Church!"

21. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Some fathers may be too protective of their children, but most fathers in our world today - including Christian fathers - are not protective enough." Do you believe, that for most Christian children, either Christian Home Schooling or Christian Day Schooling is the best option for education? Why or why not?

22. List several specific things which you, as a Christian father, can do to help keep your children away from evil influences and evil persons and evil practices.

23. Do you believe it is important for you, as a Christian father, to lead your children to a personal 'saving knowledge' of Jesus Christ when your children are quite young? (Note Deuteronomy 6: 1-6; Mark 10: 14) Do you think there is a serious danger in Christian Homes for children of Christian parents to believe that mere "intellectual" understanding of Christianity as a 'religion' is "sufficient", without personally experiencing genuine conversion to Christ (through personal repentance of sin and volitional surrender to the person of Jesus Christ)?

24. Tell what your personal response is to the following advice which is offered to parents (in the proper training of their children): "Never become 'preachy' or 'judgmental', and don't force your personal convictions upon your children. Make a clear distinction between moral absolutes which are vital for children and youth early to accept in their own lives, and personal convictions (the moral 'gray areas') which are negotiable and secondary and subject to change and personal interpretation."

25. Why is it so important to accept each of your children as they are - with their own unique cluster of talents and aptitudes and spiritual gifting - and never compare either favorably or unfavorably one of your children with another of your children?

26. What important lesson can you, as a father, learn from a study of the relationship which Isaac had with his two sons, Jacob and Esau (in the Old Testament)?

27. How should you treat a child of yours if he fails to personally accept and follow the Christ whom you love so dearly? (Note Luke 15: 11-32)

CHAPTER 16

INDEPENDENCE DAY

CHAPTER 16

SUBJECT: GOD AND CAESAR

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 22: 15-22

TEXT: *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* (Matthew 22: 21)

INTRODUCTION: A real Christian is at one and the same time a good citizen of his country, and a good citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I. RENDER UNTO CAESAR

A. A Christian Respects Law And Order And Obeys Earthly Authorities If At All Possible.

B. A Christian Respectfully Disobeys Unjust And Immoral Laws, And Willingly Takes The Consequences For Such Civil Disobedience.

II. RENDER UNTO GOD

A. A Christian Is A Part Of A Committed And Redemptive Minority, In The Midst Of A Predominately Pagan Majority.

B. Besides Being A Leavening Influence In Society, The Committed Christian, As An American Citizen, Can Practice those Biblical Principles Which Are "The Basis For An Ideal Democratic Nation."

1. Respect for the worth and value of the individual, as an end within himself.
2. Recognition of the proper relationship between the tangible and the intangible, the earthly imperfect system and the heavenly perfect system, the eternal and the temporal.
3. Work toward the creation of "a decent and humane community, a social order based on justice, order, and responsibility".

CONCLUSION: Citizens of two worlds fully committed to responsible citizenship in nation, and to responsible citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Are you rendering to Caesar what belongs to Caesar? Are you rendering to God what belongs to God.

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TEXT: *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* (Matthew 22: 21)

INTRODUCTION:

Notes William Barclay, in his commentary on Matthew, "Now we see the Jewish leaders launching their counter-attack; and they do so by directing at Jesus carefully formulated questions. They ask these questions in public, while the crowds look on and listen, and their aim is to make Jesus discredit Himself by His own words in the presence of the people. Here, then, we have the question of the Pharisees, and it was indeed subtly and cleverly framed. Palestine was an occupied country, and the Jews were subject to the Roman Empire; and the question was: 'Is it, or is it not, lawful to pay tribute to Rome?'

The question which the Pharisees asked would set Jesus in a very real dilemma. "If He said that it was unlawful to pay the tax, they would promptly report Him to the Roman government officials as a seditious person, and His arrest would certainly follow. If He said that it was lawful to pay the tax, He would stand discredited in the eyes of many of the people. Not only did the people resent the tax as everyone resents taxation; they resented it even more for religious reasons. To a Jew God was the only king; their nation was a theocracy; to pay tax to an earthly king was to admit the validity of his kingship and thereby to insult God. Therefore the more fanatical of the Jews insisted that any tax paid to any foreign king was necessarily wrong. Whichever way Jesus answered - so His questioners thought - He laid Himself open to trouble." (Barclay; 300,301)

PROPOSITION:

"A real Christian is at one and the same time a good citizen of his country, and a good citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 303)

I. RENDER UNTO CAESAR

A. A Christian Respects Law And Order And Obeys Earthly Authorities If At All Possible.

Notes the apostle Paul, in his letter to the Christians at Rome: *"Obey*

the government, for God is the one who has put it there. There is no government anywhere that God has not placed in power. So those who refuse to obey the laws of the land are refusing to obey God, and punishment will follow. For the policeman does not frighten people who are doing right; but those doing evil will always fear him. So if you don't want to be afraid, keep the laws and you will get along well. The policeman is sent by God to help you. But if you are doing something wrong, of course you should be afraid, for he will have you punished. He is sent by God for that very purpose. Obey the laws, then for two reasons: first, to keep from being punished, and second, just because you know you should. Pay your taxes too, for these same two reasons. For government workers need to be paid so that they can keep on doing God's work, serving you. Pay everyone whatever he ought to have: pay your taxes and import duties gladly, obey those over you, and give honor and respect to all those to whom it is due. Pay all your debts except the debt of love for others - never finish paying that!.....Be decent and true in everything you do so that all can approve your behavior." (Romans 13: 1-8a, 13, Living Bible)

Popular psychologist James Dobson notes that respect for authority is early learned in childhood, at the hand of the parent who properly blends discipline and love in training the child. A child who does not learn respect for authority will probably defy all authority when he becomes a youth and an adult.

One may respect law and order and justice so much that he manifests that respect by his ability to express anger when social injustice prevails.

Writes A. Powell Davies: "That is one of the truly serious things that has happened to the multitude of so-called ordinary people. They have forgotten how to be indignant. This is not because they are overflowing with human kindness, but because they are morally soft and compliant. When they see evil and injustice, they are pained but not revolted. They mutter and mumble; they never cry out. They commit the sin of not being angry. Yet their anger is the one thing above all others that would make them count. If they cannot lead crusades, or initiate reforms, they can at least create the conditions in which crusades can be effectual and reforms successful. The wrath of the multitude could bring back decency and integrity into public life; it could frighten the corrupt demagogue into silence and blast the rumor-monger into oblivion. It could give honest leaders a chance to win."

B. A Christian Respectfully Disobeys Unjust And Immoral Laws, And Willingly Takes The Consequences For Such Civil Disobedience.

When Abraham Lincoln saw "the slave market at New Orleans for the first time, he is reported to have said, 'Let's get out of this, boys. If I ever get any chance to hit this thing, I'll hit it hard.'"

Abraham Lincoln, after he became the President of the United States, during the time of the terrible Civil War (1861-1865), did indeed 'hit' the institution of slavery hard! In 1857, when the Supreme Court issued its disgraceful Dred Scott decision, confirming the constitutionality of slavery, Abraham Lincoln (when he became President) rejected that ruling and sent the Emancipation Proclamation to Congress as our Constitution's 13th Amendment, where it passed in defiance of the ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States. Yes, Abraham Lincoln, who loved his nation deeply and who sought to respect the laws which governed his country, nevertheless defied an unjust ruling of the United States Supreme Court - and, as a result, millions of slaves were freed from their enslavement! In the instance of the Dred Scott decision in the middle of the 19th century, the executive and legislative branches of the United States government simply refused to acknowledge the decision of the judiciary (Supreme Court of the United States).

Notes Charles Colson, well known Christian leader, an astute lawyer, and founder of a compassionate ministry 'Prison Fellowship': "When considering the relation of Church and state, we must remember first, of course, that in the thirteenth chapter of his letter to the Romans, Paul has written what must remain for Christians the classic admonition of obedience to the governing regime. Most scholars and pastors however, recognize that this admonition needs to be balanced with other biblical passages that suggest individuals will at times face a very clear choice between God and Caesar. The Old Testament prophet Daniel, rather than violate God's law, was granted permission not to partake of the king's food - though, we must acknowledge, he took the minimum resistance necessary, even seeking a pagan official's approval of an alternative action. His friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego went further, risking their lives rather than worship pagan idols. In the New Testament Book of Acts, Peter and John refused to stop preaching the gospel even as they recognized the state's right to punish them. The biblical evidence suggests that where

a state either demands what God prohibits or prohibits what God demands, the believer is to obey God and graciously accept the state's imposed consequences...The twentieth-century theologian Francis Schaeffer claimed in his 'Christian Manifesto' that 'at a certain point there is not only the right, but the duty, to disobey the state'. The Pauline passage in the Romans (chapter 13) recognizes two realms: Caesar's and God's. But Scripture in general, including Paul, recognizes that Caesar rules under God's authority, with delegated power to achieve certain ends; justice, domestic tranquillity, the restraint of evil. Christian thought throughout history has held that any government which perverts these ends is acting in violation of its delegated authority. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran pastor who was martyred for resisting Hitler, gave what may be the clearest expression of the principle: 'If government persistently and arbitrarily violates its assigned task, then the divine mandate lapses.' The real questions facing us (as Christian citizens in the United States) are these: "At what point does a government become sufficiently corrupt that Christians must actively resist it and, has the United States, under its current judicial regime, reached such a point? Euthanasia, if upheld by the Supreme Court, means that the medical murder of the sick and elderly has become our government's national policy. Similarly, President Clinton's veto (in 1997) of the congressional bill banning the murder of babies when partially delivered is tantamount to affirmation of infanticide. It would be hard to imagine that a Christian in good conscience could swear to uphold the Constitution or laws of a nation that practices the horrendous offense against God of taking the defenseless lives of the weakest among us: babies, the elderly and the sick...Only the Church collectively can decide at what point a government becomes sufficiently corrupt that a believer must resist it. But, with fear and trembling, I have begun to believe that, however Christians in America gather to reach their consensus, we are fast approaching this point. Most orthodox Christians are likely to find it impossible to support a political regime under which the judiciary - without any legislative license - sanctions abortion, euthanasia, and homosexual marriage." (The End of Democracy?; pg. 44ff)

Because there has been a gross violation of basic rights (religious rights and other types of rights), as a result of the re-interpretation of the United States Constitution by the Supreme Court Justices, it is now 'high time' for the executive and legislative branches once again to defy the 'usurpation of authority' of the Supreme Court. In his October 1997 Newsletter, Dr. James Dobson (of 'Focus On The

federal courts, who are appointed for life and are therefore unaccountable to anyone, have imposed their will on the electorate. Their grab for power has become known as "The Imperial Court", and it threatens not only religious liberties, but the very democratic system of the very democratic system of government itself."

Christians, of course, do not advocate overthrow of the United States government through violent means, nor are Christians (as conscientious citizens of the United States) interested in spreading discontent and bringing division - unless and until all peaceful means of change have been explored and tried.

