



"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

By

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"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

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CHAPTER 1

JESUS – "THE INCOMPARABLE ONE!"

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OUTLINE – CHAPTER 1

SCRIPTURE: *For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this." Isaiah 9:6, 7*

INTRODUCTION:

What saith the Scriptures? Through prophetic inspiration, Isaiah wrote of Jesus' unique person, activity, and destiny. *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6)

PROPOSITION:

- I. WONDERFUL!
- II. COUNSELOR!
- III. MIGHTY GOD!
- IV. EVERLASTING FATHER!
- V. PRINCE OF PEACE!

CONCLUSION:

Jesus is called "Wonderful!" His words and works, climaxed in the work of redemption, were most wonderful. As Counselor, Jesus gives perfect advice, solves all the pressing problem of life, and answers all the nagging questions of life

CHAPTER 1

JESUS - "THE INCOMPARABLE ONE!"

INTRODUCTION:

I had an hour's discussion on the phone with a representative of another religious group. In the midst of our doctrinal discussion, we came to the subject of Jesus. I asked him if he believed that Jesus was the unique, divine Son of God. His reply denied his call to be Christian in his doctrine. He said that he believed Jesus to be divine, but not necessarily unique. He admitted, upon questioning him, that he believed Jesus to be different from any other man in degree only, not in kind. He conceived that it is a possible for a man someday to be what Jesus now is. Thus, his idea of the eternal progression of the saints denies the unique deity of Jesus. His doctrine clearly denies that Jesus is the unique deity of Jesus. His doctrine clearly denies that Jesus is the unique and incomparable One.

What saith the Scriptures? Through prophetic inspiration, Isaiah wrote of Jesus' unique person, activity, and destiny. *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6)

PROPOSITION:

Names represent person's character (from Biblical perspective). Jacob (deceiver) changed to Israel (Prince of God). Peter (Rock), Darlene (Tenderly loved), and Rhonda (Strength of character). The character of Jesus is so great that many names are given to Him to describe various characteristics of His greatness.

Let us look briefly at each of the titles given to Jesus in this message.

I. WONDERFUL!

What does the word 'wonderful' mean? According to the Dictionary, it is something marvelous, extraordinary, remarkable, miraculous, astonishing, amazing, and unique.

It is not surprising that Jesus is called 'Wonderful'. Jesus is the very personification of everything that is wonderful. Jesus, more than anyone else did that which was marvelous, extra-ordinary, astonishing, and unique.

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The shepherds' report of the angels' announcement caused all those who heard to wonder *“at these things which were told them by the shepherds.”* (Luke 2:18b) The Wise Men saw Jesus, *“fall down, and worshipped him.”* (Matthew 2:11) After seeing Him, they knew this child was unique - wonderful. After seeing the baby Jesus, Simon declared, *“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace...For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”* (Luke 2:29, 30) *Those who heard Jesus asking questions in the temple, at the age of twelve, “were astonished at his understanding and answers.”* (Luke 2:47)

Jesus' miracles and Jesus' words caused the multitudes, oftentimes, to be filled with amazement. *“And they were astonished at his doctrine: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.”* (Mark 1:22) After Christ cast out a demon from a man, the people were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, *and “What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.”* (Mark 1:27) Even Jesus' death caused wonder and fear to those near the cross. *“Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”*

Jesus appeared most wonderful to the Resurrection witnesses. Among these witnesses, were the disciples who were met by Jesus on the road to Emmaus. After Jesus disappeared from their presence, they said to one another, *“Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?”* (Luke 24:32)

Jesus appears most wonderful to us today. How wonderful to know that this planet is a visited planet, visited by none other than God Incarnate. In Jesus, we see that the Kingdom of God has arrived on earth. Thus, Jesus' miracles were an active demonstration that the kingdom of God had arrived on earth. As A.M. Hunter so well put it: *“The healing of the sick, the exorcism of evil spirits, the restoration of the maimed, the deaf, the dumb, and the blind, the forgiveness of sins - all these were ‘works’ of the Kingdom...In one phrase, the miracles were the Kingdom of God in action.”* (Intro. to New Testament Theology, pg. 30)

Jesus' miracles and words were most wonderful, but the greatest wonder of all were seen in Jesus' redemptive death and glorious resurrection. Jesus' death and resurrection sealed Satan's death warrant. Through death, Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivers them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.* (Hebrews 2:14-15)

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Said Charles Lamb to a group, "If Shakespeare were to enter this room, I should rise to do him honor but, if Jesus Christ were to enter, I should fall down and give him worship." (Stand Up In Praise to God, pg. 44, Rees)

II. COUNSELOR!

Jesus is also called the Counselor. Because Jesus is the expert of life, and is able to give perfect counseling. He is able to answer every important question of life.

What is the relative importance of material and spiritual values? *"For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; of what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26)

What should be the goal of life? *"Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Luke 12:31)

What does it mean to be great? *"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."* (Matthew 23:11)

What about life after death? *"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."* (John 11:25)

Is it necessary that I forgive others? *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."* (Matthew 6:14)

How can a man be vitally related to God? *"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."* (Matthew 12:50)

What should a man's attitude be towards established government? *"Render Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* (Matthew 22:21)

With what attitude should a person look at a fellowman that has fallen into sin? *"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."* (John 8:7b)

What is the way to heaven? *"I am the door: by me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."* (John 10:9)

Jesus spoke with an authority all of His own. "The scribes were echoes; Jesus was a voice. The scribes quoted authorities; Jesus was authority. The scribes split hairs on definitions; Jesus swung about and gave directions. The scribes proposed investigations; Jesus offered insights. The scribes laid down minute precepts; Jesus pronounced universal and enduring principles." (Rees, Stand Up In Praise to God, pg. 45)

III. MIGHTY GOD!

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Jesus is also called the Mighty God! Did Jesus use power in His earthly life? Yes he did! Not the power that the political Jewish Zealots wanted Him to exert – that is, physical Military power, to down the Roman oppression and to lead the Jews to national supremacy. However, Jesus exercised a far greater power – power over the hearts and minds of men. His power was not the power of coercion but the power of transformation. His power was not the brutal power of hate, but the tender power of love. He came not to save a nation, but to save a race – the human race. Moreover, to do this involved the exercise of the greatest power – the power to surrender to death.

This death brought life. Christ died that death might die and this mission was accomplished not only through His death but also through His resurrection. His Resurrection demonstrated final victory over death and Jesus was declared the Son of God with power, by the resurrection, from the dead “...and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1:4) “O death, where is thy sting? O grace, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 15:57) Jesus demonstrated His might and power when He arose again from the dead. The last enemy to be destroyed was death. Jesus destroyed that enemy when he demonstrated His power over death. The Resurrection is the corner stone of the Christian faith. The fact of the resurrection makes Jesus’ title – Mighty God – absolutely valid.

IV. *EVERLASTING FATHER!*

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus ascended to His Father where He is now making intercession for the saints. Jesus came from the Father and Jesus went back to the Father. Jesus is distinct from the Father in personality, and yet Jesus is one with the Father in essence. Jesus has His own works to work (primarily the work of redemption), and yet Jesus possesses the same attributes as His Father.

One of those attributes commonly shared with the Father in eternity. David said of God, “*Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*” (Psalms 145:13) The same can be said of Jesus. Jesus’ kingdom is everlasting.

David’s kingdom was glorious and powerful. During Israel’s days of decline, the Jews longed for a kingdom, like unto David’s, to be restored to Israel. Eventually this hope of kingdom restoration was transferred to spiritual hope. The Messianic expectation borrowed the language of kingdom glory, like unto the glory of David’s kingdom, excepting that the glory of the Messianic kingdom would much greater. Therefore, it was natural that the angel would make his annunciation of Jesus’ birth to Mary, in the language of kingdom glory. “*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the*

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throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:31-33)

The kingdoms of earth rise and fall; Christ's Kingdom abides the same, forever. Christ's Reign exists independent of man's response to that Reign. However, Christ's Reign presupposes Christ' Realm. Those who recognize Christ's Lordship become subjects of Christ's Kingdom Realm. However, those who do not recognize Christ's Reign still must someday acknowledge it, even if that acknowledgement is not one voluntarily. Christ is the only Potentate King of kings and Lord of lords. *“Which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords...?” (I Timothy 6:15) “God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:8-10) Jesus is Eternal. He said of himself “Before Abraham was, I AM” (A title of deity, revealing Eternality. Before he came to earth in the form of a Baby, he was eternally with the Father.)*

V. PRINCE OF PEACE!

There are peace slogans, peace movements, peace speeches, peace conferences, peace prayer, peace symbols, and peace legislation. What is the Christian's reaction to all this talk about peace? It is a double reaction.

On one hand, the Christian supports all legitimate and rational attempts at bringing about peace among men and nations. The Christian supports peace conferences, peace prayers, and peace legislation. This is to say that the Christian does not bypass social responsibilities through lack of involvement in social and political problems. Paul Rees gives a biting challenge in the form of criticism to the masses of evangelical Christians. They can sit toasting their shins by a winter-night fireplace while they, in smug detachment, toss about airy pronouncements on what ought to be done with Russia, or Red China, or the United Nations, or the size of the defense budget, or the bosses of Big Labor. What would we do if we sat in the place of these Christian leaders? And what are we doing, by way of concerned and compassionate involvement in all this since after all, it is as truly Christians to render to Caesar the things that are his as it is to render to God the things that are His?” (Stand Up In Praise to God; pg. 55) Therefore, we must say that Christians ought to be involved as much as possible in attempts for peace among the communities, states, and nations.

However, the Christian is not naïve enough to imagine that lasting peace can be achieved merely by man's efforts. People today shout the shallow cry, *“peace, peace; when there is no peace.” (Jeremiah 6:13)* if it is a mistake to withdraw from all attempts at finding a just peace, it is also a mistake to think peace can be legislated or found on the basis of military might. A Christian is a realist, and as such, he knows well that there can be no peace without personal knowledge of the Prince of Peace. Christ alone can give personal lasting peace in the hearts of men

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and only through this personal discovery, can there be any semblance of genuine national peace.

There will come a time in which there will be universal peace, with the Prince of Peace Himself reigning as sovereign Ruler. The Prince of Peace *“maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”* (Psalms 46: 9, 10) *“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”* (Isaiah 2:4) *“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever...”* (Isaiah 9:7)

To summarize this point: “Christians must work for the improvement of human society, as they must pray that ‘God’s will, may be done in earth, as it is in heaven’; but they are not committed by their Lord’s teaching to any dream of Utopia in this vale of time and tears. For them, the ultimate meaning of history – and the fulfillment of their highest and holiest hopes – lies beyond history, in the supernal world.” (The Work and Words of Jesus; A. M. Hunter; pg. 104)

CONCLUSION:

Jesus is called “Wonderful”. His words and works, climaxed in the work of redemption, were most wonderful. As Counselor, Jesus gives perfect advice, solves all the pressing problem of life, and answers all the nagging questions of life. Because He vanquished death through His victorious resurrection, Jesus is entitled to the title of Mighty God. Jesus is God and is one with the Father. As such, He is called the “Everlasting Father”. Jesus is the very all peace both, in time and eternity. He is indeed the Prince of Peace. Each of the prophetic titles say something important about Jesus – His life, His death, His ascension, His reign, His realm, His purpose. Indeed, is the unique Son of God, Jesus is the Incomparable one.

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CHAPTER 2

"THE COSTLINESS OF CHRISTMAS!"

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OUTLINE – CHAPTER 2

SCRIPTURE: *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him, all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, or of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:1-14)

TEXT: *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.”* (II Corinthians 8:9)

INTRODUCTION:

“He (Jesus) had consented to enter into experiences that never came to him amid the elegances and immunities of the palace (heaven).”

PROPOSITION:

Jesus was still the Son of God while on earth just as He was in Heaven. Jesus gave up the riches of Heaven to accept the poorness of humanity, in order to make humanity wealthy.

- I. HOW RICH HE WAS!
 - A. All-Knowing!
 - B. All-Powerful!
 - C. All-Present!

- II. HOW POOR HE BECAME!

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- A. He Divested Himself Of His Omniscience, Omnipotence, And Omnipresence In Order To Be Born In Bethlehem.
- B. He Endured The Growth And Stress Of A Normal Jewish Boy Of That Time.

III. HE BECAME SUBJECT TO TEMPTATION!

- A. Role of Suffering Servant (Not Conquering Military Leader).
- B. Immediately Following His Baptism, Jesus Was Led Into The Wilderness Where He Fasted And Prayed For Forty Days And Forty Nights.
- C. In The Garden Of Gethsemane, Jesus Again Underwent Severe Temptation.
- D. Again On The Cross Jesus Underwent Severe Temptation, When His Persecutors Were Railing On Him.

IV. HOW WEALTHY HE MADE US!

- A. He Rescued Us From The Strictures Of Judaism And The Demonic In The Greek World (Fate And Determinism).
- B. He Gave Us A Heavenly Father.
- C. He Assured Our Future.

CONCLUSION:

All you need to do is to receive this costly gift – and in receiving it, give yourself to the Giver!

CHAPTER 2

"THE COSTLINESS OF CHRISTMAS!"

INTRODUCTION:

"Many years ago, when the Duke of Windsor was the Prince of Wales, he one day left Buckingham Palace, journeyed west into the coal mining country, put on a miner's cap, and went down into the dingy tunnels to see for himself the conditions in which men toiled in a difficult and dangerous branch of British industry. As a member of the royal family, he was as much a prince in the coalmine as he was when he lived in the palace in London. However, while his essential equality with royalty was changed, there was no longer an equality of experience. He had consented to enter into experiences that never came to him amid the elegances and immunities of the palace." (Rees; Proclaiming the New Testament; pg. 44)

PROPOSITION:

Jesus was still the Son of God while on earth just as He was in Heaven, but Jesus gave up the riches of Heaven to accept the poorness of humanity, in order to, make humanity wealthy. The costliness of Christmas can be seen in, three facts (1) How Rich Jesus Was, (2) How Poor He Became; (3) How Wealthy He makes us. (Outline and basic content from sermon by Bob Patterson; Catalyst tape and paper; Dec. 1974)

I. HOW RICH HE WAS!

Have you sung that song: 'Out of the Ivory Palaces'? Think of how rich and powerful Christ was before He became a man? He was invested with the full powers of divinity – co-equal with God the Almighty. Like God the Father, Jesus as all-knowing (Omniscient), All-powerful (Omnipotent); and All-present (Omnipresent).

A. All-Knowing!

He knew the beginning of the universe and He knows the end. He knew that approximately 15½ Billions of years ago with the fall out of neutrons and then the hydrogen explosion that brought our universe into existence, that our universe would begin its continual process of racing away from its self. The universe is still feeling the effects of that giant explosion.

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He also knew how that 5½ Billion years ago how our sun came into existence and the planets that now zip around our sun. He knows the End. Approximately 5½ Billions of years from now our sin will cease to be and so will our planet.

Scientists not only say that our universe is more mysterious than we have imagined, but that it is more mysterious than we can imagine, and the eternal Son knew everything about this.

B. All-Powerful!

The Gospel of John and the writings of Paul (particularly Colossians and Hebrews) tell us that Jesus was God's Agent in Creation.

Do you recall the story of Einstein at the Congress of Scientists in Vienna? He had written a mathematical formula on the back of an envelope and kept telling his fellow scientists that if only they could split the atom, then there would be enough power in one little match box to drive a locomotive and a train of cars 100 in number around the equator, one thousand times. Well, the eternal Creator was the Creator of this kind of power!

God is all-powerful. *“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighted the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?...Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.”* (Isaiah 40:12, 15)

C. All-Present!

Our universe is so big that it is hard to realize how He could be everywhere at the same time! We know the position of our sun in our Universe. It is 30,000 light years from the center of our Milky Way Galaxy.

Light travels at approximately 186,000 miles a second. That means that in one year, light would travel 6 trillion miles. That is six with twelve zeros behind it! In fact, we know that some 4 ½ Billion years ago light left certain stars, and that light is just now reaching us! This is a great big Universe that we are living in and looking at! In addition, just think there is no place in this vast Universe that we can imagine where the eternal Son was not!

God is 'transcendent'. 'Transcendence' simply means that reality which surpasses reality; that which is beyond man's comprehension. It is a

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common fact that, there are many things in the physical realm, which are beyond man's understanding. We cannot fully comprehend the vastness of the universe. We cannot fully understand the human mind or soul. We cannot fully comprehend the happenings around us. If we can't fully understand these things, it is sure that we cannot fully comprehend God. Simply because we cannot understand God, does not make God any less real. Because an ant cannot understand Einstein's Law of Relativity (and most man cannot), does that fact make the Law any less a reality? God is in a realm beyond man's capacity to understand. "God is Creator and we are but the created. Shall the created one complain if he does not understand all the mind of the Creator?" (Paul Reese, Stand Up In Praise to God; pg. 19)

Said God through His prophet, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:8, 9) *'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou are God.'* (Psalms 90:2) God is not confined by time.

"Thou art a sea without a shore
A sun without a sphere;
Thy time is now and evermore,
Thy place is everywhere."
(Christian Doctrines; Whale, pg. 58)

II. HOW POOR HE BECAME!

A. He Divested Himself Of His Omniscience, Omnipotence, And Omnipresence In Order To Be Born In Bethlehem.

How do you pour the Pacific Ocean into a Dixie cup? Well, it staggers the imagination! This is one of the inexplicable paradoxes of the Universe! How the Eternal God could take on human flesh, defies understanding, although it is a fact.

The Babe in the cradle at Bethlehem is the one who has given up these prerogatives that belonged to him exclusively as God. Furthermore, at Bethlehem, we see a scandal. Mary was pregnant, unexpectedly so, ever before marriage. (However, think a minute, if Jesus was God, would we not expect his entrance and exit from the world to be different and unusual?)

Bishop Sheen noted, "In the filthiest place in the world, purity was born. He, who later was to be, slaughtered by men, acting as beasts, was

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born among beasts. He, who would call himself the living bread, descended from heaven, was laid in a manger, literally a place to eat. There was no room in the inn, but there was room in the stable. The Stable was the last place that the world would have looked for Him. Divinity is always where one least expects to find it. No worldly mind would have suspected that He, who makes the sun warm the earth, would one day have need of an ox and an ass to warm Him with their breath. That He, who, in the language of Scriptures, could stop the turning about of our tourists, would have His birthplace dictated by an imperial census. That He who clothed the fields with grass, would Himself be naked. That He, from whose hands came, planets and worlds, would one day have tiny arms that would not be long enough to touch the heads of the cattle. That the feet, that trod the everlasting hills, would be too weak to walk; That the Eternal Word would be dumb; that omnipotence would be wrapped in swaddling clothes; that salvation would lie in a manger; That the birds, which built the nest, would be hatched therein. No one would have ever suspected that God coming to this earth would be so helpless. And that is precisely why so many miss him.”

B. He Endured The Growth And Stress Of A Normal Jewish Boy Of That Time.

Jesus had to learn everything that a Jewish Boy was expected to learn. He attended the synagogue, and there he learned just as everyone learned. As Hebrews put it, *‘He learned obedience through the things that He suffered.’ As a carpenter, He cut his hands just as anyone else would have; He was a peasant, economically poor. “He knew temptation; He knew difficulty; He knew ingratitude and is disappointment. He saw far more clearly than any of us, how the heartlessness and stupidity of some people causes suffering to others. Jesus was a real man.”* (Phillips, Good News; pg. 168)

In all those years of growing up, Jesus was waiting for a sign, and when it finally came, it came from John the Baptist.

Think how He washed His disciples’ feet – those disciples who were quarrelling over their first place at His right and left hand.

III. HE BECAME SUBJECT TO TEMPTATION!

A. Role of Suffering Servant – Look at Isaiah 53:3: *“He despised 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.”*

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Jesus came as the Messiah, but His role of Messiah was not as conquering military leader, but rather as redeeming Saviour – the one who would redeem men from sin through death.

- B. Immediately Following His Baptism, Jesus Was Led Into The Wilderness, Where He Fasted And Prayed For Forty Days And Forty Nights.

After that time, the Tempter spirit to get Jesus to turn the limestone into bread to satisfy His craving for food. This is the temptation to use His powers selfishly and for His own use. Jesus refused to do so. We too are tempted to selfishly use the special gift God has given to us.

The tempter then tried to persuade Jesus to leap off the cliff down right into the Temple court and amaze men into following Him. This is the temptation to accomplish a right and with a wrong means. The right end is the salvation of humanity. The wrong means is sensationalisms. Men, will never be truly, won to Christ through the spectacular or sensational. Remember, "This year's sensation is next year's commonplace."

The tempter then said to Jesus, *"fall down and worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of the world."* What the tempter was saying was, "Compromise! Come to terms with me! Do not pitch your demands quite so high! Wink just a little at evil and questionable things – and then people will follow you in their hordes." But Jesus well knew that to come to terms with the world and to compromise, would be to lose the world. The way of the Cross is the only way to victory. He will never win the world by becoming like the world. We cannot defeat evil by compromising with evil. Therefore, we see that Jesus 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.

- C. In The Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Again Underwent Severe Temptation. He even cried out, *"Father if it be possible, remove this cup from me!" "Nevertheless not my will but thine be done!"*
- D. Again, On The Cross, Jesus Underwent Severe Temptation, When His Persecutors Were Railing On Him. *"Come down from the Cross, and we will believe you."* Jesus had the power to come down from that Cross. We sing that song, "He could have called ten thousand angels, but He died alone for you and me."

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

IV. HOW WEALTHY HE MADE US!

A. He Rescued Us From The Strictures Of Judaism And The Demonic In The Greek World (Fate And Determinism).

1. He saved us from the bondage to the Law. Jesus came to live under the law that He might redeem us from the bondage of the law and set us free! Jesus came that we might know Truth - and truth shall set us free - free from sin's guilt, sin's pollution, sin's power, and someday, sin's presence.
2. Jesus came to save us also from fate and determinism - Greek ideas that paralyzed the ancient world. Jesus showed us the God of Creation, actively and providentially guiding His universe. Man's destiny is not determined by the movement of the stars, but by response to the Eternal Son. There is a plan for every man, which God unfolds through the love relationship initiated by the Son and established with man the redeemed sinner. Thus, hope replaces despair, purpose replaces fate, and choice replaces determinism.

B. He Gave Us a Heavenly Father; became an elder brother to us; and gave us the Holy Spirit as companion. This means that God is here - everywhere present and active and personal. God is for us, with us, and in us - that is what 'Immanuel' means.

Far from God being detached and disinterested in man, God is always taking the initiative in seeking man. There is a story of a woman who was trying to find God. "She had a certain dream which she dreamed more than once, namely that she was standing in front of a thick, plate glass window. As she looked at it, she seemed to see God on the other side. She hammered on the window, trying to attract His attention, but without success. She grew more and more desperate, and began to call to Him and found herself shrieking at the top of her voice. Then a quiet, calm voice at her side said: 'Why are you making so much noise? There is nothing between us perhaps that illustrates our difficulty, does it not? We have been thinking all along that God was somewhere far away, unapproachable, some place that was difficult of access, and we have been groping around for a long time, and all the while He is standing beside us.'" (Marshall; Mr. Jones, Meet the Master; pg. 131)

The God who is the Lofty One is also the God who is the Immanent One - the One who is pleased to dwell with the man that is contrite and humble.

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*“For this is what the high and lofty One says—
he who lives forever, whose name is holy:
“I live in a high and holy place,
but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly
and to revive the heart of the contrite. (Isaiah 57:15)*

*“The Majestic God is the Merciful God – the God who
“revives the spirit of the humble” (Isaiah 57:15a).*

God gives strength to the weak. *“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:29-31)*

The greatest of all revelations is the revelation that God is personally concerned in man, and that God wants to be a personal friend of man. God looks at humanity not only corporately but also individually. “A community canvass was being made. At a certain door, the questioner asked the woman who answered his knock what children she had. She began, ‘Well, there’s Willie, and Horace’. But the canvasser interrupted, ‘Never mind names, I just want numbers.’ The she grew impatient and a bit indignant. ‘They haven’t got numbers’, she protested. ‘Every one of them’s got a name.’ Quite so! They were her children. She was their mother. They had personalities that spoke with all the eloquence of their individual characteristics. She knew them not by number but by name. Therefore, God looks upon His human creatures. Why, according to Isaiah He calls even the starts by names.” (Paul Rees; Stand Up In Praise to God; pgs. 23, 24)

God knows all things that are going on in His world. *“For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings.” (Job 34:21)* Jesus said that God took note of every sparrow that fell to the ground, and that God has perfect count of the number of hairs on a man’s head. God knows the John Doe on the street corner; with all his problems and frustrations, God has an infinite concern for him.