If the Supreme Court continues to reinterpret the Constitution of the United States in such a way that basic religious and other rights are taken away from the citizens of our country, and if the legislative and executive branches of the United States fail to curb this unlawful power of the judiciary, then terrifying steps will continue to be taken which could result in an unthinkable condition of 'dictatorship of nine judges' in this one-time free land of America! Notes Russell Hittinger, Research Professor of Law at the University of Tulsa, "Unless the elected representatives of the people can compel the (Supreme) Court to refrain from invalidating political activity merely on the basis of the citizens' moral or religious motivation , the task of reform is blocked. Should that continue, the option remaining to right reason is the one traditionally used against despotic rule: civil disobedience." (The End of Democracy? pg. 29)

Christians are committed, according to Scripture (Romans 13), to keeping the laws of the land and honoring the rulers of the nation. But, as in the case of the disciples in the Early Church who deliberately defied man-make laws which were in direct violation of the laws and will of Almighty God (see Acts 5), so believers today may find themselves in a position (as in the case of Martin Luther King, Jr. during the 1960's Civil Rights Marches) where they *"must obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5: 29) In that case (where civil disobedience is necessary out of respect for God's 'higher laws' which are diametrically opposed to evil man-made laws), Christians who have to disobey man-made laws must also (as in the case of Martin Luther King, Jr.) be willing to take the legal consequences for breaking those evil laws (such as going to jail, etc.). There must be no violence or hatred in the actions and reactions of believers who must 'obey God rather than man', but, instead, there must be love and kindness and 'passive resistance' and 'returning good for evil' towards those (even law officers) who mistreat them.

What our nation desperately needs is an ever increasing and widespread revival which shall 'sweep' millions of our citizens into the Kingdom of God. And we also need thousands of bright and deeply dedicated citizens to become political leaders - including a Biblically-informed and godly President of the United States. It is obvious that we need Judges appointed to the Supreme Court who understand the original intent of our Founding Fathers who formed a Constitution which was solidly grounded in a Biblical understanding of the nature of man and the nature of freedom and who were unashamedly men who welcomed the moral influence of the Biblical teachings. We need more leaders like (in my opinion) the greatest of all our American Presidents - Abraham Lincoln!

The longer Abraham Lincoln was in the Presidency, the more godly he became and the more he prayed and the more he referred to the Bible in his speeches. In Lincoln's preparation for the speech at Gettysburg, he prepared three rough drafts of the address, and at the close of each he wrote, "This nation shall not perish from the earth." But then during the actual delivery, at Gettysburg, as he drew to the end of the speech, he felt the weight of that moment and the lifting of the inspiration of that hour, and he said: "This nation UNDER GOD shall not perish from the earth."

And those words "UNDER GOD" have become a part of our national conscience, and you're finding many people seemingly reaching back for some type of moral integrity. Lincoln called nine times for national repentance. He used 167 Scripture references in his 2nd Inaugural Address, and only one or two in the 1st Inaugural Address.

The nation which remembers its God is the nation that will prosper, but the nation which forgets God is under judgment. It has lost its moral fiber and is in the process of dying. But if we remember God and turn to Him, God may yet in mercy spare us as a people. 'Remembering God' meaning genuine repentance, as evidenced by moral integrity, brotherly love, and social justice.

As a committed citizen of this nation, a true believer is committed to moral integrity, brotherly love, and social justice. And, not only does he seek to live a godly life himself, but such a person (a Christian) is committed to reaching as many as possible with the transforming power of the Gospel. He seeks to respect the authority of God-ordained leaders, and to obey Biblically-based laws, but a true Christian first respects God's absolute and ultimate authority and he

obeys God's higher laws instead of man's laws (if man's laws are in violation of God's laws).

Said Martin Luther King Jr., One has not only legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.

"In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of his community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law."

In speaking of civil disobedience, it is important to remind ourselves that it is foolish and wasteful of time and energy to act against something ignorantly. If one is going to react against a law or court decision, let him first have full knowledge of the law, with it's full implications.

Let me illustrate. Some have accused the Supreme court for removing the Bible out of the public class rooms. Yes, the Court does forbid the study of the Bible devotionally and doctrinally, but the Court actually encouraged the study of the Bible in the school classroom. Said Supreme Court Justice Clark: "Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be affected consistent with the First Amendment." Said Justice Brennan, "The holding of the court today plainly does not foreclose teaching about the Holy Scriptures."

Reaction, accompanied by anger, which is misdirected or wrongly or ignorantly motivated, is destructive. A Christian is responsible to obey the authorities, to pay taxes, to honor fallible leaders, to maintain law and order.

As responsible Christian citizens, we are to render to Caesar the things which belong to Caesar. What are the responsibilities which Christians have to the nation? (1) Pray for those in leadership positions; (2) Work for candidates and issues of our choice; (3) Vote. Most elections are won by default; (4) Support those leaders who are elected; (5) Some need to be willing to run for office ourselves.

These are some suggestions offered by Rev. John Huffman.

Regarding our responsibility as Christian citizens of the United States, Dr. James Dobson (in his October 1997 Newsletter) writes: "We must send men and women to Washington who understand why they are there and what they are supposed to be with the authority they have been given. The only way that will happen is if believers get involved in the electoral process. Unfortunately, almost one quarter of Christians are not registered to vote, and of those who are, many don't go to the polls. Of those that do, many aren't adequately informed. This is a disgrace and a dereliction of our duty to be salt and light in our world. Let's use the influence granted to us by the Constitution and elect representatives, whether Democrat, Republican or Independent, who believe in fundamental liberties and traditional standards of morality."

II. RENDER UNTO GOD

A Christian is a man with duel citizenship - citizenship on earth and citizenship in Heaven. He lives simultaneously in two worlds - the world of time with its political and social structures, and the world of the spirit with its spiritual and unseen relationships. As Christians, we are to be in the world responsibly involved in national citizenship, but not partaking of the worldly spirit. How then can we as Christians render unto God the things which belong to God?

A. A Christian Is A Part Of A Committed And Redemptive Minority, In The Midst Of A Predominately Pagan Majority.

Many have asked the question, "Is America A Christian Nation?" Perry Cotham looks at the popular answers that are given to this question.

Many people say that America is a Christian Nation because of the great popularity of Christianity in our nation. A high percentage of Church members, great Church budgets, many Church services and community Church projects are all cited as evidence that our nation is a Christian nation. But look beyond the surface. "Numbers and popularity alone do not represent strength and true vitality. Leading churchmen, sociologists, and other responsible observers have for some time questioned the depth of the religious commitment of American Church members. Stated one observer: 'Quite simply, between science and psychology, modern man has lost his soul, and his Christian faith.'

The Churches have themselves bought too many of the materialistic values of our success-oriented society. There has been a collapse of faith among churchmen themselves." (Clare Booth Luce)

It is doubtful that one can establish the idea that America is a Christian Nation simply because of the surface popularity of Christianity.

There are many who declare that America is a Christian Nation because of the religious ceremonies and statements and acts of religious allegiance and commitment which show a sympathy for the principles of the Christian religion.

To illustrate this fact, note the following: "Churches are tax-exempt. Our coins are engraved with 'In God we trust.' Oaths in court and at inauguration ceremonies are usually taken with one hand placed on a Bible. The armed services, including their academies, provide chaplains and worship services. Chaplains serve the national Congress and state legislatures. Financial assistance is given veterans training for the ministry. Astronauts have read the Bible in outer space. Invocations are offered before many sporting events."

However, as our skeptical youth are ready to point out, many of our religious acts are merely mechanical, routine, and insincere, and consequently of little spiritual value. "A nation is Christian by virtue not of symbols and public ceremonies alone." (Ibid.; pg. 227)

There are many who declare America a Christian Nation because its laws and public policy are based in at least a general way on the Holy Scriptures. However, let us remind ourselves that even if it could be shown that our laws are 'Christian' laws, the mere existence of Christian laws, does not produce Christian Character in a nation. "The purpose of the law is not to make a man good or righteous, or even decent or respectable; it is to require him when dealing with others to meet minimal standards of justice and to protect him from injustice." (Perry Cotham)

Therefore, the mere existence of laws which are based on a Biblical ethic cannot make a man moral, upright and merciful in his personal character.

Painful as the conclusion may be, there is evidence which reveals that America is not a Christian Nation. "The idea of a Christian America is unfounded, impractical, and by historical standards antiquated."

One leading Christian observer says that we should call America "a pagan nation, inhabited by a minority of committed Christians." (Ibid., pg. 17)

Said one observer, "The time has arrived when American Christians are a minority in a political society that is officially non-Christian and, in reality, may even be anti-Christian".

Among those who do profess Christianity, there are many who have adopted the worldly philosophies and values. "Despite the high preference for the Christian faith, millions of Americans have added to their Christian commitment, secular supplements. Eventually these supplements supersede and even supplant authentic Christian faith. So deceptive is this process that too many are not aware of it. Millions of Americans profess Christianity and operate with secular values."

There is a strange paradox in the American character. Leading Theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr has noted that America is "at once the most religious and the most secular of western nations....We are 'religious' in the sense that religious communities enjoy the devotion and engage the active loyalty of more laymen than in any nation in the western world. We are 'secular' in the sense that we pursue the immediate goals of life, without asking too many ultimate questions about the meaning of life and without being too disrupted by the tragedies and autonomies of life."

Said God to the wayward Israelites, *"This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me."* (Isaiah 29: 13)

It is possible to have a form of religion, but deny the power thereof. (II Timothy 3: 5)

Even American Christians have been affected by the worldly philosophy of hedonism, which "holds that the pursuit of pleasure is life's highest purpose." It is the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake. "Discipline is largely irrelevant." The popular, Satanic motto of hedonism is: "If it feels good, do it!" Even professing Christians have become, at times, pleasure -obsessed instead of God - obsessed. As an example, Christians have been guilty of making Sunday a holiday rather than a holy day. In America we worship 'Sports'!

Our society is very materialistic. Those who are serving the God of materialism, are proclaiming "that man is created to serve material

ends rather than material things to serve man."

Have Christians been bewitched by the materialistic God of our age? Are Christians generally good stewards of material possessions? Do Christians believe that life consists in the abundance of things which a man possesses? Have Christians become lovers of money rather than lovers of God? Do American Christians really believe Jesus' words: *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth"?* Do American Christians recognize the seriousness of Jesus' words when He said, *"You cannot serve two masters: God and money. For you will hate one and love the other, or else the other way around.?"* (Matthew 6: 24, Living Bible) Do Christians, surrounded by money lovers, realize the danger in longing to be rich? *"But people who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil-minded and finally send them to hell itself. For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows."* (I Timothy 6: 9, 10; Living Bible)

We have been commenting on what it means to render to God the things which belong to God. We have noted that a Christian is a part of a committed and redemptive minority, in the midst of a predominately American pagan majority.