C. He Assured Our Future – growth in grace in this life and a place in God’s presence after death.

Says J.B. Phillips, “‘Heaven’ is not, so to speak, the reward for ‘being a good boy’ (though many people seem to think so, but is the continuation and expansion of a quality of life which begins when a man’s central confidence is transferred from himself to God-become-man. This ‘faith’

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links him here and now with truth and love, and it is significant that Jesus Christ, on more than one occasion is reported, to have spoken of 'eternal life' as being entered into now, though plainly to extend without limitation after the present incident that we call life. The man who believes in the authenticity of His message and puts his confidence in it already possesses the quality of 'eternal life'. *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them. (John 3:36) "Very truly I tell you; whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." (5:24), "Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life." (6:47); He comes to bring men not merely 'life' but life of a deeper and more enduring quality. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10); "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:28) "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (17:3); (Your God Is Too Small; pgs. 127, 128)*

CONCLUSION:

What has God done then, that we often celebrate at Christmas time. God has made us rich, but to make us rich was very costly to God. Jesus was rich but He became poor in order, through His poverty, we might be, made rich. The way God accomplished this purpose is most mysterious and wonderful. "It is fifteen hundred years ago that this apparently invincible Empire (of Rome) utterly collapsed, and all that is left of it is ruins. Yet, the little baby, born in such pitiful humility and cut down as a young man in His prime, commands the allegiance of millions of people all over the world. Although they have never seen Him, He has become friend and companion to innumerable people. This undeniable fact is, by any measurement, the most astonishing phenomenon in human history. It is a solid rock of evidence, which no agnostic can ever explain away. That is why, behind all our fun and games at Christmas-time, we should not try to escape a sense of awe, almost a sense of fright, at what God has done." (Phillips, Good News; pgs. 162, 163)

This is what God has done to make it possible for you to become rich. How will you respond to God's offer of riches? Remember the costliness to God. It costs you nothing, in one sense, but it costs you everything in another sense. You don't have to earn this gift, or deserve this gift, or improve your life before you can receive this gift. All you need to do is to receive this costly gift – and in receiving it, give yourself to the Giver. But when you receive this gift of forgiveness and life and hope and joy, you will naturally want to give yourself to Christ in return for the gift. When you give yourself to God, then God gives you everything that belongs to Christ! You become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ! What an offer! Will you give yourself- your sins and disappointments and failures and despair – all to God, and accept His gift – the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there room in your heart for Jesus? Listen

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to Christ: *“Look! I have been standing at the door and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with Me.”* (Revelations 3:20, Living Bible.)

OPEN YOUR HEART AND LET HIM IN – NOW!

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

CHAPTER 3

"THE GREATEST LOVE STORY!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE – CHAPTER 3

SCRIPTURE: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."* (John 3:16-21)

TEXT: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16)

INTRODUCTION:

John 3:16 describe the most dramatic, most amazing, and love story in all of human history. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

PROPOSITION:

Although we can never plumb the depths of its meaning, let us again look at the heart of the Gospel as revealed in the most familiar verse of the Bible John 3:16.

- I. *"FOR GOD"* – Divine Initiative!
- II. *"SO LOVED THE WORLD"* – Divine Redemption!
- III. *"THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON"*– divine substitution!
- IV. *"THAT WHOSOEVER"* – Universal Offer!
- V. *"BELIEVETH IN HIM"* – Individual Appropriation!
- VI. *"SHOULD NOT PERISH"*- Individual Protection!
- VII. *"BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE"* – Individual Assurance!

CONCLUSION:

Thou Liberator of our souls, deliver every one of us from the bondage to sin and to self. Save our souls from eternal loss, and save our lives for earthly gain! Amen

CHAPTER 3

"THE GREATEST LOVE STORY!"

INTRODUCTION:

There are many great love stories, but the greatest love story of all - the most dramatic, most amazing love story which is summarized in 25 words in John 3:16. It is the Golden text of Scripture! It is the Gospel in a, nutshell!

PROPOSITION:

Although we can never plumb the depths of its meaning, let us again look at the heart of the Gospel as revealed in the most familiar verse of the Bible - John 3:16! Let us move into a simple exposition of this verse.

I. *"FOR GOD"* - Divine Initiative!

God always takes the first step. God always initiates! This divine initiative is what shows clearly the great contrast between Christianity and the other world religions. For instance, Hinduism has Scriptures showing men's austerities in storming heaven's gates to disturb God's calm loftiness through human persistence. However, Christianity declares the startling fact that God always takes the first step - the initiating step. It is not God's reluctance, but man's reluctance that must be, overcome. It is not man searching for God, but God searching for man! It is not man climbing up the ladder to find God, but God climbing down the ladder to find man! In India, there is a picture of an armless god. However, the God of Christianity is not as is God's arm reaching out to lost humanity.

There is a story of a woman who had a nightmare. In her dream, she pictured herself on one side of a very thick plate glass window and she thought she saw God on the other side of the plate window. In her dream she saw herself as alone and lonely and sad, in desperate need of God. In an attempt to get God's attention, she began scream for God with all the volume she had. After pounding and creaming for some time, she felt the touch of a hand on her shoulder, and looking around she saw God standing behind her. God spoke to her, "Daughter, I have been here all this time, so close to you and yet you failed to see me. Why have you been pounding on the window and screaming so loudly. Was my reflection in the glass which you saw?"

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God is nearer than you think. You need not yell for God, for God is as close as a prayer away. Romans 10: 5-7 says: *"Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: 'The man who does these things will live by them.' However, the righteousness that is by faith says; 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (That is, to bring Christ down) "Or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (That is, to bring Christ up from the dead).*

In one of H. G. Wells' books, there is the story of a man of affairs whose mind was so tensed and strained that he was in serious danger of a complete nervous and mental breakdown. His doctor told him that the only thing that could save him was to find the peace that fellowship with God can give. 'What!' he said, 'to think of that, up there, having fellowship with me! I would as soon think of cooling my throat with the Milky Way or shaking hands with the stars!' God, to him, was the completely unfindable." (Barclays Romans, pgs. 70, 71)

But, God is findable, approachable, and present. Reach out and you can touch him in your spirit!

II. *"SO LOVED THE WORLD"* - Divine Redemption!

Make no mistakes about it. God hates sin - the actions and attitudes that degrade men - but God loves men nevertheless. It is man that God came to love, to redeem. Jesus came not to destroy but to save, not to condemn but to forgive, that they might have it more abundantly," said Jesus. Saint Augustine said, "God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love!"

The Cross demonstrates "God's love." The Cross on Calvary is the unveiling of the Cross, which has eternally been on the heart of God! The Cross is the greatest of all revelations concerning God. For the revealed Cross in history is the result of the hidden Cross-on the heart of God! The Cross shows that the heart of the Universe is self-giving, sacrificial love. God is love and the Cross on Mt. Calvary gives concrete expression to that truth. Because God is suffering love, the Cross is an absolute necessity. Only as man could see Jesus on the Cross of Calvary could man see the Christ of the Ages who has always borne a cross in His heart!

Jesus reveals the nature of God. Everything Jesus was, God has always been. When Jesus was suffering on the Cross, God was suffering on the Cross!

Jesus' suffering on the Cross for sin shows that God suffers for sin. God hurts in our hurts, He bleeds when we bleed, He shares our guilt. *"Surely He haith borne our grief's, and carried our sorrows."* (Isaiah 53:4a)

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Jesus' love for humanity was supremely expressed when He suffered for man's sin. *"But God commandeth His love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8)

"It was the Cross which won Kagawa. He already knew the story of Jesus 'who loved men, specially the unhappy ones. Then one day he heard the story of the Cross. 'Is this true?' he asked. 'Quite true', said the missionary. 'Jesus died?' Kagawa said. Myers, the missionary, looked at the stricken boy. 'He died because He loved them', he said. That night Kagawa prayed his first and his constant prayer, 'Oh, God, make me like Christ!'" (Barclay's Men and Affairs; pg. 13)

Kagawa became one of the greatest missionaries of all times in Japan, his home country. At times, he was plagued with weakness, disease, and tuberculosis. However, the love of God - Calvary love - captured and motive Kagawa. At times, as the rain came pouring down; he would stand on the street corners in Japan and cry out, "God is love. He who loves is like God!" Thousands came to know Christ through Kagawa's preaching on the love of God.

III. *"THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON"* - Divine Substitution!

Jesus is God. Therefore, when Jesus died, God died! Jesus took man's penalty. God is righteous and just. God must be consistent in His actions if He is to be consistent and reliable in His character. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" - that is the righteous law of God. For God to remain consistent in His character requires God to exact the penalty for sin, which is death. Sin must be penalized.

However, God is not only just; He is by nature Love. God's just character, requires the death penalty for sin; God's loving character desires the saving of humanity. How can humanity be both saved for heaven, and justly punished for sin? How can the apparent contradiction and requirements of God's justice and God's love be reconciled? There is only one answer and that answer is, found in the Cross. How can God remain just, at the same time justify the ungodly, and redeem a race of men, Only by Divine Substitution! God must take the penalty of sin upon Himself, justly punishing sin in His own body and fulfilling the law's demand for the death penalty. Such Sacrifice - Such Love!

"In a school where student government ruled that anybody stealing should be whipped publicly, a hunchback stole a lunch, and when asked to take off his coat to be flogged, he pitifully begged, 'Oh, no, not that,' for he was ashamed of his crooked spine. A big boy, from whom the lunch had been stolen, arose and asked if there was anything in the rules to prevent his taking the punishment, and when told there was none, he came forward and took it on himself. The hunchback, now a preacher, said he was redeemed through that

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act, for he saw the Cross through it." (Jones, How to Be a Transformed Person, pg. 123)

The Cross saved me from so much. The Christ of the Cross saved me from the humiliation of sinful exposure and from the hell of righteous punishment. The Cross is Christ's great redeeming act for all times!

IV. *"THAT WHOSOEVER"* – Universal Offer!

Jesus died for all! He took the flogging for every person! Therefore, all can be saved if they will!

'Whosoever' includes all the little children of the world, many of whom are tragically neglected and abused? Jesus is the lover of children.

Jesus loves the exploited people of the world. The exploited in Jesus' day were the slaves. The oppressed peoples of the world today are included in the universal offer of 'Whosoever.'

'Whosoever' includes the rich and the poor alike? James, the blood brother of Jesus, wrote, *"Let the brother in humble circumstances glory in his elevation (as a Christian, called to the true riches and to be an heir of God); and the rich (person ought to glory) in being humbled (by being shown his human frailty), because like the glower of the grass he will pass away."* (James 1:9, 10; Amplified Bible)

'Whosoever' includes both the moral and the immoral. "Celsus, an early opponent of Christianity, objected to this attitude, saying that other faiths invited in the respectable, the moral, the upright, but this faith scandalously invites in the riffraff, the immoral, the drunken, the dishonest, and welcomes them! It does! But the riffraff become the respectable, the immoral become the moral, the drunken becomes the sober, and the dishonest become the honest, and live and die for it!" (Jones; How to Be a Transformed Person, pg. 124)

'Whosoever' includes everyone. God's love is as wide as humanity itself. None, however evil, is outside of the scope of God's saving love. 'Whosoever' includes; the young and the old, male and female, free and slave, black, yellow, and white, rich and poor, moral and immoral, learned and illiterate.

V. *"BELIEVETH IN HIM"* – Individual Appropriation!

Christ died to save all, and God calls all to be saved, but these facts do not mean that all persons will automatically be saved. How is a person saved from sin and saved for heaven? The Bible says we are saved by God's grace, through our faith.

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Belief or faith is the key to appropriation of God's salvation. What is belief? To believe is *"to trust in, to rely upon, and to adhere to."* (Amplified Bible) It is transferring one's trust for salvation from self to the Saviour – Christ. It is commitment of one's heart, mind, and life to the all-sufficient power of Christ. It is putting your weight down on Christ!

To trust Christ with your life means to believe that Christ is trustworthy. The object of faith determines the value of faith. The object of the sinner's faith must be Jesus Christ. Christ is perfectly trustworthy. "How did you like the airplane ride?" asked of a nervous man who went up for the first time. "Very well," he replied, "but I never did put my whole weight down!" Faith means putting your whole weight down on God!

Says John Murray, "Faith is not the act of God, it is not God who believes in Christ for salvation; it is the sinner. It is by God's grace that a person is able to believe but faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone. In faith we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation...Faith is a whole-souled movement, of self-commitment to Christ, for salvation from sin and its consequences." (Redemption Accomplished and Applied; pgs. 106, 107)

Some say that it makes no difference what you believe or what you put your faith in, just as long as you are sincere, but one can be sincerely wrong! To place faith in an unreliable object (regardless of your sincerity) will result in a tragic outcome!

An illustration of being sincere is in using a small bath towel as a parachute; regardless of the degree of sincerity, the outcome will be death!

Remember, the object of your faith determines the value of your faith.

Christ is a trustworthy object of your faith. He is sinless. He died for you. He arose again. He alone is able to forgive you. He is the best friend you will ever have. He understands and cares for you. You can believe in Him. He has always kept His word! You can put your weight down on Him, and He will never let you down!