But let us quickly note that, even though committed Christians are in the minority, "the character of a nation is not necessarily determined by the majority of its people - a deeply committed minority is quite sufficient." God has always used the select, committed minority to change society. Even one person can have a great and positive affect upon a nation. "Joan of Arc was only one woman, but she saved France. The whole city of Florence was transformed under the preaching of one Roman Catholic priest by the name of Savonarola. Martin Luther was one man, but he nailed some theses on the Church door at Wittenberg and altered the course of European history. One man, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, with nothing but a pen in hand, stood up against the entire Soviet empire." (Decision Magazine; Jan 1976; pg. 12)

"If God spared an entire nation because of the dedication of one woman named Esther, if He spared multitudes because of the prayers of one man named Moses, if God would have spared Sodom for ten righteous Sodomites, then will not the Almighty spare this great nation because of the leavening influence of some truly converted people?"

Laws in a nation can only be the "creature of a society's prevailing morality." Therefore, "the leavening quality of Christian character in all human relationships and institutions" is that which will raise the general moral level of consciousness in a nation. The quality and content of laws simply reflect the prevailing mood of morality in national life as a whole, the latter being influenced by the degree of commitment found in the Christian minority.

B. Besides Being A Leavening Influence In Society, The Committed Christian, As An American Citizen, Can Practice those Biblical Principles Which Are "The Basis For An Ideal Democratic Nation."

1. Respect for the worth and value of the individual, as an end within himself. The committed Christian will treat each fellow citizen as an equal. A responsible society is one in which man is never made a mere means for economic or political ends. The 'thingification' of a human being has no place among sincere Christians. Man is not a cog in a machine. A man's worth is not judged by his performance, for a man has inherent worth by creation because of Christ's redemption. Notes Robert George, an associate professor of politics at Princeton University, "In 'Evangelism Vitae', John Paul II teaches that 'laws which authorize and promote abortion and euthanasia are radically opposed not only to the good of the individual but also to the common good; as such they are completely lacking in juridical validity.... A civil law authorizing abortion or euthanasia ceases by that very fact to be a true, morally binding law...Abortion and euthanasia are crimes which no human law can claim to legitimize. There is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws; instead there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection...In the case of intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is...never licit to obey it, or to take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or vote for it...We are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.' The Pope emphasizes again and again that this is call to action. All of us must give witness to the sanctity of human life, not merely by personally refraining from abortion and euthanasia, but by working in various spheres - including the political sphere - to overcome these 'crimes against life' and create a 'culture of life'." (The End

of Democracy?; pg. 57, 58)

2. Recognition of the proper relationship between the tangible and the intangible, the earthly imperfect system and the heavenly perfect system, the eternal and the temporal. The responsible Christian citizen is a person who lives for two worlds. A committed Christian is not a person who professes Christianity with his lips, and at the same time operates with secular values.

3. Work toward the creation of "a decent and humane community, a social order based on justice, order, and responsibility". A truly committed Christian will work for just laws, and will help to maintain the orderly process of law, and will seek to live responsibly. Said former President Kennedy: "Don't ask what your nation can do for you, but ask what you can do for your nation."

CONCLUSION: Citizens of two worlds fully committed to responsible citizenship in nation, and to responsible citizenship in a nation, and to responsible citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Are you rendering to Caesar what belongs to Caesar? Are you rendering to God what belongs to God.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you personally believe that it is possible for you to "live for two worlds" - the worlds of time and eternity - that you can at one and the same time be a good citizen of your county and a good citizen of the Kingdom of God?

2. According to Romans 13: 1-8, what are some of the responsibilities of a "good Christian citizen"?

3. How do you believe respect for authority is best taught in the life of a younger child, within the context of the child's home?

4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A child who does not learn respect for authority will probably defy all authority when he becomes a youth or an adult."

5. Why is it so important for a Christian to express his anger when social injustice prevails in the society in which he lives, and how can that anger be most constructively manifested?

6. During the terrible Civil War (1861-1865), how did President Abraham Lincoln express defiance against an unjust interpretation of the States Constitution by the Supreme Court Justices?

7. What responsibility do the executive and legislative branches of the United States government have, when the judiciary branch of the government (Supreme Court Justices) usurp their authority by reinterpreting the U.S. Constitution (resulting in robbing the United States citizenry of their basic religious rights)? When the judiciary and legislative branches of government fail to confront the judiciary, when there has been an obvious abuse of power by the judiciary, what should be the widespread response of millions of concerned Christians who cherish basic human (and religious) rights which are being violated?

8. In a so-called 'free and democratic society' (as America has long professed to be), when do you think concerned Christians should begin to resort to "Civil Disobedience' when there is a violation of basic "human rights" (basic freedoms) by the Supreme Court of the United States)?

9. In resorting to "Civil Disobedience", how does the example of Martin Luther King Jr. serve as a wholesome 'guide' to "proper behavior" during difficult encounters with those who defend man-made laws which are diametrically opposed to the 'higher laws' of God?

10. If the time ever came in the life of our nation, when it would be against the laws of the United States government for a person (a Christian) to intentionally and persuasively give a verbal witness for Jesus Christ (with the intention of strongly influencing a non-Christian to become a true Christian believer), would you decide to conform to the laws of your county (and remain quiet about your faith), or would you (out of respect for the commands of Jesus Christ (decide to defy the laws of the land (and suffer the consequences for breaking man-made laws)? (Note Acts 5)

11. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statements: "The nation which remembers its God is the nation that will prosper, but the nation which forgets God is under judgment. It has lost its moral fiber and is in the process of dying."

12. From your own reading and learning and observation, do you believe there is evidence that our nation (the United States of America) is presently on the "threshold" of a widespread awakening and national revival of genuine repentance, as evidenced by a great spiritual hunger and a widespread desire for moral integrity, brotherly love and social justice?

13. Give your personal response or reaction to the following quotations by Martin Luther King, Jr." "One has not only legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to abuse the conscience of his community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law."

14. As a responsible Christian citizen of your nation (which has passed both just and unjust laws), what can you do to fulfill your Biblical duty (Christ-given command) to "render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar"?

15. Do you see any evidence that even many Churches in America today have themselves bought too many of the materialistic values of our success-oriented society and that, therefore, there is a deficiency in "rendering unto God all that belongs unto God"?

16. As important as it is for our nations' laws to be based on a Biblical ethic, why can't such laws make a citizen of the United States a moral and upright and merciful person?

17. Without resorting to harsh judgmentalism, how can you rightly evaluate and determine if an American who professes Christianity with his lips, is really operating his life with 'secular' values? How would you define the following 'secular' values: (1) Materialism, (2) Hedonism, (3) Scientism, (4) Sensualism?

18. Why is the truth of Isaiah 29: 13 particularly relevant for modern-day Americans?

19. What steps will you take in your own personal life, in order for you to avoid simply keeping up the outward appearance of religion but rejecting the inner power of true religion? (Note II Timothy 3: 5)

20. What can you do to assure yourself that material things in your life are truly serving others and glorifying God, rather than material things becoming your 'God' and making you their servant? (Note I Timothy 6: 6-20)

21. Is it possible for the character of a nation to be shaped and even determined by the presence of a deeply committed Christian minority who live in the midst of a predominate pagan majority? Give examples from the Biblical and Church History, when God spared an entire group of people or even a whole nation because of the faithfulness of a deeply committed God-fearing person or a smaller group of godly people.

22. Give your interpretation and application (examples) of the following statement: "Laws in a nation can only be the 'creature of a society's prevailing morality'."

23. If it is true that the quality and the content of laws simply reflect the prevailing mood of morality in national life as a whole, then what can you as an individual Christian do to help raise the general moral level of consciousness in your nation?

24. As one who believes he is committed to the democratic way of life in America, are you strongly committed to those Biblical principles which are the basis for an ideal democratic nation.

    (a) Respect for the worth and value of the individual (including the life of the unborn child and the life of the handicapped and the life of the aged and infirm), as our end within himself, recognizing the "image of God" in each person?

    (b) Work toward the creation of a decent and humane community, a social order based on justice, order, and responsibility?

CHAPTER 17

EVANGELISM

CHAPTER 17

SUBJECT: EVANGELIZING THE LOST!

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28: 16-20.

TEXT: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* (Matthew 28: 19)

INTRODUCTION: In all the clang and clamor of the world's strife and chaos, the Christian can still hear the voice of Jesus echoing through the ages, saying, *"Go, teach, baptize, and make disciples in all nations!"* If every person is to be reached with the Gospel, every Christian must become an evangelist to herald forth the message of salvation.

I. PREPARATION FOR GOING

A. Baptism of Spirit
B. Dedication of Will

II. PURPOSE OF GOING

A. Example of Going
B. Content of Message

CONCLUSION: What is the purpose of the Great Commission? It is to go and teach all nations. The object of all teaching is to lead all men to repentance. The sign that one has repented is baptism.

"Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God."

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TEXT: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* (Matthew 28: 19)

INTRODUCTION:

In all the clang and clamor of the world's strife and chaos, the Christian can still hear the voice of Jesus echoing through the ages, saying, *"Go, teach, baptize, and make disciples in all nations!"* Many earnest Christians are endeavoring to carry out the Great Commission. Christianity has encircled the globe and many backward tribes now are even receiving the Gospel in their own tongue. Yet, the world's population is expanding at geometric proportions! If every person is to be reached with the Gospel, every Christian must become an evangelist to herald forth the message of salvation.

PROPOSITION:

As an attempt better to understand the Great Commission, let us note that preparation is necessary before going forth, and let us also note what really is the purpose of going forth.

I. PREPARATION FOR GOING.

A. Baptism of Spirit

Before Christ's ascension, he gave specific instructions to His disciples. One might naturally think that those instructions urged the disciples immediately to begin evangelizing the world. Christ, however, did not tell them immediately to go to evangelize the world. Instead, he told them to wait, to pray, and to prepare for the outpouring of God's Spirit. *"On one occasion, while he was eating a meal with them, he emphasized that they were not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise."* (Acts 1: 4, Phillips)

Before the disciple goes, he must wait. *"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."* (Isaiah 40:31) Says Barclay, "There are times when the Christian may seem to be wasting time, when he must wait in a wise passivity. Action without preparation must of necessity fail. There is a time to wait on God and a time to work for God." (Barclay's Luke; pg. 312)

Before a disciple goes, he must pray in the unity of the Spirit with other Christians. (The disciples, who were gathered together in the so-called Upper Room received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, it is recorded that *"those all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."* (Acts 1: 14)

What explains the dynamic ministry of great soul-winners? Such power cannot be explained apart from the Spirit's baptism. This was the case with D. L. Moody. Let Moody tell of his own experience. "One day in the city of New York - oh, what a day! I cannot describe it. I seldom refer to it. It is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke of for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. When I began preaching again my sermons were not different. I did not present any new truths, yet hundreds were converted. I would not go back to where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world." (Prayer and Life's Highest, pg. 60)

Notes William Barclay on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts: "The Holy Spirit was the source of all guidance...All the leaders of the Church were men of the Spirit...The Spirit was the source of day to day courage and power...The Christian courage to meet the dangerous situation; the Christian power to cope with life more than adequately; the Christian eloquence when eloquence was needed; the Christian joy which was independent of circumstances are all alike ascribed to the work of the Spirit. In the first thirteen chapters of Acts there are more than forty references to the Holy Spirit. The early Church was a Spirit-filled Church and precisely therein lay its power." (Barclay's Acts, pg. 12, 13)

B. Dedication of Will

Before one can make disciples, he himself must live a disciplined life. Just as the athlete dedicates his energies to win a race, and just as a musician is single-minded in mastering a piece, so the Christian must daily dedicate his will to please God and to win souls. Paul the Apostle lived a dedicated life. He gloried in his sufferings for Christ. Paul's list of suffering was long: *"I have worked harder than any of them. I have served more prison sentences! I have been beaten times without numbers. I have faced death again and again. I have been beaten the regulation thirty-nine stripes by the Jews five times. I have been beaten with rods three times. I have been stoned once. I have been shipwrecked three times. I have been twenty-four hours in the open sea. In my travels I have been in constant danger from rivers and floods, from bandits, from my own countrymen, and from pagans. I have faced danger in city streets, danger in the desert, danger on the high seas, danger among false Christians. I have known exhaustion, pain, long vigils, hunger and thirst, doing without meals, cold and lack of clothing."* (II Corinthians 11: 23-27, Phillips)

Paul Rees tells of the great dedication of Henry Martyn to God's will for his life.

"With his brilliant student career at Cambridge behind him, there came the call of his Lord to the mission field. Though several attractive, lucrative vocations were open to him, he said: 'Here I am, Lord: send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in earth; send me even to death itself if it but be in Thy service and in Thy kingdom.' When he fell deeply in love with a girl named Lydia, he told her of his call from God to live and minister in India. Was this agreeable to her? He pleaded that it might be. It was not. If he would stay in England, he could have her as his bride. If he went to India, it would be without her. Hence the question, like a drum-beat in his brain: "India or Lydia? Lydia or India? ' But Martyn was a mastered man - mastered by love and love's Master. Therefore the mastery was his in a crisis of poignant choice. Pain drenched yet triumphant was his witness: 'My dear Lydia and my duty call me different ways. Yet God hath not forsaken me...I am born for God only. Christ is nearer to me than father or mother or sister.'" (Prayer and Life's Highest, pg. 24, 25)

While the disciples were enjoying the Lord's presence in the Upper Room of Jerusalem, Christ said, *"That the world may know...Arise, let us go hence."* George Delamarter imagines Peter thinking or saying something like this: "No, Master, let's stay here. Your words have blessed our souls tonight. Never has our fellowship been more precious. Speak on, tell us more; our souls are being fed. Besides, the hour is late and the streets of Jerusalem are dangerous tonight. Master, the Jews even seek thy life. Master stay here." (GO, pg. 31) Christ has called us to leave our comfortable abodes and our beautiful churches, and go out into the highways and byways of life, to lift men out of the abyss of sin, and to share God's love with them.

"I said, "Let me walk in the field."
He said, "No, walk in the town."
I said, "There are no flowers there."
He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black,
There is nothing but noise and sin."
And He wept as He sent me back.
"There is more," He said; "there is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick
And fogs are veiling the sun."
He answered, "Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone."

I said, "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say."
He answered, "Choose tonight
If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in Heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide."

I cast one look at the fields,
Then set my face to the town:
He said: "My child, do you yield?
Will you leave the flowers for the crown?"

Then into His hand went mine:
And into my heart came He;
And I walk in a light divine,
The path I had feared to see."
(By George MacDonald, Taken from Christ and Fine Arts, pg. 714)

II. PURPOSE OF GOING

A. Example of Going

Jesus said, *"You are to go and make disciples of all the nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you." Because dedicated, Spirit-filled men down through the ages have taken this commandment seriously, nations have become partially or wholly evangelized.*

One classic example of a man who took Christ's commandment seriously, was David Livingstone. Livingstone planned and prepared and finally penetrated the dark continent of Africa in the 19th century to present the light of the Gospel to the heathen natives. Says Latourette about the primitive condition of the Africa to which Livingstone was called to minister: "In the nineteenth century Africa south of the Sahara contained the largest population of 'primitive' cultures to be found anywhere on the planet. Except in a few places, largely on or near its northern borders, it had no continuing states or kingdoms. For the most part its organization was tribal. The vast majority were not only illiterate but also spoke languages which had never been given a written form. Religion was chiefly animism in one or another of its protean manifestations." (A History of Christianity, pg. 1303)

David Livingstone, a Scot of lowly birth who was raised by humble but godly parents, went to work in a cotton mill at the age of ten, but, because of his love for learning, he went to night school and read such books as he could get hold of. After a deep religious experience, he decided to become a medical, missionary and received training in medicine and theology. Livingstone was challenged by a missionary to Africa, Robert Moffat, "who said that from where he lived on any clear morning the

smoke of a thousand villages could be seen where the name of Christ had never been heard." (Ibid., pg. 1808) Livingstone went to Africa to evangelize in hundreds of native villages, some of which had never before been seen by a European. This great frontier missionary felt the heartbeat of Christ's love, and felt compelled to go and to tell of God's love.

B. Content of Message

Jesus command His disciples to go forth and to teach all nations. Throughout the Book of Acts we see the disciples beginning to carry out this commission. To understand the content of the disciples' teaching and preaching, one must go to the disciples' sermons as they are found in the Book of Acts. In summary form, we find the essence of preaching in the early Church. C. H. Dodd, a modern-day New Testament scholar, has pointed out the five main ideas that were communicated in the preaching of the early Church. Modern-day preaching, which is patterned after the New Testament preaching, has these same main ideas in it. William Barclay well summarizes these ideas.

1. "The age of fulfillment has dawned; the Messianic age begun. This is God's last word. A new order is being inaugurated, and the elect are summoned to join the new community." (Barclay's Peter; pg. 167) For centuries, the Jewish people had awaited for the Messiah's coming, and finally he came. Christ, the Anointed One of God, came to redeem his people. *"But when the proper time came God sent his son, born of a human mother and born under the jurisdiction of the Law, that he might redeem those who were under the authority of the Law and lead us into becoming, by adoption, true sons of God."* (Galatians 4: 4, 5) Christ, the Messiah, came not only to redeem those who were under the Law - the Jews - but He came also to redeem those who were alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel - the Gentiles. Christ came to show that the concept of the Messiah which the Jews had, was false. Christ came to reign, but not to reign over Israel only; instead He came to reign over all of humanity's enemy, which is Satan. *"He (Christ) also became a human being, so that by going through death as a man he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might also set free those who lived their whole lives a prey to the fear of death."* (Hebrews 2: 14, 15, Phillips) The new order which Christ came to establish was the order of grace and love, to destroy the order of law and hate, which too oftentimes was shown in the Jews' attitude in the Old Testament times. Christ came to make provision whereby all can belong to his kingdom and community of love. The Messianic prophesies were perfectly fulfilled in Christ.

2. "This new age has come through the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, all of which are in direct fulfillment of the prophesies of the

Old Testament, and are, therefore, the result of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." (Barclay's Peter, pg. 167)

The new age which God inaugurated is the age of grace which is expressed through God's universal invitation to salvation. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Romans 10: 13) *"Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."* (I Timothy 2: 4) *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men."* (Titus 2: 11) *"The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."* (2 Peter 3: 9, R.S.V.)

Christ surrendered the glories of heaven to live a selfless life for mankind, through which He might inaugurate the new age of grace. Christ laid down his own life on his own accord, in order that he might become the perfect sacrifice for sin. Christ broke the bars of death through his resurrection, in order to show his power over sin and Satan, and to demonstrate his power to make mankind victorious over sin. Jesus is the focal point of 'salvation history', through which all men can find life.

3. "By virtue of the resurrection Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God, and is the Messianic head of the new Israel." (Barclay's Peter, pg. 167) Who are members of the new Israel? All of those who are spiritual sons of Abraham, that is, all who truly believe in the object of Abraham's faith - God, who expressed Himself in the latter times in Christ. Those who believe in, adhere to, and rely upon Christ are members of the one Israel - the family of God. God's family is composed of humanity - male and female - and of all ages - past centuries and present century - and of all classes - despised and honored - who truly have expressed faith in the Christ of the Ages who has been exalted to the right hand of God.

4. "Those Messianic events will shortly reach their consummation in the return of Christ in glory, and the judgment of the living and the dead." (Barclay's Peter, 167) Christ came to earth the first time as the Lamb of God, meek, and lowly and submissive. When Christ returns to earth the second time, he will come as the Lion of Judah, creating terror in all who have rejected him. *"For he (God) has fixed a day on which he will judge the whole world in justice by the standard of a man whom he has appointed."* (Acts 17: 31) The one by whom all men will be judged is Christ. Before Him all persons shall bow and to Him all persons shall confess that He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Before him all men will be judged according to the works done in the body. In this present age, right might go unrewarded, and wrong

might go unpunished, but in the final age when God's plan for this earth will be consummated, God will judge righteously. The wicked will be punished and the righteous will be rewarded.

5. "These facts are made the grounds for an appeal for repentance, and offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life." (Barclay's Peter, pg. 168) Because God through Christ has inaugurated a new age of grace and has established his community of love which encompasses all mankind, and because Christ has offered His gift of salvation and will judge each man according to whether he accepts or rejects that gift, in light of all the foregoing facts, it behooves man to repent of his sins. One who turns his back on his sins and receives Christ, is offered forgiveness and is promised the Holy Spirit and eternal life.

Here then, in summary, is the essence of all true preaching. (1) God's purpose in history is to establish a new order - an order of grace to replace the order of law; (2) God has inaugurated that new order through Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection has made it possible for all men to become members of the community and family of God; (3) Because Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God, He is the Christ of the Ages, forever contemporary and a very present help in time of need. Christ is not a historical remembrance but He is the present reality and personal Comforter; (4) Christ is not only the Savior of all mankind, but He is also the Judge of all humanity, before whom all must give an account of their lives; (5) Because one's response to Christ determines personal destiny, it is imperative that one repent of his sins, and accept Christ's standards for his life. To do so results in a rich reward - present forgiveness and new life and future hope and eternal life. God demands that all men repent - turn from their wicked ways and turn to God. Baptism is an outward sign to the world that the baptized one has inwardly repented of his sins.

CONCLUSION:

What is the purpose of the Great Commission? It is to go and to teach all nations. The object of all teaching is to lead all men to repentance. The sign that one has repented is baptism. The disciple of Christ must first teach and lead men to repentance and then baptize. That is the purpose of going - teaching and baptizing.

One dare not go and attempt to represent Christ in the world until he is fully prepared. What is essential for preparation? It is waiting in earnest prayer for the baptism of God's Spirit which imparts power. One is not prepared to make disciples until he himself is a dedicated disciple. Dedication means daily surrender of one's will to God's perfect will.

"Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,

The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God."

QUESTIONS

1. Give your personal reaction or response to the following statement: "If every person is to be reached with the Gospel, every Christian must become an evangelist to herald forth the message of salvation." (Note II Timothy 4: 5)

2. Instead of Christ commanding His disciples immediately to go out into the world of sinful men to preach the Gospel and to evangelize the world, what did Christ tell His disciples to do, immediately after He ascended to heaven? (Note Acts 1: 4)

3. Give an example from your own experience or from your observation of another, which illustrates the truth of the following statements: *"There are times when the Christian may seem to be wasting time, when he must wait in a wise passivity. Action without preparation must of necessity fail. There is a time to wait on God and a time to work for God. Before a disciple goes, he must pray in the unity of the Spirit with other disciples* (Acts 1: 14)."