"Believeth" in John 3:16 is the present tense in the Greek New Testament. The present tense is the continuous tense. It means: that it is the person, who persistently, habitually, and continuously believes in the Son who will not perish but who will have eternal life. Eternal life is not a deposit, which God gives a person who momentarily believes, but eternal life is a relationship of love, which is meant to last a lifetime, maintained with God through obedience and faith. To experience eternal life in heaven, one must follow Christ all of one's life. *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!"* God's faithfulness and power to save and to keep are never in question. It is a

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question of the continuance of the believer's commitment, trust, and belief. The faithfulness of God can never avail for the unfaithfulness of men.

*"If we endure, we will also reign with him.
If we disown him, he will also disown us;
If we are faithless, he will remain faithful,
For He cannot disown Himself."* (2 Timothy 2:12, 13)

VI. ***"SHOULD NOT PERISH"*** -- Individual Protection!

Those who appropriate the grace of God through a continuing commitment to Christ are those who are continually renewed inwardly and outwardly, and thus, are saved from disintegration and degeneration. Those who do not believe in Christ are gradually perishing – in attitudes, in relationships, and in physical constitution. To persist in unbelief is ultimately to perish eternally!

To believe in Christ and serve Christ is to save both your earthly life and your eternal soul!

"A young man, some years ago, lay dying. His mother believed him to be a Christian and was greatly surprised and distressed one day when, on passing his room, she heard him say, 'Lost! Lost! Lost!' Immediately she opened the door and cried, 'My boy is it possible you have lost hope in Christ, now you are dying?' 'No, Mother, no!' he replied, 'it is not that. I have a hope beyond the grace but I have lost my life! My life has been only spent for myself. I have lived for this world – and now - while dying, I have given myself to Christ – BUT MY LIFE IS LOST!" (Shoe-Leather Faith, pg. 331)

Believing in Christ will not only save you from a wasted earthly life, but finally it will save your soul from perishing eternally.

John wrote; *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire."* (Revelations 20:12, 15)

The Bible says that God *"is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (II Peter 3:9, NIV)

Failure to believe in Christ ultimately means eternal destruction and hell! In hell, ones memory is retained. Hell is a place stripped of all pleasant things such as beauty, family, and children. God never prepared hell for human beings but only for the devil and his demons, but those who follow Satan, will have to ultimately go where Satan goes, – to hell!

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Sir Thomas Scott, the former Lord Chancellor of England, said on his deathbed: "Until this moment I thought there was neither God nor hell. Now I know and feel there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty." (World Aflame; pg. 756)

Voltaire said in his dying words, "I am abandoned by God and man! I shall go to hell! O Christ! O Jesus Christ!" (Shoe-Leather Faith; pg. 141)

VII. *"BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE"* - Individual Assurance!

Christ came to abolish death. *"...if a man keep my saying he shall never see death," said Jesus* (John 8:51). Christ taught, "Death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality...Heaven is the continuation and expansion of a quality of life which begins when a man's central confidence is transferred from himself to God-become-man." (Phillips Readings; pg. 211)

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. My grandmother cared for her and was caring for her when my aunt died. The sorrow following my aunt's death, which my grandmother felt 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 dressed in garments of pure white, her face radiant with the countenance of heavenly strength and health. My grandmother knew that 'Aunt Mary' was with Jesus. Suspended in mid-air and looking upwards toward heaven Aunt Mary' seemed to be saying to my grandmother, 'come on up, Edna.'

CONCLUSION: - Prayer

"We thank you for Jesus whose death was a demonstration of your eternal love. Greater love hath no man than this that a sinless man lay down his life for sinful humanity. We thank you, Father for Jesus' sacrificial, selfless life, for Jesus' substitutionary death, and for Jesus' glorious bodily resurrection. Because Jesus died for our sins once-and-for-all, we can enjoy forgiveness and eternal life. We thank you for total cleansing from sin through the shed blood of Christ. We know that without the shedding of Christ's blood, there is no remission of sins. Life is in the blood! When Jesus' blood was shed God's life was poured out-for each of us."

"Thou Liberator of our souls, deliver every one of us from the bondage to sin and to self. Save our souls from eternal loss, and save our lives for earthly gain! Amen."

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CHAPTER 4
"THE ULTIMATE ALTERNATIVES!"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE – CHAPTER 4

SCRIPTURE: *“So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” ¹⁸For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. ¹⁹Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”¹⁸For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. ¹⁹Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. ²¹For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²²Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. “I tell you the truth; whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.” (John 5:16-30)*

TEXT: *“I tell you the truth; whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24)*

INTRODUCTION:

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

The truth regarding life, death, judgment, and the afterlife are fundamental concerns of all men. Here (John 5) we find those truths discussed.

PROPOSITION:

Let us attempt to analyze Jesus' discourse regarding His unique relationship with God, and try to understand first, why Jesus claimed to be the Life-Giver, and secondly, why Jesus is inevitably the Judge of all men.

- I. JESUS THE LIFE-GIVER!
 - A. Source of Life
 - B. Offer of Life

- II. JESUS THE JUDGE!
 - A. Necessity of Judgment
 - B. Results of Judgment

CONCLUSION:

Jesus came to earth to carry out the Father's plan, which was the redemption and salvation of man. He offers new and abundant life to all men. Man's response to Jesus determines man's eternal destiny.

CHAPTER 4

"THE ULTIMATE ALTERNATIVES!"

INTRODUCTION:

Preceding the discourse of Jesus, which you read, Jesus healed a man who had been crippled for thirty-eight years. After Jesus healed the man, the man lifted up his bed and joyously walked. When the Jews saw the cured man, they did not rejoice with him, as would be expected. Instead, they frowned at him for carrying his bed, for this day was the Sabbath, and it was a serious offense to life burdens on the Sabbath. When the cured man was questioned, he told the Jews that Jesus had cured him. Jesus then became the target of the Jews' bitter opposition. To the Jews, Jesus was a law-breaker and serious offender.

To understand this incident, one must understand the Jews' legalistic observance of the Law. To the general principle given by God in the Ten Commandments, regarding Sabbath observance, the Jews had added thousands of little rules and regulations. The Jews devised thirty-nine different classifications of work, one definition of work being the carrying of a burden. The Legalistic Jews further defined what a burden consisted of. To them, it was a burden to carry a needle in ones robe on the Sabbath, and thus sinful. Some Jews argued that it was a burden, and thus sinful, to wear artificial teeth or a wooden leg. These petty details were a matter of life and death. One can see why the Jews were so critical of this man, carrying his bed on the Sabbath. The actual words of the law were, "If anyone carries anything from a public place to a private house on the Sabbath intentionally he is punishable by death by stoning."

Jesus' discourse to the Jews following this healing grew out of the Jews' challenge to Jesus that He had broken the Sabbath. This challenge gave Jesus the opportunity, to fearlessly, assert His claim to deity, and to reveal His unique relationship with the Father.

This healing on the Sabbath mainly served as a springboard by which Jews could delve into a penetrating discussion regarding his divine relationship with God. The truths regarding life, death, judgment, and the afterlife are fundamental concern of all men. Here we find those truths discussed.

PROPOSITION:

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

Let us attempt to analyze Jesus’ discourse regarding His unique relationship with God, and try to understand first, why Jesus claimed to be the Life-Giver, and, secondly why Jesus is inevitably the Judge of all men.

I. JESUS THE LIFE GIVER!

Jesus oftentimes claimed to be the Life-Giver. He said to the Jews at this time, “This is the truth I tell you – he who listens to my word and believes in Him who sent me has eternal life.” (5:24a) what was the source of this life which Jesus offered, and to whom did He offer this life?

A. Source of Life

The Jews’ opposition arose over Jesus’ breaking of their Sabbath Law. What was the Jews’ understanding of God’s relationship to the Sabbath?

- (1) The Jews readily acknowledged that God did not stop working on the Sabbath. Although God rested from His creation, it was believed that God continued to exercise His works of judgment, mercy, compassion, and love.
- (2) When Jesus claimed to have the right to work on the Sabbath, Jesus was claiming to have a divine right.
- (3) When Jesus claimed to have this right to work, the Jews charged him of making himself equal with God, which to them meant that he was rebelliously asserting independence from God.
- (4) Jesus said that He was not rebellious or independent of God, but instead He had intimate fellowship with His Father. Jesus said, *“My Father continues His work until now, and so do I continue mine.”* (5:17) Jesus never referred to God as ‘Our Father’, but always as ‘My Father’. Jesus claimed to have a very special relationship with God, different from any other man.

When Jesus referred to God as His unique Father, this doubly incited the Jews’ anger. The Scripture says, *“Because of this the Jews tried all the harder to find a way to kill Him, because not only was He habitually breaking their Sabbath, but He also kept on saying that God was His own Father, thereby making Himself equal with God.”* (5:17-18)

Despite the hatred of the Jews, Jesus said, *“This is the truth I tell you – the Son cannot do anything which proceeds from Himself. He can only do what He sees the Father doing. In whatever way the Father acts,*

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the Son likewise acts in the same way; for the Father loves the Son and has shown Him everything that He does. And He will show Him greater works than these, so that you will be moved to wondering amazement." (5:19-20)

What Jesus may be saying, is this. This is my Father's universe and world. He is continually working for the salvation of humanity. I am His unique Son who has always enjoyed the most intimate fellowship with the Father. My Father and I are one in purpose, desires, and mind. My relationship to the Father is so close that I can only desire His will. I am His Son and thus, the most perfect expression of His person and will. I have been sent to earth to help accomplish His plan of salvation. My work is the same work as my Father's - which labor is a ceaseless work of redemptive compassion. This work must be carried on at all times - whether it is on the Sabbath or not."

Jesus' love for God, His Father, made Jesus feel compelled to do what His Father did and to work ceaselessly as His Father worked. Jesus was freely obeying a higher law - the law of love to God and not submitting to the petty Sabbath laws of man. Jesus could have asserted independence from God, but he did not because of His love and because of His intimate, tender relationship with God. It was this love that caused Jesus to say: *"He could only do what He saw the Father doing."* (John 5:19)

Because Jesus is one with the Father in mind, words, and actions, Jesus also gives life. When Jesus claimed to be able to give life, He really claimed to be divine. The Jews believed that God alone could give life.

Jesus' breaking of the Sabbath, Jesus' address to God as His special Father, and Jesus' claim to give life, all pointed to him as being divine. Jesus is saying that God is the Source of life, and that because Jesus is the Son of God, He has authority to *"make alive those whom He wishes."* (John 5:21)

B. Offer of Life

Throughout Jesus' entire ministry, He pointed men to Himself as the Giver of life, and offered men a unique quality of life. Jesus said, *"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man comes to the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) *He said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* (John 10:10) Jesus called Himself the resurrection. *"I myself am the resurrection and the life. The man who believes in me will live even though he dies, and anyone who is alive and believes in me will never die at all."* (John 11:25-26) Jesus called Himself the

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Bread of Life. By this, He meant that He Himself "is the essential without which real life can neither begin nor go on." (Barclay's John, pg. 222) Man feels alienated and alone, and hungers for a deep, satisfying relationship. Through Christ, man enters into a new relationship with God and his fellowmen. Jesus said, *"I myself am the bread of life. The man who comes to me will never be hungry and the man who believes in me will never again be thirsty."* (John 6:35) He said, *"I assure you that the man who trusts in Him (God) has eternal life already. I myself am the bread of life...I myself am the living bread which came down from Heaven, and if anyone eats this bread he will live forever. The bread which I will give is my body and I shall give it for the life of the world."* (John 6:47, 48, 51) To the parched soul, Jesus offers Himself as the Living Water. He said, *"If any man is thirsty, he can come to me and drink! The man, who believes in me, as the scripture said, will have rivers of living water flowing from his inmost heart."* (John 6:37-38)

Jesus said He wanted all people to find this life. *"I will never refuse anyone who comes to me. For I have come down from Heaven, not to do what I want, but to do the will of him who sent me. The will of Him who sent me is that I should not lose anything of what He has given me, but should raise it up when the last day comes. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and trusts in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up when the last day comes."*

Jesus showed through His deeds of compassion that He came to bring life. When He healed the crippled man in the episode preceding this discourse, Jesus showed that, He was interested in the physical well-being of men. All of the miracles were signs that God's power was with Jesus in order that He might give physical and spiritual life to men.

What happens when Jesus gives new life to a man? (1) A man receives a new will, which enables him to have the power to realize his aspirations, which at one time his sin kept him from attaining. (2) A man receives a new heart, which can feel the grief, sorrow, and suffering of others. (3) A man receives a new frame of mind, which causes him to become mentally alert to new truths. (4) A man receives a new spirit which is sensitive to sin and which easily repents over wrong.