4. Put a check by those statements which reflect and briefly describe the experience and work of the Holy Spirit in your own personal life:

_____a. The Holy Spirit is the source of all guidance.

_____b. The Holy Spirit is the source of all day to day courage and power.

_____c. The Holy Spirit gives wisdom to cope with the trials and troubles of life.

_____d. The Holy Spirit gives the believer the ability to communicate clearly and boldly the simple message of Christ's forgiveness.

_____e. The Holy Spirit gives abounding joy to the believer, independent of the changing circumstances of life.

_____f. The Holy Spirit cleanses the inner motives of the heart to enable the believer to be truly sincere in his actions and his relationships.

_____g. The Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the believer's heart, to enable him to love God supremely and to love his neighbor as himself.

5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: *"Before one can make disciples, he himself must live a disciplined life."* (Read II Corinthians 11: 23-27)

6. Tell to what degree you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christ has called us to leave our comfortable abodes and our beautiful churches, and to go out into the highways and byways of life, to lift men out of the abyss of sin, and to share God's love with them."

7. According to Matthew 28: 19-20, what is actually the "Great Commission"? From your personal experience and observations of believers whom you have known throughout your life, share an illustration of a person whom you believe has taken the "Great Commission" of Jesus most seriously, as demonstrated by his actions in "reaching out" in witness to unbelievers.

8. In light of the fact that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophesies regarding the coming of God's Messiah to earth (Galatians 4: 4-5), how did Jesus' role as God's Messiah differ considerably from the role of the Messiah as the majority of Jews popularly anticipated?

9. According to Hebrews 2: 14-15, what did Jesus, through His death on the cross, truly accomplish?

10. Read the following portions of Scripture, and then tell what is the basic and common message in all of these Scriptures:

    (a) Romans 10: 13
    (b) Romans 5: 18
    (c) I Timothy 2: 4
    (d) Titus 2: 11
    (e) II Peter 3: 9

11. Who are members of the "New Israel"?

12. In contrast to the way Christ came to earth the first time as a lowly baby (as a meek 'Lamb'), how will Christ come to earth the second time? When Christ comes to earth the Second time, what will He do? (Note Acts 17: 31)

13. In all true "Gospel Preaching", what is the appropriate appeal that should be made to all listeners? In other words, in "light" of all the truths regarding God's forgiving grace and God's initiating love, what are all listeners urged to do?

14. Using the sermons, as they are recorded in the Book of Acts, summarize the five main ingredients in the Gospel message which clearly outlines God's plan of salvation for lost mankind.

15. Do you personally identify with the following prayer, written by a great Christian (Amy Carmichael)?

"Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God."

CHAPTER 18

VETERAN'S DAY

CHAPTER 18

SUBJECT: THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST

SCRIPTURE: I Timothy 1: 18-19; II Timothy 2: 3-4

TEXT: "I have fought a good fight...I have kept the faith." (II Timothy 4: 7)

INTRODUCTION: Because the Christian campaign is as long as life itself, it is necessary for the soldier of Christ to guard against certain perils, and to manifest certain Christlike traits.

I. QUALITIES OF THE SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST

A. Guard Against Ease, Complacency, and Over-Confidence.
B. Guard Against Under-Estimating The Strength Of The Enemy.
C. Guard Against Resting On The Laurels Of Past Victories.

II. EXAMPLES OF LOYAL SOLDIERS FOR JESUS CHRIST

A. Timothy

1. Interested In Well-Being of Others.
2. Tested and Proven Worker

B. Epaphroditus

1. The Activities of Epaphroditus
2. The Traits of Epaphroditus

CONCLUSION:

Timothy is the patron saint of all those who are quite content with the second place, so long as they can serve. Epaphroditus was a man of faithful and humble service, as seen in the terms used to describe his relationship to Paul: brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, messenger, servant. He was willing, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, to gamble his life to serve Paul and to serve Christ.

CHAPTER 18

SUBJECT: THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST

SCRIPTURE: I Timothy 1: 18-19; II Timothy 2: 3-4

TEXT: "I have fought a good fight...I have kept the faith." (II Timothy 4: 7)

INTRODUCTION:

Notes the famous scholar, William Barclay, about the length of the campaign, "It is not to a battle that we are summoned; it is to a campaign. Life is one long campaign; life is a service from which there is no release. Life is not a short, sharp struggle after which a man can lay aside his arms and rest in peace; to the end of the day life is an unceasing campaign...It is there that the danger of life enters in. It is necessary to be for ever on guard and on the watch...There are no periods of relaxation in the Christian life...We must remember that we are summoned to a campaign which goes on as long as life goes on." (Barclay's commentary on Timothy; pg. 59)

PROPOSITION:

Because the Christian campaign is as long as life itself, it is necessary for the soldier of Christ to guard against certain perils, and to manifest certain Christlike traits.

I. QUALITIES OF THE SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST

A. Guard Against Ease, Complacency, and Over-Confidence.

It has been correctly said, "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom." Paul's exhortation must be heeded by every earnest Christian. *"Let him who thinks that he stands secure take care lest he fall."* (I Corinthians 10: 12).

He who feels that he is secure enough is he who will fall, sure enough. Barclay gives an illustration from history that demonstrates this point. The Acropolis of Sardis "was built on a jutting spur of rock that was held to be impregnable. When Cyrus was besieging it he offered a special reward to any who could find a way in. A certain soldier, Hyeroeades by name, was watching one day and saw a soldier in the Sardian garrison drop his helmet accidentally over the battlements. He saw him climb down after it and marked his path. That night he led a band up the cliffs by that very path and when they reached the top they found it quite unguarded; so that they entered in and captured the citadel, which was too safe." (Barclay's Corinthians; pg. 99,

100)

The Christian 'soldier' must ever be watchful, vigilant, and careful in order that he might always guide his footsteps aright. The Christian 'soldier'must give no place to the devil, but must always build up a strong defense against the enemy of his soul through earnest prayer and careful alertness.

The easy life oftentimes becomes the complacent life which leads to degeneracy and disaster. Do you remember what happened to the armies of Hannibal of Carthage? Hannibal had been so successful as a general in routing the Roman legions. Hannibal's campaign against the Romans had to be temporarily suspended, and therefore he wintered his troops in Capua which he had captured. "Capua was a city of luxury. And one winter in Capua did what the Roman legions had not succeeded in doing. One winter there with its luxury so sapped the morale of the Carthaginian troops that when the spring came and the campaign was resumed they were unable to stand before the Romans. Ease had ruined them when a struggle had only toughened them." (Barclay's commentary on Hebrews; pg. 143)

When troops in an army suddenly face the danger and threat of the oncoming enemy, they become more alert and unified to fight against the common enemy. It is at such times of emergency that courage is especially shown.

Oftentimes the person who is going through trouble and adversity, draws much closer to God than the person who is having it easy in life. Said Lincoln, "I have often been driven to my knees in prayer because I had nowhere else to go."

B. Guard Against Under-Estimating The Strength Of The Enemy.

To develop a false sense of security oftentimes leads to devastation and destruction. America learned her lesson the hard way at Pearl Harbor, "One outstanding thing that we remember is how a sense of overconfidence and false security led to a lack of alertness and to tragic disaster. Even when Sergeant Joseph I. Lockard, in charge of an aircraft detector unit, reported to his superior officer readings which showed that a large number of unidentified planes were approaching, approximately 132 miles away, his superior ignored his report. A precious hour which elapsed before the planes struck was wasted. Men thought that 'it couldn't happen', but it did." (Three types of Eternal Security, by B. I. Olmstead; pg. 29)

One of the greatest needs in the Christian 'soldier' life is consistency. The growth of many is in spasms, irregular and uncertain. The greatest test of the genuineness and thoroughness of one's Christianity is the test of time. A true

Christian is enabled to remain faithful through all the changes and chances of life. The Christian must remain alert and not let himself be lulled to sleep by over-confidence and false security. Said one wise person, "If things are going well, ask the Lord to sanctify the joy. If the sky is overcast, seek refuge in the Lord."

C. Guard Against Resting On The Laurels Of Past Victories.

One of the strong temptations which the Christian 'soldier' faces is the temptation to rest on the laurels of one's past achievements.

In the book of Judges, one can note a uniform cycle which the Israelites went through as a result of their complacency which they developed after a victory over their oppressors. When the Israelites were harshly oppressed, they would pray and God would send them a strong deliverer in the form of a Judge, and they would be set free from their oppression. After enjoying freedom and prosperity for a time, the Israelites would develop complacency which led again to apostasy and finally oppression by another enemy once again. In their oppression they would again pray and be delivered, only to fall back again into apostasy which led to further oppression. This cycle was repeated several times during the time of the Judges.

It is important to guard against "resting at east in Zion." When life brings you to the heights, be careful that you do not fall to the depths. After the high moment of Jesus' baptism, Jesus was led away into the wilderness, where he underwent severe temptation. One time after John Bunyan had preached a great sermon, he was complimented by one who said, "That was a great sermon, Mr. Bunyan." Said Bunyan, not in scorn but in all honesty, to the one who complimented him, "Thank you, but the devil already told me that as soon as I finished my sermon." It is after we have experienced a high moment of great victory that we must guard against falling into sin. Because the Christian campaign is as long as life itself, we must ever be on our guard.

Paul says, "*Fight the good fight of faith.*" The Christian is involved in a life-long spiritual campaign against the forces of evil. The 'soldier' for Christ must guard against complacency, false security, and contentment in past victories. He must not seek escape from the battle, but rather courageously fight the 'good fight of faith' in the front lines for God and with God.

Paul was not an 'armchair theologian', that is, one who confined himself to a room to study theories and theological abstractions and speculations. Paul's theology was a theology of action. "The proof of the pudding is in the tasting." The proof of the theology of Paul was in its workability and applicability in daily living. Paul did not stop with mere words, ideas, and

programs, but Paul's main concern was with people. His ministry was a person-centered, not a philosophy-centered, ministry. Paul's letters reveal this emphasis. Paul gives much room in his letters to people - their strengths, weaknesses, needs, contributions, friendship.

The last third part of the second chapter of Philippians, is given to Paul's description of two of his friends - Timothy and Epaphroditus. These men were both "soldiers of Christ." They were willing to endure hardship as "good soldiers of Jesus Christ." They exemplified the very qualities which we have just described in the first part of this message. As we today remember the brave soldiers of our nation who have served our country to maintain our several freedoms, let us seek to be 'soldiers' for Jesus Christ, with loyalty as we see exemplified in the lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Soldiers for Christ are both confident and humble. The proof of humility is service. It is easy to talk about humility, but true humility will express itself in action - the action of service. Let us see how humility expressed itself in action in the lives of Paul's two friends, as described in Philippians 2: 19-30.

II. EXAMPLES OF LOYAL SOLDIERS FOR JESUS CHRIST (Read Philippians 2: 19-30)

A. Timothy

Perhaps there was no one closer to Paul than Timothy. We know few details about Timothy, but all we do know is highly complimentary. Timothy was probably brought up, trained, and educated in Greek ways. He had a very godly mother and grandmother who early taught him the Scriptures. Upon meeting Timothy on his second missionary journey, Paul immediately saw in Timothy qualities and abilities that could wonderfully be used in service to Jesus Christ. From that time on, they were very close together and spent much time together, traveling, working, preaching, and writing. Timothy was even with Paul in prison in Rome.

Notice the descriptions which Paul gives of Timothy.

1. Interested In Well-Being of Others.

"I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 2: 20-21) Timothy was not self-absorbed in his own interests but he took a genuine interest in the needs, troubles, and successes of other people. He was not self-centered but others-

centered. People were important to him; in fact, people were the most important thing of all to Timothy. Because Timothy was saturated with the Scriptures, it is no wonder that Timothy valued human personality and needs so highly. The Scripture says that individuals are of infinite importance to God. Man carries in his being part of God - the very image of God, therefore he who would value the highest thing in life must value the human being. Man has intrinsic value in virtue of his special creation!

Paul earlier had written these words: *"You must look to each other's interest and not merely to your own."* In Timothy, that statement took on flesh and blood. Paul earlier reminded us that Jesus Himself put aside His own interests and left the glory of heaven to seek and to save the lost of earth.

Paul was saddened that so many others had become pre-occupied in their own selfish pursuits and had forgotten the interests of their fellowmen. Said one man, "A pagan is one whose activities do not go beyond his own selfish interest." Someone defined a Christian as a person who truly cares for others.

2. Tested and Proven Worker

"But you know how Timothy has proved his worth, working with me for the gospel like a son with his father." (Philippians 2: 22, Phillips)

Timothy's character remained solid amidst the test of time and the trials of circumstances. He remained steadfast during persecution and loss. None was more faithful to Paul during hardship than Timothy. Timothy learned to preach the Word in season and out of season - when it was popular to preach and when it was not popular to preach. It may have been hard for Timothy personally to preach at times. It appears that Timothy may have been a naturally timid person, for Paul wrote these words to Timothy: *"Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control."* (II timothy 1: 6, 7, RSV) Timothy's worth was established by the strength of character that was his as a result of the hardships which he endured for the Gospel.

The worth of Timothy's character and the proof of his humility are seen in Paul's further description of Timothy: *"working with me for the gospel like a son with his father."* (v. 22b) What is the ideal relationship between father and son? Warm obedient companionship.

When Paul could not go to one of the churches himself, he sent Timothy as his personal representative. Paul thought of and trusted Timothy as he would if he were his own son. "The great use of Timothy was that Timothy was a man who could be sent anywhere, and who was always willing to go. In the hands of Timothy a message was as safe as if Paul had delivered it himself." (Barclay's Philippians, pg. 59, 60) He was faithful not to distort the message, even though his personality was different than Paul's personality.

B. Epaphroditus

In the last portion of Chapter 2 in the Book of Philippians, Paul speaks in some detail of Epahroditus, the special messenger who was sent to Paul at Rome from the Philippian Church. While at Rome serving Paul during Paul's imprisonment, Epaphroditus became very ill, perhaps with the dreaded Roman fever. He almost died from his illness, but God spared him. Now, out of necessity, Epaphroditus must return to Philippi. Paul was concerned that the Philippian church would kindly receive him back, and Paul wanted to make sure that none would blame Epaphroditus of being weak or cowardly. Paul, who himself was facing the possibility of death at Rome, was not so concerned about his own problems that he could not take time to think about saving a friend from embarrassment. SO Paul defends the character and activities of Epaphroditus.

1. The Activities of Epaphroditus

Paul calls Epaphroditus his fellow brother, showing his oneness of fellowship and sympathy. He was one who could feel for Paul and who expressed warm sympathy and love and understanding during Paul's difficult prison experience.

Paul calls Epaphroditus his fellow worker. He knew what it was to work long hours for the cause of the Gospel and for the help of Paul. He never shunned responsibility and labor. He was one with Paul in work.

Paul called Epahroditus his fellow soldier. Epaphroditus was not only one with Paul in sympathy and in work but also in battle for the truth and in danger. He knew the truth and fearlessly defended and proclaimed the truth.

Epahroditus was not only a fellow brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but he was the messenger and minister to Paul's need. The meaning of 'messenger' is 'apostle' - one of the very spiritually elite

of the faith. The word for 'minister' is 'servant' and has a special meaning. "In the ancient days in the Greek cities there were men who, because they loved their city so much, out of their own resources and at their own expense undertook certain great civic duties. (Examples: defray the expense of an embassy, pay costs of putting on great Greek drama, pay cost of great athlete who would represent the city, pay a crew to serve in the navy of the state). (Barclay's Philippians; 62) The word which is used to describe such a man is applied to Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus is one who gives of his very self in service to Paul, with no expectation of receiving anything in return. His service is borne out of love for Paul. Such service has no ulterior motives attached to it. That is the real proof of humility - service borne out of love.

The specially elite in faith (apostle and messenger) is the one who abandons himself in unselfish service to his fellow men. Epaphroditus was elite, not because he was aloof, but because he was intimately and lovingly involved in caring for another.

2. The Traits of Epaphroditus

Paul expresses the attitude of Epaphroditus towards the Philippians: "he has been longing for you all". Epaphroditus, a man of intense, deep, and tender feelings, was very homesick for his friends. He wanted to be of service to Paul, but his illness, and the anxiety which it caused Paul and the Philippian friends, caused Epaphroditus to long for home, family, and friends. "He has been homesick for you, and was worried because he knew that you had heard that he was ill." Epaphroditus was concerned not to burden others unnecessarily.

Epaphroditus was dearly beloved by his friends. Said Paul, *"Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious."* (Philippians 2: 27, 28)

The anxiety that Paul felt over Epaphroditus' sickness, and the rejoicing that his presence would bring the Philippians, were both evidences that Epaphroditus was very dearly beloved.

Epaphroditus was deserving of highest honor. *"Honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me."* (V.. 29, 30) How did he risk his life? In his identification with Paul's troubles and Paul's prison ministry of the

Gospel, Epaphroditus risked becoming identified and involved in Paul's trial and charge.

The word for 'risked' is 'gambled'. It means that he recklessly risked or gambled his life for the sake of Christ. He was a courageous and brave man, willing to risk his very own life while he conscientiously and unselfishly served Paul.

"In the days of the Early Church there was an association of men and women called the parabolani, the gamblers. It was their aim and object to visit the prisoners and the sick, especially those who were ill with dangerous and infectious diseases. In A.D. 252 plague broke out in Carthage; the heathen threw out the bodies of their dead, and fled in terror. Cyprian, the Christian bishop, gathered his congregation together and set them to burying the dead and nursing the sick in that plague-stricken city; and by so doing they saved the city, at the risk of their lives, from destruction and desolation. There should be in the Christian an almost reckless courage which is ready to gamble with its life to serve Christ and to serve men." (Barclay's Philippians 62, 63)

CONCLUSION:

The proof of humility is seen in service to God and one's fellow men. Timothy served his fellow men humbly by maintaining a heart-felt concern and interest in the well-being of others. Timothy unselfishly served Paul, never seeking self-glory or selfish advantage. As Paul's personal representative, he was careful never to distort Paul's message. Paul thought so much of him that he called him his son - denoting warmth, obedience, and companionship. "Timothy is the patron saint of all those who are quite content with the second place, so long as they can serve." (Barclays' Philippians; pg. 50)

1. Epaphroditus was a man of faithful and humble service, as seen in the terms used to describe his relationship to Paul: brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, messenger (apostle-elite) , servant (one who gives freely, not expecting anything in return). His humility is further seen in his affection, in his concern not to needlessly burden others, in his character which made him most beloved by Paul and the Philippians, and by his willingness to gamble his life to serve Paul and to serve Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. Realistically - speaking, should one view his life, from a spiritual perspective, as a short 'battle' or as a long 'campaign'? Why?

2. Give your personal interpretation and reaction to the following statement: *"He who, as a Christian, feels that he is secure enough is he who will fall, sure enough."* (Note I Corinthians 10: 12 and Galations 6: 1-3)

3. Illustrate, from your own life's experiences or from your observation of the lives of fellow believers, the truthfulness of the following statement: "The Christian must give no place to the devil, but must always build up a strong defense against the enemy of his soul through earnest prayer and careful alertness." (Note Mark 14: 38; Mark 14: 26-31; 66-72; Hebrews 10: 19-25, 38-39; Jude, verses 24-25; I Thessalonians 2: 18; James 4: 6-7; I Peter 5: 8-9)

4. Do you believe that too much so-called 'Ease' in the Christina life can lead to complacency and indifference and coolness and over-confidence, which can result in the spiritual downfall of a Christian? Do you believe that the Christian who is going through much troubles and adversity is more likely to draw closer to God than the Christian who seems to be having it rather "easy" in life? Why or why not? Share a personal experience in your life when you were facing a great difficulty and adversity, the result of which sent you to your knees in prayer where you felt God's nearer presence and imparted power and wisdom to meet the challenge.

5. Is it possible for a believer to develop a sense of overconfidence and false security in his Christian walk, which results in a lack of alertness and vigilance that eventually leads to spiritual disaster? How seriously should Christians take the multitude of "Warning Passages: in the Bible? According to those many "Warning Passages", is it possible for a believer to become seduced by temptation and to fall into sin and even into a "backslidden state"?

6. Give your personal interpretation and reaction to the following statement: "If things are going well, ask the Lord to sanctify the joy. If the sky is overcast, seek refuge in the Lord."

7. Tell what you think is meant by the statement: "It is important for you as a Christian to guard against the peril of 'resting at ease in Zion'."

8. What must a believer guard against when he is enjoying the so-called 'heights' of success (spiritually or professionally or economically, etc.)?

9. After Jesus' 'high point' in his spiritual life, at His baptism, what happened to Jesus, and how is this event in Jesus' life a 'lesson' to every Christian? (Note Matthew 3: 16-4: 1)

10. Tell how Timothy and Epaphroditus exemplify some of the qualities of "soldiers of Christ", as noted in the letters of Paul: (a) Good Soldiers guard against ease and complacency and over-confidence; (b) Good soldiers guard against under-estimating the strength of the enemy; (c) Good soldiers guard against resting on the laurels of past victories.

11. Why is it so important for a Christian's ministry to be person-centered instead of merely philosophy-centered (centered on mere words and ideas and concepts and programs)? (Note James 2: 14-26; I John 3: 16-18; Titus 2: 13-14)

12. Do you believe that human beings have intrinsic worth in virtue of their special creation? If so, what implications does this belief have for the development and focus of your own "personal ministry"?

13. In the mind of Paul, what quality in the life of Timothy mad e Timothy most special as a servant of the Lord, according to Philippians 2: 20-21.

14. Give your personal response or reaction to the following statement: "A pagan is one whose activities do not go beyond his own selfish interest, whereas a true Christian is one who truly cares for others."

15. As a Christian, has your personal faith in God (like as in the case of Timothy) kept you steadfast amidst the trials of hard circumstances and amidst the passing of time?