Jesus is the source of abundant life, which He offers to all men. Whosoever will may come to him for new life.

II. JESUS THE JUDGE!

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To claim to give life and to judge are claims of God Himself – thus, Jesus is claiming to divine by claiming such rights!

Jesus said in His discourse to the Jews, *"Neither does the Father Judge anyone, but He has given the whole process of judging to the Son, that all may honour the Son, as they honour the Father."* Why should it be necessary for Jesus to be Judge, and what are the results of His judgment?

A. Necessity of Judgment

Jesus made it clear that He came into the world, not to condemn man, but save man. Jesus' entire ministry was a redemptive mission. Jesus said He came to seek and to save those who are lost. As the Great Physician He touched the diseased, crippled bodies of men, and restored them to health. He spoke tender words of forgiveness to sinful outcasts who were, despised in the eyes of society. He gave back to men their self-respect and true manhood. He came to heal, not to destroy. Jesus came not for judging the world but of saving the world. He desires that all should be saved.

"...who wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time." 1 Timothy 2:4-6

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." Romans 5:18

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." Acts 17:30

"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." Revelation 22:17

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"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2

However, because of who Jesus is – the Life-Giver – He inevitable becomes the standard by which all men are judged. A man is judged according to the type of response, he gives to Christ. Jesus' purpose is to give life, but when a person refuses Jesus' offer of life, that person has automatically chosen death, and thus has really judged himself. Christ separates men into two groups – those who have accepted life and those who have rejected Christ and chosen death.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left." Matthew 25:31-33

Perhaps this truth can better be understood if a few examples from everyday life are cited.

A parent may say, "The teacher flunked Johnnie". The parent really knows that Johnnie has flunked himself. The teacher's only desire was that Johnnie would do good work and get fine grades. The teacher offered a good grade to Johnnie, on the condition that Johnnie would work for it. Because Johnnie failed to meet this condition, he flunked himself. The teacher did not flunk him; she was only the standard by which success or failure would be determined.

When we say that Christ has judged a person, we really mean that a person has judged himself. Jesus' only desire is that a person finds life in God. Jesus offers life to the person, on the condition that the person will accept the offered life. Because the person fails to meet this condition, he has judged himself (flunked himself). Jesus did not really judge him. He is only the standard by which success or failure, life or death, is determined.

Suppose a person went into a famous art gallery. The purpose of a famous painting is to impart joy and aesthetic appreciation to the onlooker. The aesthetic capacity of the onlooker is; judged according to the type of response that the onlooker displays. If the onlooker is awed to silent contemplation as he views the painting he is, judged as being a mature person with a deep aesthetic appreciation. However, if the onlooker frivolously explains: "Isn't that cute!" The onlooker is immediately judged as a, shallow, immature, and childish person with no esthetic values and appreciation. The painting is not judged, but the onlooker is judged according to the type of response that is made. The

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painting is only the standard by which a person judges his own aesthetic values.

A person never judges the worth of Shakespeare. His works are already established as, great literature. A person does judge his own literary profundity, according to the type of response that is given to Shakespeare's works.

Christ is simply the standard by which all men are judged. Man really judges his own sense of values, when he either accepts or rejects Christ's offer of life. The person who accepts Christ values eternity more than time. The person who rejects Christ values the transitory, fleeting pleasures of time, more than the permanent joys of eternal heaven.

“Jesus is the touch stone by which all men are tested; reaction to Him is the test by which all men are divided.” (Barclay; 190 x John Vol.1) One cannot have the Father (God) without the Son (Jesus). Thus, those who want to speak highly of God without speaking highly of Jesus, have neither the Father nor the Son.

B. RESULTS OF JUDGMENT

Jesus said, “This is the truth I tell you – the hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and, when they have heard, they will live. For, as the Father has life in Himself, so He has foreseen to the Son to have life in Himself; and He has given Him authority to exercise the process of judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this, for the hour is coming when everyone in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who have done good will come out to a resurrection which will give them life, but those whose actions were base will come out to a resurrection which will issue in judgment.” (John 5:25-29)

Jesus taught men that the grave was not final. He spoke of an afterlife. The sober fact of Scripture is that all men will face God individually at the final Great Judgment. Every man will be judged according to, what his response was to Jesus Christ during his lifetime. Barclay so well summarizes this truth when he writes, “All through life we are fitting or unfitting ourselves for the life which is to come; we are making ourselves fit or unfit for the presence of God. In this life, we can choose the way, which leads to life, or the way, which leads to death. It is the tremendous truth that every deed, we do in this life is, either making or marring a destiny, winning or losing a crown. In this life a man can either make himself fit to win life, or he can commit that most

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terrible and tragic of all things – spiritual suicide." (Barclay's John, pg. 192)

To reject Christ's offer of eternal life, is to commit spiritual suicide. The Bible says that God is not willing that any person should be lost or perish, but that all men come to him for life. How sad Jesus' heart was when the Jews rejected Him. He said to them, *"You are not willing to come to me to have real life!"* (John 5:40)

Jesus is Saviour Now, but Judge hereafter.
(Mercy spurned is judgment earned).
God's perfect will is salvation for all:
God's permissible will is condemnation for
God-rejecters who refuse the universal offer of life!

CONCLUSION:

The Bible says, *"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body."* (II Corinthians 5:10) *For the one who has rejected Christ's offer of eternal life, there is a "terrifying expectation of judgment and a fierce fire which will consume God's enemies."* (Hebrews 10:27)

Jesus' claims to be the Son of God must be faced. Jesus came to earth to carry out the Father's plan, which was the redemption and salvation of man. Jesus came to earth to bring life. He offers new and abundant life to all men. Man's response to Jesus determines man's eternal destiny. To accept Jesus means abundant life, on this earth, and eternal life in heaven after the death of the body. The invitation to life is given to all men.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelations 22:17) The choice is yours. Which will it be – life or death?

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CHAPTER 5

"THE POWER OF THE CROSS!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 5

SCRIPTURE: *"He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

*Surely, he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him
and by his wounds, we are healed.*

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:3-6*

"Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him." (John 19:1-6,)

" So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It reads JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. (John 19:16-19)

TEXT: *"Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles," (I Corinthians 1:22, 23)*

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INTRODUCTION:

If Jesus were here today, He would have the same mission as He had twenty centuries ago. Jesus would have many followers, but would also have bitter opponents who would plot to kill him.

PROPOSITION:

Paul preached that man could only be saved through Christ's death.

- I. THE CONTEMPT OF THE CROSS!
 - A. Misery of the Cross.
 - B. Mistreatment of Jesus.

- II. THE CONQUEST OF THE CROSS!
 - A. How Did Jesus Face The Cross?
 - 1. Jesus Willingly Surrendered Himself to the Cross.
 - 2. Jesus Experienced An Agonizing Struggle.
 - 3. Jesus Exercised Trust in His Father.

 - B. Why Did Jesus Die On The Cross?

 - C. What Is The Meaning of Christ's Death?
 - 1. The Cross Made Men Think.
 - 2. The Cross Satisfied God's Justice.
 - 3. The Cross Fully Revealed God's Love.

CONCLUSION:

Christ died on the Cross of shame and contempt because man needs a Saviour – He came not to condemn the world but that the world might have life through Him.

CHAPTER 5

"THE POWER OF THE CROSS!"

INTRODUCTION:

If Jesus had come during our time, He probably would have died in a gas chamber or in an electric chair. Yet the way in which He died tho thousand years ago was much more painful and shameful.

If Jesus were here today, He would have the same mission as He had twenty centuries ago. His mission would be love. If Jesus were on earth today, He would associate Himself with sinners and speak of the Kingdom of God. He would rebuke hypocrisy wherever He saw it, even if it was seen in religious people. Jesus would have many followers, but would also have bitter opponents who would plot to kill Him.

However, unjust means, modern man would be able to eliminate Jesus by means of the electric chair or the gallows. Jesus would challenge men to follow him, and tell that that they must be willing to go to the gallows for Him. If Jesus were on earth today and went to the electric chair, all would forsake Him as they did in the first century.

PROPOSITION:

Paul preached that man could only be saved through Christ's death. Paul wanted to know nothing among those to whom he preached except Jesus Christ and him crucified. *"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* (1 Corinthians 2:2)

How did Jesus face the cross and why did He die on the cross? What is the meaning of Jesus' death? The answers to these questions defy human understanding. Nevertheless, we must try to answer them.

Let us first see the barbarity of the cross as a death instrument, and realize the terrible mistreatment that Jesus underwent. Let us then try to understand the reason for Jesus' death.

I. THE CONTEMPT OF THE CROSS!

A. Misery of the Cross

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Klausner a Jewish writer, describes crucifixion as “the most terrible and cruel death which man has ever devised for taking vengeance on his fellow-men. Cicero describes it as “the 0cruelst and the most horrible torture.” Tacitus called it a torture only fit for slaves.” (Barclay’s Matthew, vol. 2, pg. 402) Barclay refers to Klausner to further describe the crucifixion: “The criminal was fastened to his cross, already a bleeding mass from the scourging. There he hung to die of hunger, thirst, and exposure, unable even to defend himself from the torture of the gnats and flies, which settled on his naked body and on his bleeding wounds. It is not a pretty picture – but that is what Jesus Christ suffered – willingly, for us.” (pg. 402)

The criminal carried his cross beam to the scene of crucifixion where the upright of the cross was waiting. The Criminal was led to the scene of crucifixion by as long a route as possible in order that all might see and take warning. It is no wonder that the scourged, exhausted Jesus fell under the weight of the Crossbeam. Under such circumstances, an onlooker was compelled to carry the Crossbeam. Nails were driven in to the hands, and the feet usually were bound loosely to the cross. The dying thief was oftentimes offered a mixture of wine and frankincense, as an act of mercy to deaden the senses. Jesus refused such an offer and endured agonizing pain.

Jesus not only endured such pain and shame as is normally associated with the cross, but he also endured the bitter mockery of his persecutors while he was dying on the cross.

B. Mistreatment Of Jesus

We have already seen the torture and mistreatment that Jesus endured as he carried his cross and endured the agonizing pain of the cross. Jesus endured what every crucified criminal endured. However, Jesus went to the cross after he had received the grossest sort of injustice at his trial. Jesus went to the cross as an innocent victim, as we can well see after investigating the scene of his trial. Let us see the terrible mistreatment of Jesus before he was crucified.

The Jews hated Jesus so much that they broke their own laws of justice. Let us see the many ways in which the Jews violated their own laws.

All criminal cases must be tried and completed during the daytime, and could not take place at the Passover season at all. Jesus’ trial took place in secrecy at night and during the Passover season. If a verdict was guilty, a night must elapse before the pronouncement of verdict in order that feelings for mercy might arise. No meeting of the Sanhedrin

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was valid unless it met in a certain designated place in the Temple precincts. There must be two witnesses who were separately examined and who had no contact with each other. False witnesses were punishable by death. The evidence for an accused innocence must first be laid down and then his guilt. The Jews disregarded these laws of justice, and plotted for Jesus' death.

After Jesus confessed that, He was the Messiah he was accused of blasphemy. Barclay describes what then happened: “Then there followed the spitting on Him, the buffeting Him, the slapping of His face, and the mockery of Him. Even the externals of justice, were forgotten and the venomous hatred of the Jewish authorities broke through. That meeting in the night began as a court of justice and ended in a frenzied display of hatred, in which there was no attempt to maintain even the superficialities of impartial justice.” (Barclay's Matthew, vol. 2, pg. 392)

The next day Jesus was brought, before Pilate, the Roman Governor, to have him sentenced to death. The Jews did not have authority to crucify Jesus. Only a Roman authority could condemn a Jew to death. The Jewish leaders knew that Pilate would not listen to their accusation of Jesus' blasphemy, so they trumped up some false political charges. They charged Jesus, as a revolutionary, who incited the people not to pay their taxes and charged him as claiming to be a king.

Pilate well knew that Jesus was not a revolutionary, and was impressed over Jesus' dignified silence and powerful presence. Pilate however was afraid to submit to this awesome power, and therefore sought to escape responsibility for right positive action. Instead of acting courageously, Pilate subsided to the mob's cry to release Barabbas, a political prisoner, instead of Jesus. Pilate then washed his hands in a futile attempt to release himself from guilt. He played the role of a coward and let an innocent man die.

Pilate next had Jesus scourged. Barclay describes the terrible torture of scourging. “The victim was stripped; his hands were tied behind him, and he was tied to a post with his back bent double and conveniently exposed to the lash. The last itself was a long leather thong, studded at intervals with sharpened pieces of bone and pellets of lead. Such scourging always-preceded crucifixion and ‘it reduced the naked body to stripe of raw flesh, and inflamed and bleeding welts.’ Men died under it, and men lost their reason under it, and few remained conscious to the end of it.” (Barclays Matthew, vol. 2, pg. 400)

This then is a brief description of the horrible mistreatment and agony that Jesus endured as an innocent man.

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The question that is uppermost in our minds at this point is, ‘How did Jesus face the cross and why did he have to die?’

The Cross, on which Christ died, was not merely a contemptuous instrument of death, but also a symbol of victory. To understand the conquest of the cross let us ask a series of questions, the answers to which all of us are seeking.

II. THE CONQUEST OF THE CROSS!

A. How Did Jesus Face The Cross?

Throughout Jesus ministry Jesus periodically reminded His disciples that He must suffer and die. Matthew records that He must suffer; *“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”* (Matthew 16:21)

1. Jesus Willingly Surrendered Himself to the Cross.

No one compelled Jesus to die. Jesus said to his listeners one day, *“I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”* (John 10:17-18) Jesus could have called ten thousand angels to his rescue, but he refused to. He died willingly and alone.

2. Jesus Experienced An Agonizing Struggle.

While Jesus’ disciples slept in the Garden at the hour of greatest crisis, Jesus suffered intense agony of soul. Matthew tells the account: *“Then he said to them, “My soul is much distressed with a distress like death. Stay here, and watch with me.” He went a little way forward and fell on His face in prayer. ‘My Father,’ He said, “If it is able, let this cup pass from me. But let it be not as I will, but as you will.”...He went away a second time and prayed. “My Father,” He said, “if it is not possible for this to pass from me unless I drink it, your will be done.”* (Matthew 26:38, 39, 42, Barclay’s Translation)

Barclay comments on this agony. *“This is no play-acting this was a struggle in which the outcome swayed in the balance. The salvation of the world hung in the balance in the Garden of Gethsemane, for even then, Jesus might have turned back, and God’s purpose would have been frustrated. At this moment all*

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that Jesus knew was that He must go on and ahead there lay a cross.” (Barclay’s Matthew, vol. 2, pg. 385)

3. Jesus Exercised Trust in His Father.

Beyond the bleak darkness of the Garden, Jesus saw the blazing light of the Resurrection. Although Jesus in His humanity could not understand the necessity of his death and even sought His Father to remove the bitter cup from Him, He faced the cross with faith in God that there would be a victorious outcome. Jesus was able to submit Himself to his captors. It was because he had already committed Himself unreservedly to His Father.

B. Why Did Jesus Die On The Cross?

This is perhaps the most difficult question to answer. It is because man is finite and cannot completely perceive the infinite counsels of God Almighty. Rev. Bastian said of Christ’s suffering: “It all defies reason, not because it is unreasonable but because it goes beyond reason. It originates in the eternal counsels of a holy God who cannot look lightly on sin but cannot turn easily away from the sinner.” (The Pastor Speaks – The Midweek Reminder of March 15, 1967) John Stott comments on the cross of Christ in these words: “The cross is the pivotal event in history. Small wonder that our puny minds cannot fully take it in! One day the veil will be altogether removed, and all riddles will be solved.” (Basic Christianity – John Stott, pg. 88)

Although we cannot fully understand why Christ had to die on the cross, we do know that our salvation depends solely upon Christ’s death. We must therefore attempt to understand the reason as best we can.

About one thing we are certain. Christ did not die because of any personal guile or sin. The Bible says that, “*Jesus did not sin; neither was guile found in his mouth.*” (I Peter 22, AV) Jesus was the perfect, sinless Son of God.

It is clear the Jesus did not die for Himself, but for others. Christ died for all of humanity because every man is sinful and in need of a Savior, who can forgive sin and restore man to a right relationship with God. Man, was created, to have perfect fellowship with God, but because of man’s rebellious disobedience, man fell from grace and became alienated from God.

The Scriptures teach that man is sinful and in need of a Savior, “*There is none righteous, no, not one...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*”

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"For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Romans 5:10);

*"The fool says in his heart,
"There is no God."
They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;
there is no one who does good.*

*The LORD looks down from heaven
on all humanity
to see if there are any who understand,
any who seek God.
All have turned away, all have become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one. (Psalm 14:1-3);*

*"We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6);*

*All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
we all shrivel up like a leaf,
and like the wind our sins sweep us away. (Isaiah 64:6)*

Man's futile attempt to excuse sin and suppress guilt only leads to mental and physical sickness. Man's sense of sin is not an 'inferiority complex', but a real sickness, 'that must be dealt with'.

What then is the reason that Christ died? Christ died for others in order that he might heal their sin-sick souls.

C. What Is The Meaning Of Christ's Death?

Let us probe more deeply. What, was accomplished when Christ died?

1. The Cross Made Men Think.

It is said of Abraham Lincoln, that he was in some ways much more popular after his death, and then he was during his life. The greatness of Lincoln was seen in his hour of death. One of

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Lincoln's critical opponents paid homage to Lincoln after he died, and considered his death to be a great loss.

Christ's words were powerful and convincing, but his death-awakened men even more. The centurion cried out, *"Truly this man was the Son of God."* The sacrificial character of Jesus is best shown on the cross.

2. The Cross Satisfied God's Justice.

Why did Jesus cry out on the cross, *"My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?"* It was because Christ was bearing the penalty of all men's sins upon Himself. *"The curse resting on transgressors was transferred to Jesus on the cross."* (Stott's comment on Galatians 3:10, Basic Christianity)

In the Old Testament, animals were sacrificed to atone for the sins of people. The blood of these animals was periodically shed to symbolize the future perfect sacrifice of God for sins, which was Jesus himself.

Peter saw in Jesus the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering servant: *"But there they are, overwhelmed with dread, where there was nothing to dread. God scattered the bones of those who attacked you; you put them to shame, for God despised them."* (Isaiah 53:5) He said that Jesus *"bare our sins in his own body on the tree that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by those stripes ye were healed."* (I Peter 2:24) *"Paul declared that God made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (II Corinthians: 21)

It is because Jesus bore all of the accumulated sins of the world – past, present, future – which God could not look upon Christ. Habakkuk of the Old Testament wrote about God: *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."* (Habakkuk 1:13) God hates sin, and since Christ bore man's sins, God hid his face from Christ and temporarily abandoned Him.

Sin, cannot go unpunished because 'it is the breaking of God's laws'. Christ took man's penalty. Sin has been punished once and for all, through Christ's death. If I accept Christ's death, as the death that I should have undergone for my own sins: then I am forgiven of my sins and released from any personal penalty.

3. The Cross Fully Revealed God's Love.

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God hates sin and could not look upon Christ who bore man's sins. However, God has always loved sinners, and perfectly expressed that love in Christ.

It was Christ's love for sinners that sent him to the cross.

Because He put the self-righteous Jewish leaders into the same category as the publicans, prostitutes, and sinners, they hated Christ and nailed Him to the Cross.

It was God, who sent Christ to die. It was because God so greatly loved the world that Christ came. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

The Cross then reveals God's love as nothing else could. Barclay says, “The effect of the Cross changed, not the heart of God, but the heart of man. It was man who needed to be reconciled, not God. It is entirely against all Pauline thought to think of Jesus Christ pacifying an angry God, or to think that in some way God's wrath was turned to love, and God's judgment was turned to mercy, because of something which Jesus did.” (More New Testament Words, Barclay, pg. 106)

Martin Luther's discovery of God's love is worth noting. Luther had been raised to think God as an angry Judge who might be appeased. Luther pictured God as a Judge sitting on a rainbow, ready to consume man and plunge him to hell for his sins. When Luther was studying Psalms twenty-two, his attention was arrested by the verse, *“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* It was after studying this Scripture that Luther's conception of God was changed. He realized that Christ was forsaken, abandoned, and alienated in order that Christ might identify himself with humanity who possessed the same feelings because of sin. Luther no longer viewed God solely in terms of an avenging Judge in the heavens, but rather as a loving Savior who bore man's sins. Rainton says of this experience of Luther: “Luther, as no one before him in more than a thousand years, sensed the import of the miracle of divine forgiveness.” (The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century – by Roland Rainton, pg. 34) The most important meaning of the Cross is found in divine forgiveness. Through Christ's death, man is delivered from the bondage of sin.

It is only through the Cross that man can be forgiven of his sins. The Jews attempted to attain salvation through self –

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righteousness. This is impossible, because God views man's righteousness as filthy rags. The Greek attempted to attain salvation through wisdom or intellectual achievements. This is impossible because man merely becomes a more sophisticated sinner, if he depends solely on education. *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death.”* (Proverbs 14:12) God's way is the way of the Cross. The way of the Cross leads to heaven. All other ways end in destruction.

CONCLUSION:

Christ died on the Cross of shame, and contempt because man needs a Saviour – He came not to condemn the world but that the world might have life through Him. Stott well expresses man's greatest need: “We do not need a lecture; we need a Saviour. It is not the education of the mind only which can help; it is a change of heart. Man needs power, not advice. He has found the secret of physical power. His discoveries in the realm of atomic physics are spreading alarm throughout the world.

Now man needs spiritual power, power to set him free from himself, power to conquer and control himself, power to give him moral character to match his scientific achievement.” (Basic Christianity, pg. 78) Christ said that He would receive all who would come to Him for forgiveness. Have you come to the Saviour? If not, come to Him now.

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CHAPTER 6
"PERSONALITIES AROUND THE CROSS:
PETER!"

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OUTLINE – CHAPTER 6

SCRIPTURES: *"Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "This very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same. (Matthew 26:31-35)*

"Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" At that time, Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." (Matthew 26:48-56)

"But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome." (Matthew 26:58)

"Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away." Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly." (Matthew 26:69-75)

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TEXT: *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”* (1 Corinthians 10:12)

INTRODUCTION:

Peter was destined to become one of the greatest of all Christian leaders, in spite of all his failures and sins.

PROPOSITION:

Peter was a man of great potential, great weakness, and finally, a man of great usefulness, when the Holy Spirit took control of his life.

- I. PETER WAS OVER-CONFIDENT!
- II. PETER DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF THE MASTER!
 - A. Peter’s Reckless Courage
 - B. Peter’s Denial
- III. PETER GENUINELY REPENTED OF HIS SIN AND TURNED TO THE MASTER!

CONCLUSION:

Peter is the man who overcame his weakness. We too can overcome our weakness and continue to follow Christ.

CHAPTER 6

"PERSONALITIES AROUND THE CROSS" – 'PETER!'

INTRODUCTION:

Peter was destined to become one of the greatest of all Christian leaders, in spite of all his failures and sins. "In his honor the greatest cathedral of all time was built on the very place where the Emperor Nero drove his chariot through his gardens, illuminated by the burning bodies of the Christian martyrs. In his honor, the great Michelangelo designed that great cathedral. There you will see the famous statue of Peter, worn smooth by the kisses of the Pilgrims who have journeyed there from all parts of the globe." (Sermon Builder; August 1972, pg. 17)

No name is mentioned more in the Gospels, than Peter's name, He is always first named in the lists of the disciples. He was the first to recognize Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. He was the first to speak up on the Mount of Transfiguration with his impulsive suggestion. *'Let's put up three tents and stay here.'* He was the first to enter the empty tomb when John and he ran to the sepulcher on Resurrection Sunday." (Bastian's Sermon on Peter)

Jesus "spoke words of approval, and praise, and even blessing to Peter the like of which He never spoke to any other man. And at the same time, and almost in the same breath, He said harder things to Peter than He ever said to any other of His twelve disciples, unless it was to Judas." (Whyte's Bible Characters; pg. 37)

PROPOSITION:

Peter was a man of great potential, great weakness, and finally, a man of great usefulness, when the Holy Spirit took control of his life. Certain important statements can be said of Peter, each of which is a lesson for our lives.

I. PETER WAS OVER-CONFIDENT!

Said Peter to Jesus, shortly before Jesus' death, *"I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."* (Luke 22:33)

Out on the Mount of Olives Jesus said to them, *"You will all fall away: for it is written, 'I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.'..."* leave it to Peter to speak up to that one. He said, *"Even though they all fall away, I will not."* Jesus had to tell him that before morning broke, he would deny his Lord three times. (Bastian's Sermon)

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Says the Scripture, *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* (Hebrews 10:12) This is a warning against over-confidence.