16. If, according to II Timothy 1: 6, God has not given you a 'spirit of timidity', what 'spirit' has God given to you?

17. As a "personal representative" of the Apostle Paul, what was one of Timothy's most valuable and helpful traits, as it related to Paul's missionary work?

18. How does the fact that Paul wanted to defend the character of Epaphroditus and to save him from embarrassment, have direct relevance and application to you in your personal relationships with your colleagues in Christian ministry?

19. Tell in what ways Epaphroditus proved to be the following to Paul in Paul's ministry relationships with Epaphroditus: (a) fellow brother, (b) fellow worker, (c) fellow soldier. Do you enjoy a relationship with any fellow Christian whom you believe would fit the description of any one (or more) of the above titles?

20. Considering the example of Epaphroditus, who was a genuine 'minister' or 'servant' to Paul, lovingly and humbly serving Paul with no ulterior or selfish motives, do you personally desire to increasingly become such a humble servant to others in the development of your own personal ministry?

21. In his relationship to the Apostle Paul, how did Epaphroditus "risk" or "gamble" his life for Jesus Christ? (Note Philippians 2: 29-30)

22. Tell to what extent you personally identify with the following statement: "There should be in the Christian an almost reckless courage which is ready to gamble with its life to serve Christ and to serve men."

CHAPTER 19

THANKSGIVING

CHAPTER 19

SUBJECT: THE HEALING POWER OF GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: Luke 17: 11-19

INTRODUCTION: There are several interesting applications that could be made from this simple and miraculous story: (1) The miracle of Jesus' healing power, in the midst of great hopelessness; (2) The strengthening power of the fellowship of suffering; (3) The perfecting of faith in God through obedience. But the greatest lesson is this: (4) The Healing Power of Gratitude.

I. WHAT IS GRATITUDE?

Among the several ingredients which could be noted which describe Gratitude, the following are four of these ingredients: (1) Remembrance of another's past goodness, (2) A sense of unworthiness and humility, (3) Spontaneous expression outwardly of inner feelings of gladness, (4) Warmness which seeks to maintain loving relationship into the future.

If gratitude is so important, we must ask the question: "Why did the nine out of the ten lepers not return to thank Jesus?"

A. Perhaps Neglect Kept The Nine From Returning.
B. Perhaps Pride Kept The Nine From Returning.
C. Perhaps Greed Kept The Nine From Returning.

II. WHY IS GRATITUDE SO IMPORTANT?

A. Because One Cannot Be Whole and Happy Without Gratitude.
B. Because "An Ungrateful Spirit Spoils The Core Of Character."

CONCLUSION: If gratitude is so important, then how can we develop a more grateful spirit? First of all, be sure you are a true believer in Christ. To the person who yields his life to Christ, God will put a new spirit, a new heart, and a new power within him.

Second, learn regularly to recall your past blessings. Dwelling upon blessings rather than problems gives you a positive and happy focus in life. Remember the song "Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

Someone said, "If we offered more praise for answered prayer, there would be more answered prayer for which to offer praise."

CHAPTER 20

SUBJECT: THE HEALING POWER OF GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: Luke 17: 11-19

INTRODUCTION :

There are several interesting applications that could be made from this simple and miraculous story:

One could describe the hopelessness of the dreaded disease of leprosy, which is called the living death, and point out the miracle of Jesus' healing power.

One could center upon the fellowship of these ten lepers, which fellowship was based on common suffering, and point out the disguised blessing found even in the fellowship of suffering. The strengthening power of a fellowship is noteworthy.

One could also point out in this episode the important lesson that faith is perfected by obedience. Obedience is faith in action. The lepers were told to go and to show themselves to the priests in order to have their cure certified, and they left Jesus while they were still leprous. It was "as they went they were cleansed."

PROPOSITION:

All of the above lessons can be learned from this healing episode. All are important, but the central lesson of this event has to do with Gratitude.

I. WHAT IS GRATITUDE?

Hear these words from a letter, written to a doctor by a little girl who was just old enough to write, after she returned from the hospital: "I want to thank you very much for being so good to me. I hope I was not too much trouble to you...Please always remember me because I will always remember you." (Sockman's 'Whom Christ Commended; pg. 97.)

Gratitude is well described in this letter. From this simple letter we learn certain things about gratitude: (1) Remembrance of another's past goodness, (2) A sense of unworthiness and humility, (3) Spontaneous expression outwardly of inner feelings of gladness, (4) Warmness which weeks to maintain loving relationship into the future.

"Ten lepers went to Christ for healing; only one returned to thank. Ten went to ask; only one came back to praise." (Allen's 'Touch of the Master's Hand; 31)

Why was only one truly grateful? What is gratitude? To answer these questions one may ask the penetrating question: 'Why did the nine not return to thank Jesus?

A. Perhaps Neglect Kept The Nine From Returning.

We cannot dogmatically state that the nine lepers who did not return to thank Jesus, had no appreciation. Perhaps they did. But perhaps their joy in becoming cleansed, freed men was so overwhelming that they neglected to return to thank the very one who had healed them - Jesus.

Is it possible for us to be so engrossed in the enjoyment of gifts and blessings that we forget or neglect to thank and praise the one who is the Giver of the gifts? Like a small child who is so enraptured with a new toy on Christmas morning that he neglects to thank his parents for the toy!

Or take any one of us who receives something from parents or loved ones, but fail to write a letter of gratitude. Gratitude that remains unexpressed is not full gratitude.

Someone said, "Impression without expression leads to depression." Many times we feel gratitude down inside us for a kindness someone has shown to us, but we simply do not express that feeling of gratitude. If the feeling remains unexpressed, that felling of thankfulness can gradually lessen until it dies. Good intentions must issue forth in good actions. A bell is not a bell until you ring it! (II Corinthians 8: 10-11, Phillips)

Neglect may be coupled with a lack of imagination in knowing how to express gratitude. One may feel embarrassed to express thanks to another. But the returning leper who was healed was not embarrassed. "*When he saw that he was healed, he turned back praising God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.*" (v. 15, 16)

His uninhibited praise was spontaneous, and unashamed. Gratitude deeply felt always finds time for creative expression. It is unashamed and uninhibited. This healed leper was a noble soul, sensitive to the great kindness shown to him by the 'Man of Galilee'. How many times I have neglected to express gratitude to fellow believers, to fellow workers in the Church! What would happen if each of us committed ourselves to write a letter of appreciation each week?

B. Perhaps Pride Kept The Nine From Returning.

"Pride, conceited pride, is the greatest reason for the thanklessness of man....In my mind I can hear these ten lepers talking as they rushed back to their home towns: 'They thought leprosy would kill me but I whipped it. You can't keep a good man down.' It is so easy to blame all our failures on somebody else and all our successes on ourselves. And that doesn't make for gratitude." (Allen: 31, 32)

What is the essence of gratitude? It is humble recognition that we have received more than we deserved. It comes from a sense of unworthiness. Gratitude is the opposite of pride. People think that what they have is earned by themselves. But that is selfish pride, and remember, Pride is one of the seven sins that God definitely hates. The Bible repeatedly urges us to humble ourselves before God. (Deuteronomy 6: 10-12)

The Bible asks the revealing question: "What have you but what you have received?" The obvious answer is 'Nothing'. All things good come from God.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" *"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."* (I Corinthians 6: 19, 20)

But we tend to say 'That is MY house which I am paying for."

But, did not God grow the trees to make lumber, and did not God give you the strength and talent to invest in working to receive a salary to purchase a house? Many have no resources. They are born invalids.

But, we go on to say: 'That is MY automobile.'

But remember, God gave the world a man named 'Henry Ford' with his inventive genius. Remember, it is God who puts metals in the earth to make automobiles. Remember, it is God who allows you and me an income which makes possible the purchase of a car. Remember, that most Chinese, for instance, ride bicycles, as well as many others in the world.

Again, we say: 'This is MY pure water to drink.'

But remember, many places in the world are not blessed with pure water. For instance, pure water in Hong Kong is scarce. Am I more worthy than those in Hong Kong? "To whom much is given, much will be required." What is

required? More gratitude, more humility, more praise!

We are heard to say: 'This is MY food.'

But, remember, it is God who put fertility in the soil to grow our food. And remember that a fourth of the world's population lives in parts of the world where the earth is not able to sustain them with sufficient food.

"The early Hebrew lawmakers understood man's tendency to ingratitude. In the eight chapter of Deuteronomy is this counsel to the pioneers of Israel: *'Take heed...lest, when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses and live in them...and your silver and gold is multiplied,....then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God.'*

"This proneness to forget God as the giver of our blessings increases with the methods of modern living. More and more we are leaving the soil for the city, thus removing ourselves from the firsthand reminders of our dependence on God. Living and working amidst man-made things, we forget the forces of fertility. A scientist has figured that a farmer's effort is only about 5 percent of the factors which produce a crop of wheat. We city dwellers eat the bread without thought of the 95% which the Creator contributes. In fact, we seem to be ever less grateful to the farmers, and talk much about the farm problem." (Sockman; 93)

Is it not true that the First Thanksgiving was a Fast rather than a Feast?

C. Perhaps Greed Kept The Nine From Returning.

The greedy person uses people as stepping stones to get his next desire fulfilled. "The greedy nature keeps the nose on the scent of the next desire and turns away from the fragrance of past favors." (Sockman; pg. 94) The greedy person who gets in trouble pleads for others to help him out of his predicament, but after the help is received, he forgets his benefactors and continues his selfish pursuits.

"Recall one of Aesop's fables. A wolf had been gorging on an animal which he had killed. A bone became stuck in his throat. He groaned and howled for help. At last a crane agreed to try. 'I would give anything if you would take it out,' cried the wolf. The crane put his long neck down the wolf's throat and pulled out the bone. When the crane asked for his reward, the wolf grinned and showed his teeth, saying: 'Be content. You have just put your head inside a wolf's mouth and taken it out again in safety; that ought to be reward enough for you.' At the end of the fable Aesop put these words: 'Gratitude and greed go not together.'" (Sockman; 94)

"This one leper recognized that he had received answer to his prayer. He, too, had a home and family he was anxious to get back to. Perhaps, he too, had a business that needed his attention. But also, he was a decent man." (Allen; 32) His sensitive, fine nature compelled him to return to express gratitude. He did not allow greed to kill gratitude.

Consider the longevity of life today, due in part to modern medicine. Someone asked the penetrating question: "Are people so grateful for their restored and lengthened health that they come forth from our hospitals and clinics praising God and setting themselves to serving their fellow men? Or do we turn to God for health and then go to the devil to spend it? When we are discussing how far faith can help in healing, we should also consider how much our healing is strengthening our faith." (Sockman; pg. 96, 97)

II. WHY IS GRATITUDE SO IMPORTANT?

Or to rephrase this question, "Why did Jesus consider Ingratitude to be such a serious sin?"