"Men who have stood the highest, in Scriptures, have often fallen on their strongest point. Moses was noted for, his humility. Right there he fell. He got angry instead of being humble, and fell through lack of humility. Elijah was noted for, his boldness. Right there he fell. Why, he stood on Mount Carmel and defied the whole nation. He stood there alone. He seemed to be the boldest man in the whole nation. However, after awhile he got word the Jezebel was going to take his life, and then he lost all his boldness and got defeated at the threat of a woman. Then there was Samson who was noted for, his strength. He lost his hair, wherein his strength consisted. Abraham was noted for, his faith. But he got into Egypt, and denied his wife." (Bible Characters, D. L. Moody, pg. 132)

"There was only one time, I am told that Edinburgh Castle was ever taken by the enemy, and that was done by climbing on the back rocks. The rocks were so steep the besieged did not believe the enemy could get in that way, but that was just where they got in." (D. L. Moody, pg. 132)

A New Yorker had panted his way to the peak of the Matterhorn. In glee, he leaped into the air, both hands above his head. Just then, a cold gust nearly swept him off the peak. His guide shouted, 'Down on your knees.'" Spiritually, the advice is, "Either get down on your knees or fall flat on your faces." (Bastian's Article on Temptation)

Peter failed his Master in His most crucial hour of need. He slept in the Garden while Jesus agonized in Prayer. Peter, James, and John were the three disciples who were given a privileged position, for Jesus took them into the inner recesses of the garden near to the place where he agonized in prayer. Yet the three slept instead of praying. How Jesus yearned for their fellowship and companionship, which the disciples failed to give.

Peter *"followed his Master afar off"*. Is it not possible for us too to follow our Master afar off?

We too can fail our Master during an hour of testing. As someone said, "All that is needed for the triumph of evil is the complacency of good people."

Will we fail our Master when he is depending on us most? Will we fail Him in Prayer? Speaking of the nation of Israel, Samuel said, *"Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way."* (1 Samuel 12:23)

Remember, our Lord is depending upon us to witness to the unsaved who are groping in the darkness.

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Will we fail our Master by not supporting His Church? By not attending the public Church services, we are not only robbing ourselves, but we are casting a ‘No’ vote for keeping the Church doors open. It is not a question of whether or not one can remain a Christian and not attend a public service. It is a question of one’s Christian responsibility to encourage others. Said Jesus, *“Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* Wrote the writer to the Hebrews; *“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?”* (Hebrews 10:25)

“Let us not neglect our Church meetings as some do.” (Hebrews 10:25)

Peter had to learn the hard way of the perils of over-confidence as shown by what he wrote many years later. *“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; Whom steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”* (I Peter 5:8, 9) *Peter the Proud became Peter the Humble.* (I Peter 5:5-6))

Peter fought the enemy in the power of the flesh – cut off the servant’s ear. Tempestuous Peter earlier desired to reap vengeance upon his enemies (call down fire from heaven on Samaritans who had rejected the message of the Gospel). Peter later in life show that he had learned well his lesson – that vengeance belongs to God. Peter learned that love is the only way to live life.

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven, for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ, is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result; of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to

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you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed, to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. Therefore, with minds, that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you, when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him, you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you. (Book of 1st Peter)

Said Martin Luther King, Jr., one time, “I’ve decided to stick with love.”

II. PETER DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF THE MASTER!

A. Peter’s Reckless Courage.

It is quite wrong to regard Peter with nothing but unsympathetic condemnation. The blazing fact is that the disaster, which happened to Peter, is one, which could have happened only to a man of the most heroic courage. All the other disciples ran away, but Peter alone did not. In Palestine, the houses of the well-to-do, were built in a hollow square around an open courtyard, off which the various rooms opened. For Peter to enter that courtyard in the centre of the High Priest’s house was to walk into the lion’s den – and yet he did it. However, this story ends; it begins with Peter the one brave man.” (Barclay’s Matthew, pgs. 345, 346)

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"The last place that anyone would have dreamed that Peter would go to would have been the courtyard of the High Priest's house - and yet that is precisely where he did go." (Barclay's Mark, pg. 370)

When Peter's identity became known in the High Priest's Courtyard, any prudent man would have run as fast as he could - to hide! But "not Peter!"

B. Peter's Denial.

"He (Peter) could have attacked the mob, but he went down before a woman's sneer." (Macartney - Greatest Men of Bible; 78) When pressured hard, finally Peter "swore to a young maiden that he had never known Jesus and to make his denial sound more authentic, he used a bit of blasphemy." (Bastian)

When the cock crowed, Peter remembered Jesus' words and conviction stabbed his conscience. When Jesus was removed from the court room and, passing by, looked upon Peter, Jesus' look of love broke Peter's heart.

"Make no mistake - Peter fell to a temptation which would only have come to a man of fantastic courage." (Barclay's Mark; pg. 371)

Says Bastian; "Is it only people like Peter who wobble under pressure?" I can say it is with a self-righteous feeling until I look into a mirror.

Have you ever asked that question of a mirror? What does your mirror say of you?"

"We can stop here if we're not careful and formulate a religion which accents human weakness. We can congratulate ourselves that we are a lot like Peter in his worst moments. Moreover, we can go from there to say it is normal to fall again, and again. This is what it means to be a Christian - to know how weak you are - we can say. If we do, however, we stop with only half the story. Jesus was able to accept people, weaknesses and all, but He never intended to let them feel comfortable in their weakness and sin. When he took Simon Peter into His band, He did so because He saw not only what he was, but also what He had the possibility of becoming. That is the kind of a leader Jesus was, and that is the kind of Savior He is. (Bastian)

III. PETER GENUINELY REPENTED OF HIS SIN AND TURNED TO THE MASTER!

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Peter convicted first where he heard the cock crow. God may use a simple thing from nature to bring conviction to the soul – like a book, a sermon, a Church Building, a voice of a loved one, etc.

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto his, before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.” (Luke 22:61, 62)

The Power of Jesus’ look, to bring sorrow and repentance is described by John Newton:

I saw One hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood;
Who fixed his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.

Sure, never till my latest breath,
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.”

The look of Christ can melt your heart too. See the tender eyes of Jesus, the broken heart, the open arms of reconciliation. “It was a look of love, a look of tenderness, a look of pity, a look of peace.” (Moody, pg. 135)

The look of Christ resulted in Peter remembering. The memory of Jesus’ previous warning to Peter and Jesus’ tender love for Peter caused Peter to go out into the dark and weep bitterly. “Tears are nothing to be ashamed of if they’re for the right reason. And no tears are more wisely shed than those we shed over our sins.” (Bastian)

Tears of true repentance are followed by the peace of forgiveness and restoration.

Can you imagine how Peter spent these hours while Jesus was in the grave? Do you think he ate anything? Do you think he slept at all? Did he weep his heart out many times – reliving a thousand times his act of denial and cursing? Did he spend those hours praying that his Lord might someday be given back to him?

Surely, Peter knew the meaning of true repentance, which gave a new peace of mind and a heart at rest with itself once again.

“Satan thought he had Peter; and he almost did have him, when he persuaded him to follow afar off, and then take his seat by the fire among the enemies of

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Christ, and then again and again deny that he even knew his Lord. Satan thought that he had put out the light of Peter's soul in the bitterness of his grief, and had sunk him in the hell of his shame and self-condemnation." But Peter's faith did not fail! Faith in what? Faith in the measureless, forgiving, redeeming, cleansing, restoring power of Christ." (MaCartney, 82, 83)

Regardless of the depth of shame to which a man's sin and backsliding has brought him, there is always the tender, forgiving 'look' of Jesus. The backsliding can be restored; Dignity can be regained; Guilt can be resolved; Conscience can be cleansed; and Hope can be recovered. Out of the night of bitter tears, the repentant one can come into the sunshine of God's renewed fellowship and joy. The weak can be, made strong. The injured can be, healed. The fallen one can be, lifted to his feet again. *"The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may tumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand."* (Psalms 37:23, 24)

After Jesus' resurrection, the angels told the women who were afraid: *"Don't be alarmed, but go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"* (Mark 16:6, 7)

Jesus' forgiving love for Peter is shown by the fact that Jesus singled out Peter as an object of special consideration and compassion.

He, who is forgiven much, will love much. When the disciples were meeting together with the Lord along the lakeshore some time after the Resurrection, Peter's love was tested. Just as Peter had denied his Lord three times, so three times Jesus asked the important question: *"Peter, lovest thou Me more than these?"* - The 'these' probably referring to the other disciples.

Now humbled and tender, with confidence centered only in Christ, Peter affirmed his love for the Master. After Jesus ascended to heaven, and Peter and the other followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Peter had many opportunities to prove his unshakeable love and loyalty to the Master.

"By degrees, and under the teaching, the example, and the training of his Master, Peter's too-hot heart was gradually brought under control till it became the seat in Peter's bosom of a deep, pure, deathless love and adoration for Jesus Christ. If Peter was for too long like the sand, rather than like the rock, his Master had so nobly named him, the sand will one day settle into rock, and into rock of a quality and a quantity to build a temple. If Peter is now too forward to speak, he will I end be as forward to suffer. The time will come when Peter will act up to all his outspoken ardors and high enthusiasms." (Whyte's Bible Characters, pgs. 39, 40)

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Peter fed the flock of God for many years, as one of the greatest of all Christian leaders.

Peter's, triumphant suffering for Christ throughout the remainder of his life, was finally consummated by his martyrdom.

“The Bible does not tell us how Peter died, but all traditional material is unanimous in declaring that Peter went to Rome about 61 A.D, and that he was martyred there, probably by upside-down crucifixion.” (Sermon Builders; August 1973; pg. 27)

CONCLUSION:

Peter is the man who overcame his weakness. We too can overcome our weakness and continue to follow Christ. There is forgiveness and hope for the future. The eagle whose wing is broken can fly as high again. Bones that are broken can be healed, and we can walk again. A film can be spliced again which repairs and will enable us to see the big picture again. Repent, believe, and begin following the Master. There is a bright future for you and Christ together.

Remember this:

1. The danger of over-confidence.
2. The possibility of denying our Lord during a crisis.
3. The hope of restoration and forgiveness if we fail miserably – to become a Stewart leader in Christ's Court.

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CHAPTER 7
"PERSONALITIES AROUND THE CROSS –
'PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES."
(PRIESTS)

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE – CHAPTER 7

SCRIPTURE: *"Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. (Matthew 26: 57)*

"The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward ⁶¹and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" "Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" "He is worthy of death," they answered. Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?" (Matthew 26: 59-68)

INTRODUCTION:

These two Parties were most responsible for aiding the Jewish leaders in the latter's plot to crucify Jesus.

PROPOSITION:

The greatest enemy of Christ and Christianity was official, organized religion (in the form of the priesthood).

- I. MOTIVES OF MUDEROUS PLOT - Reason for the Murderous Plot of the Pharisees:
 - A. They Were Angered By Christ's Note Of Authority.
 - B. They Were Angry With Christ's Universalism.
 - C. They Were Angry Because Of Christ's Indifference To, Some Aspects Of Their Puritanism.

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- D. They Were Angry With Christ Also Because Of His Attacks Upon Them Personally.
- E. They Were Angry With Christ Also Because Of His Attacks Upon Them Personally.
- F. Reasons For The Murderous Plot Of The Sadducees:
 - 1. Jealousy was one cause for their murderous plot.
 - 2. Anger was another cause for their murderous plot.
 - 3. Fear was perhaps the leading cause for their murderous plot.

II. METHODS OF MURDEROUS PLOT

III. MESSAGE FROM MURDEROUS PLOT

- A. Religion That Lacks Power (Pharisees)
- B. Religion That Lacks Tenderness (Pharisees)
- C. Religion That Lacks Person-Orientation (Sadducees)

CONCLUSION:

There are wrong types of orientation in a Church, such as “program-orientation”, “organization-orientation”, and “completion-orientation”. All programs, organizations, competition contests, etc., must minister to individuals, or they are useless.

CHAPTER 7

"PERSONALITIES AROUND THE CROSS" –

'Pharisees and Sadducees - (Priests)'

INTRODUCTION:

Caiaphas, mentioned in our Scripture reading, was the High Priest and was a Sadducee. Let us seek to understand a little about the background of the Sadducees, who were the priests of Israel.

Origin of the Sadducees:

1. Party took shape about two hundred years before the birth of Jesus.
 - a. The Jews, after the 70 years of exile in Babylon, returned to their homeland, seeking to establish – not a monarchy, ruled by a king – but a theocracy ruled by God's priests.
 - b. In the early days, the priests were God-honoring leaders who helped heal the nation.
2. Party began gradually to degenerate morally and spiritually.
 - a. The party became the aristocracy of Jewry, and membership in the higher order of priests depended solely upon birth in a certain family, thus becoming exclusive, stubborn, conservative, and aloof from the common crowd.
 - b. The Priests who were the leaders of the theocracy had not only spiritual power, but also political power.
 - c. As years went by, politics prevailed over spiritualities; thus, the priests became corrupt, power-seeking politicians, with little regard for vital spiritual realities.
 - d. When Palestine became part of the Roman Empire, Rome control Palestine through the Jewish governing priests, who depended upon Rome for their position and security? Thus, the Sadducees became the pawns of the Romans, although the Sadducees (even under Rome) continued to enjoy relative independence, partly because of the Sadducees' ability to bribe Roman officials.
 - e. Engrossed in deep political intrigue with influential Romans, wealth.