A. Because One Cannot Be Whole and Happy Without Gratitude.

"The Lord was very disappointed; not disappointed because He wanted their praise, but rather because He had an even greater blessing that He could not give the other nine." (Allen; pg. 32, 33)

The nine lepers were healed, but they were not whole. Gratitude is the medicine that cures diseases and bestoys true health. "Many people have possessed God's physical blessings, but they are not happy and in their hearts is no peace. But for those who recognize their blessing and express their gratitude there is a spiritual wholeness awaiting, which is Christ's greatest blessing." (Allen; pg. 33)

"It would seem safe to assume that the mind and spirit as well as the body of the grateful leper had been cured." (Sockman; pg. 96)

Writes Elton Trueblood: "If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. It is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it you turn it into a blessing. If you could work miracles, therefore, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful heart and spirit. It heals and turns all that it touches into happiness." (The Lord's Prayer; 92-93; quoted in Light and Life Magazine; pg. 3; Nov. 19, 1974)

Wholeness, health, happiness - has its basic ingredient - Gratitude.

B. Because "An Ungrateful Spirit Spoils The Core Of Character."

"It opens the way to envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. And it closes the way to God because the Holy One dwells 'with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit.'" (Ibid)

Gratitude recognizes God's power and man's goodness. It cleanses one from the smallness and pettiness of carnal competition, envy, jealousy and comparison with others. The grateful person can accept the Biblical exhortation which says: *"Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."* (Philippians 2: 3, 4)

Gratitude recognizes God as Creatorhood. The small city child who visited the country side covered with wild flowers, said: "I wonder if God would mind if I picked one of His flowers?" That is the spirit of humble gratitude. Gratitude, is the strongest motivation for salvation (even though fear is also a strong motivation). Gratitude is the basic motivation behind all stewardship (behind joyful giving).

CONCLUSION:

If gratitude is so important, then how can we develop a more grateful spirit? First of all, be sure you are a true believer in Christ. To the person who yields his life to Christ, God will put a new spirit, a new heart, and a new power within him.

Second, learn regularly to recall your past blessings. Dwelling upon blessings rather than problems gives you a positive and happy focus in life. Remember the song "Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done." Recall your parents' care as they held your childish, feverish hand. Remember your teachers, who, though poorly paid, took pains to guide your often unwilling mind. Remember your friends who have gone to bat for you when you were in danger of losing the game.

Then especially during this Thanksgiving Season, think "about those who made this land a fit place in which to live...In early New England it was the custom at Thanksgiving to place five grains of corn at every plate as a reminder of those rigorous days in the Pilgrim Fathers' first winter at Plymouth, when the food supply was so depleted that only five grains of corn were rationed to each individual at a time. We do well to recall also that at the time the ration was down to those few grains, there were only seven healthy colonists to nurse the sick and that half their original number lay in the windswept graveyard on the hill. And yet the following spring, when the Mayflower sailed back across the Atlantic, only the sailors were aboard."

(Sockman; pg. 99)

Someone said: "If we offered more praise for answered prayer, there would be more answered prayer for which to offer praise."

QUESTIONS

1. In examining the story of the Ten Lepers, which of the following lessons and applications mean the most to you, and why?

   (a) Hopeless situations in life, as symbolized by the ten leprous men, can always be confronted and resolved by Christ's mighty healing power.

   (b) Persons who suffer together are persons who often are drawn close to one another in a heartfelt fellowship.

   (c) Just as the ten lepers obeyed Christ and went to the priests while they were still lepers, so we too must learn to perfect our faith through explicit obedience to Christ, even when we do not immediately see the results of our faith in Christ.

   (d) Only as one expresses gratitude for Christ's miracles in one's life, does he experience wholeness and total health in his life.

2. What, to you, are some of the basic ingredients in gratitude?

3. Is it possible for us to be so engrossed in the enjoyment of gifts and blessings that we forget or neglect to thank and praise the one who is the Giver of the gifts?

4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Gratitude that remains unexpressed is not full gratitude."

5. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "Impression without expression leads to depression."

6. According to II Corinthians 8: 10-11, what advice and exhortation is given to a person who possesses "good intentions"?

7. Tell what is meant by the popular statement: "A bell is not a bell until you ring it!"

8. Why is it sometimes important for a believer to "dramatize" his faith by participation in verbal, audible praise of God?

9. Have you ever felt yourself embarrassed to express your gratitude and thanks to another person? Why? What does the uninhibited, unashamed, spontaneous, and loud praise of the one returning, healed leper teach you about gratitude? (Note Luke 17: 15-16)

10. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statements: "It is so easy to blame all our failures on somebody else and all our successes on ourselves. And that doesn't make for gratitude."

11. Do you believe that Gratitude is the opposite of Pride? What does Deuteronomy 6: 12 teach you about Gratitude?

12. What is your personal answer to the following questions which the Apostle Paul addressed to the Corinthian believers: *"What do you have that God hasn't given you?"* (I Corinthians 4: 7)

13. According to I Corinthians 6: 19-20, to whom do you belong, and what should your attitude be as a result of such recognition?

14. Give an illustration to demonstrate the truth of the following statement: The greedy nature keeps the nose on the scent of the next desire and turns away from the fragrance of past favors."

15. Is it possible to allow greed to destroy gratitude in your personal life? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "he greedy person who gets in trouble pleads for others to help him out of his predicament, but after the help is received, he forgets his benefactors and continues his selfish pursuits."

16. Give your interpretation and application of the following statement (in light of your careful reading of Luke 17: 11-19): "When we are discussing how far faith can help in healing, we should also consider how much our healing is strengthening our faith."

17. Why do you think Jesus considered ingratitude to be such a serious sin? What warning which Paul gave to the Corinthian believers should be heeded by every believer today? (Note I Corinthians 10: 10-11)

18. Give your explanation and application of the following statement: "The nine lepers were healed, but they were not whole." Is it possible for one's mind and spirit truly to be restored to wholeness without practicing an attitude of gratitude?

19. Can you, from your own personal experience, testify to the truth of the following statements? "If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. It is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it you turn it into a blessing. If you could work miracles, therefore, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful heart and spirit. It heals and turns all that it touches into happiness."

20. Why is it difficult, if not impossible, for one to find his way to God when he is possessed with an ungrateful attitude? Give your interpretation of the statement: "Ingratitude opens the way to envy, malice, and all uncharitableness."

21. Illustrate how one who has the spirit of gratitude is enabled to appreciate the power of one's Creator and the goodness of one's fellow man.

22. Are the attitudes which are expressed in Philippians 2: 3-4, the attitudes of a truly grateful person? What is the relationship between the attitude of gratitude and the attitude of true humility?

23. Explain why Gratitude is the strongest motivation for "acceptance of Christ as Savior", and also for "generous giving to the Church of Jesus."

24. If the spirit of gratitude is so important, how do you think you can personally develop a more grateful spirit?

25. Put a check beside those suggestions which you intend to concentrate on, in your attempts to practice a grateful attitude in future months in your life:

_____a. Start and maintain a Daily Journal (diary) in which I shall regularly record personal blessings for which I wish to praise God.

_____b. Dwelling upon my blessings - both in the thoughts I think and in the words I speak - rather than concentrating upon my trials and hardships and disappointments.

_____c. Associate more with positive-minded and positive-speaking fellow believers, whose grateful attitudes and speech I will seek to imitate.

_____d. Recall more often my parents' care of me when I was a small child, and seek to express more gratitude to them for their selfless care of me when I was so dependent upon them.

_____e. Recall more frequently my teachers from my past who, though they were poorly paid, took pains to guide me even during times when I often had an unwilling and unteachable mind.

_____f. Remember more frequently my several friends who, throughout my life, have "gone to bat" for me when I was in danger of losing the "game of life."

_____g. Write love notes more frequently, not only on Valentine's Day, to my spouse who has supported me on countless occasions with her kind words and her loving actions.

_____h. Sing praises to my God, whose grace and love and mercy are greater than words can describe, for His saving and sanctifying power in my personal life.

_____i. Find a prayer partner with whom I may regularly spend time in prayer, together praising our God.

26. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement: "If we offered more praise for answered prayer, there would be more answered prayer for which to offer praise."

APPENDIX 1

BOOKS WRITTEN BY RON CHRISTIAN

When ordering any of the following books, please indicate the number of books and make checks out to:

"Christian Living Ministries"
% Ron Christian
2724 Garrett Drive
Fort Collins, Colorado 80526
Telephone (970) 282-3488
(send for an order form and a price list)

(The listed cost of the books does NOT include the cost of mailing and handling. Please add an additional 10% of the total cost of the order, for postage and handling).

1. **HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION** (An in-depth devotional study of the basic truths of Christianity) - 12 Chapters; approx. 165 pages; $15.00.

2. **COMING TO KNOW GOD** (A topical and expository study of the Plan of Salvation, with special emphasis on the first 6 chapters of Romans) - 12 Chapters; approx 200 pages; $15.00.

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5. **CONQUERING THE ENEMIES WITHIN** (A topical devotional study on living the abundant Christian Life, with an attempt to understand and to cope effectively with the major 'enemies' which seek to destroy the life of a believer) - 13 Chapters; approx. 110 pages; $10.00.

6. **FROM AGONY TO ECSTASY** (A study on the Fall and Restoration of Man) - 3 Chapters; approx. 50 pages; $10.00.

7. **AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?** (A Biblical study on the causes and the cures of Envy) - 5 Chapters; approx. 60 pages; $10.00.

8. **BECOMING A MATURE CHRISTIAN** (An expository study of the book of I Thessalonians, with a close examination of the life of holiness) - 8 Chapters; approx. 110 pages; $10.00

9. **LIVING THE LIFE OF JOY** (An expository study of the Book of Philippians) - 18 Chapters; approx 200 pages; $15.00.

10. **LET US HOLD FAST** (An in-depth devotional study of the Book of Hebrews, with special emphasis on the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the victorious life of a believer) - 23 Chapters; approx 375 pages; $20.00.

11. **ADVENTURES IN BIBLICAL FAITH** (Understanding the ways of faith, as exemplified in the lives of Old Testament and New Testament Personalities, with an examination of the many different types of Biblical Faith) - 35 Chapters; approx. 550 pages; $22.00.

12. **LOST IN WONDER, LOVE, AND PRAISE** (A detailed expository study of the 13 of the most popular Psalms, with practical applications to the personal struggles and problems that every believer confronts in his 'pilgrimage of faith') - 13 Chapters; approx. 250 pages; $20.00.

13. **MARKS OF A GREAT CHURCH** (Identification of those important traits and characteristics which describe an effective and healthy local Church) - 18 Chapters; approx. 250 pages; $20.00.

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15. **THE BALANCED LIFE OF STEWARDSHIP** (Seeking 'balance' in living a truly 'Christianized life' as a faithful steward of the Living God; explores the stewardship of money, time, influence, work, talents, the human body; a call to commitment for believers to 'reach out in love' to the needy around them) - 19 Chapters; approx. 250 pages; $20.00.

16. **GOD FOR ALL SEASONS** (A book of messages which seeks to 'draw attention' to the various holidays and special events of each calendar year, with an emphasis that Christ is the 'Lord' of all things and events and places; learning to take Christ into all legitimate holidays of each year) - 19 Chapters; approx. 300 pages; $20.00.