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- f. “Annas and Caiaphas were growing rich through the taxes Jewish populace paid one-third of its livelihood in taxes.
- g. The Sadducees became so materialistic in their goals and attitudes, that religiously they came to deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and they also came to deny belief in angels.

PROPOSITION:

The Sadducees, perhaps more than anyone else were responsible for the death of Jesus. Caiaphas the High Priest was one of the leading priests, and it was he, who led in the plot for Jesus’ death. The greatest enemy of Christ and Christianity was official, organized religion (in the form of the priesthood). Even yet, the greatest enemy of Christ may be religion – religion as a form without the power.

Let us look further at the priests who were the leaders of the official religion, and ask, why they plotted the death of Jesus, and after looking back at the evil of religion, let us look at the present-day dangers of official religion. We will look at the motives and methods of the murderous plot and look at the message that can be derived, from this murderous plot.

I. MOTIVES OF MUDEROUS PLOT- Reason for the Murderous Plot of the Pharisees:

The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of the Jews. It was composed of seventy-one members. Within its membership there were Sadducees – the priestly classes were all Sadducees – the Pharisees and Scribes, who were experts in the law, and respected men who were elders.” (Barclay’s Mark; pg. 367)

Let us look briefly at the murderous motives of the Pharisees who were the religious experts of their day. The Pharisees were the teachers of the law, strictly disciplined, passionately moral, and fanatically religious (Puritans), and in close touch with the common populace. They differed from the Sadducees in several points – one of, which is seen, in the fact that, one could only be born a Sadducee while one could be trained din the scribal college to be a Pharisee, (or expert in the Old Testament Law).

William Sangster gives five reasons for the murderous plot of the Pharisees:

A. *“They Were Angered by Christ’s Note of Authority.”*

Especially considering that, Jesus as a carpenter had never graduated from a scribal college, and thus supposedly had no credentials to qualify Him for authoritative teaching. As if this were not enough, Jesus did not spend a lot of time quoting historical statements of

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famous Rabbis of the past; rather, Jesus spoke on his own, and made claims that were unique – He made claims that only the Promised Messiah could make. "The note of authority the Pharisees interpreted as blasphemy: 'He puts himself in the place of God!'" (Sangster; pg. 20)

B. *"They Were Angry with Christ's Universalism."*

Jesus made statements and had associations with enough non-Jews that would lead one to, rightfully believe, that Jesus came to bring God's Salvation to all nations. Considering the exclusive, proud, nationalistic attitude of the Pharisees, combined with their great distain for non-Jews, it is little wonder why Jesus soon became very unpopular with the Pharisees, and eventually the object of a murderous plot. "That note of universalism the Pharisees interpreted as being traitorous: 'The man isn't loyal to his own race'". (Sangster; pg. 20)

C. *"They Were Angry Because Of Christ's Indifference to Some Aspects of Their Puritanism."*

The Pharisees were not satisfied to accept the great wide principles of the Mosaic Law that each person is to apply to his individual case, but the Pharisees extracted literally thousands of rules and regulations, which they believed, would meet the needs of every person in every possible situation. The Pharisees imposed their multitude of burdensome, man-made regulations upon the people, and did this in the name of God and righteousness. "They misrepresented the whole nature of religion, and burdened the people with unnecessary and finicky detail; making it, for instance, a serious sin that a man should drag a stick along the ground on the Sabbath because that was plowing, and plowing is breaking the Sabbath. Women were not allowed to use a mirror on the Sabbath. She might spy a gray hair, and if she plucked out she would be guilty of reaping on the Sabbath and thus breaking it!" (Whitehead; pg. 43)

D. *"They Were Angry With Christ Also Because Of His Attacks upon Them Personally."*

We have already made reference to Matthew 23 where the woes are pronounced upon the Pharisees. Jesus accused them of play-acting children, who sought the applause and recognition of men; who made long prayers to be seen of men' who were blind leaders of the blind; who majored on minors and minored on majors' who omitted judgment, mercy,, and faith; who focused on externals and covered up the internals; who were outwardly nice but inwardly corrupt. Jesus called them, whitewashed sepulchers, hypocrites, fools, children of hell, blind

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guides, killers of the prophets, and generation of vipers. Is it any wonder the Pharisees were not too fond of Jesus!

E. *“They Were Angry With Christ Also Because of His Attacks upon Them Personally.”*

The Scriptures say, *“The common people heard him gladly”*. Jesus’ love of individuals got him the crowds, which resulted in the Pharisees becoming insanely jealous of Jesus. (These five points taken from ‘They Met at the Cross; William Sangster; pgs. 16-19)

The Pharisees had far more dealings with Jesus than did the Sadducees. “There is comparatively little reference to the Sadducees in the Gospels. It is not hard to understand why. The Sadducees were ‘high and lifted up.’ They were the priestly aristocracy. To them the Man of Nazareth was just a ‘hot-gossipier’ – so far beneath them that, except on rare occasions, they did not even notice him. The name ‘Sadducee’ is only mentioned nine times in the Gospels.” (Sangster; pg. 25)

F. *“Reasons for the Murderous Plot of the Sadducees.”*

What was in Jesus that finally drew the attention of the aristocratic Sadducees (which we described at the beginning of this message)? Why was there a murderous plot against Jesus on the part of the Sadducees? The leading Sadducee being, Caiaphas who gave a guilty verdict to Jesus?

1. Jealousy was one cause for their murderous plot. The deadened, conservative souls of the aristocratic Sadducees had no interest in a new religious movement, especially if that movement was revolutionary, popular, and independently carried on without sanction or backing from Jewish religious headquarters whose control was in the hands of the priestly Sadducees. “Again and again we find emissaries of Caiaphas trying to trip up Jesus in his preaching, trying to find this excuse and that excuse for silencing him.” (Whitehead; pg. 45)
2. Anger was another cause for their murderous plot. When Jesus overthrew the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple, Jesus was indirectly challenging the evil, materialistic methods of the Sadducees, for it was this aristocratic class of priests, who were lining their own pockets through this sacrilegious practice. Jesus was a

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threat to the Temple trade and therefore a threat to the priests' evil ways of accumulating more and more money.

3. Fear was perhaps the leading cause for their murderous plot. Remember, the Sadducees had close ties with the Roman officials, since Rome actually ruled Palestine through this religious-political aristocratic group. The Sadducees were far more politically oriented and motivated than they were religiously. Reasoned the Sadducees: *“If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”* (John 11:48)

The popular concept of the Messiah included the Jews' conquest of Rome through supernatural military might, led by God's Messiah. It is because of this popular concept, that Jesus commanded His disciples never to tell others that Jesus was the Messiah. Caiaphas nevertheless feared that Jesus' increasing popularity would result in a possible riot by the Jewish populace against Rome. Said Caiaphas; *“It is expedient that one man should die for the people.”* Here then is the scheme of Caiaphas' plot against Jesus. Caiaphas feared the people because of Jesus' popularity. But, nevertheless, Jesus must be destroyed, to save favor with Rome. *“In one act they would destroy Jesus, put the blame on Rome, pretend to those who followed Jesus that Jesus was martyred by Rome and yet, by handing him over, pretend their own loyalty to Roman authority and their support of law and order.”* (Whitehead; pg. 45)

II. METHODS OF MURDEROUS PLOT

We have briefly traced the two main groups who plotted Jesus' death. Their plot was successful, resulting in the grossest crime of humanity – the crucifixion of the God-man, and the most beautiful character that ever set foot on earth.

Caiaphas the High Priest charged Jesus with threatening to destroy the temple. Jesus had said on one occasion: *“destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”*, (referring of course to the temple of His own body and prediction of his own resurrection). Jesus was silent in the face of this accusation and the false witnesses could not agree among themselves, so Caiaphas had to drop this charge and go to another charge.

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The charge that finally sent Jesus to the cross was the charge of blasphemy. Because Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Jewish Sanhedrin sentenced Jesus with death by crucifixion.

The Sanhedrin broke their own laws to accomplish Jesus' death. Let us look at the Jewish system of law and see with what gross injustice Jesus was treated.

| THE SANHGEDRIN LAW | BREAKING OF LAW IN JESUS' TRIAL |
|---|--|
| 1. Guilty person was to be both arrested and accused only by the witnesses against him. (Whitehead; pg. 48) | 1. The temple police arrested Jesus. |
| 2. "All criminal cases must be tried during the daytime and must be completed during the daytime. (Barclay's Matthew; pg. 390) | 2. Jesus was tried at night and condemned to die within a very short time. |
| 3. The court was not to meet during the time of the great Jewish feasts. | 3. Jesus was condemned to die (criminal case) during one of the most sacred Jewish feasts (Passover). |
| 4. "When evidence was taken, witnesses were examined separately and their evidence to be valid must agree with every detail." | 4. "Now the chief priests and the whole council sought to witnesses against Jesus to put him to death; and found it not. For many bare false witnesses against him and their witnesses agreed not together." (Mark 14:55-56) |
| 5. When witnesses disagreed in their testimony, the accused was to be acquitted. | 5. Jesus was condemned to die in spite of the lack of agreement in the witnesses' testimonies. |
| 6. "In regard to witnesses, all evidence had to be guaranteed by two witnesses separately examined, and having no contact with each other." | 6. There is no evidence that the witnesses were separately examined previous to the trial. |
| 7. "No decision of the Sanhedrin was valid unless it met in its own meeting place, the Hall of Hewn Stone in the Temple precincts." | 7. The Sanhedrin met in the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. (Matthew 26:57) |
| 8. "Each individual member of the Sanhedrin must give his verdict separately, beginning from the youngest and going on the eldest." | 8. "There is no word of individually given verdicts." (Barclay's Mark; pg. 368) |

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| | |
|--|--|
| <p>9. "It would be illegal for a judge to cross-examine the prisoner."</p> | <p>9. Caiaphas, the High Priest, who presided as judge and head of the Sanhedrin, was the main one instrumental in getting a guilty verdict.</p> |
| <p>10. "In any trial the process began by laying before the court of all the evidence for the innocence of the accused, before the evidence for his guilt was adduced." (Barclay's Matthew; pg. 391)</p> | <p>10. The Sanhedrin began immediately to establish the guilt of Jesus upon trumpet up charges.</p> |
| <p>11. "If the verdict was a Verdict of death, a night must elapse before it was carried out so that the court might have a chance to change its mind and its decision towards mercy."</p> | <p>11. "A night was not allowed to elapse before the penalty of death was inflicted." (Barclay's Mark; pg. 368)</p> |
| <p>12. Witnesses proved to be false, were to be stoned, according to the Law.</p> | <p>12. The witnesses were shown to be false but nothing was found to punish them.</p> |
| <p>13. No self-incriminating, leading questions were to be asked of the defendant.</p> | <p>13. The High Priest (who had no right of cross-examination to begin with) asked Jesus (under most solemn oath) to answer if He was the Messiah. A 'Yes' answer to this question would immediately constitute blasphemy (as far as the Sanhedrin was concerned." To ask such a question in court was completely forbidden by Jewish law.</p> |
| <p>14. A condemned person was to be treated with common decency and with common justice, following the trial in the courtroom.</p> | <p>14. When Jesus was unjustly condemned to die, a frenzied display of hatred followed, as shown by the spitting on Jesus, the buffeting Him, the slapping of his face, the mockery of Him. "No attempt was made to maintain even the superficialities of impartial justice." (Barclay's Matthew; pg. 392)</p> |

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III. MESSAGE FROM MURDEROUS PLOT

What lessons can we learn from a study of the Pharisees and Sadducees – the official religious leaders of Jesus’ day? Remember, that religion crucified Jesus! That kind of religion is bad. What are its characteristics?

A. Religion That Lacks Power (Pharisees)

Paul described this type of powerless religion: *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”* (II Timothy 3:5)

The Pharisees had a form of godliness – but a form without the vital content is like a sack without the groceries, like a seashell without the animal, like the ribbon without the gift. The religion of the Pharisees was a hollow, cold powerless thing. It is still possible to retain the forms, conventions, customs, and jargons of religion without the essence, content, spirit, and life of true religion. It is possible to have the shell without the meat, to have the programs without the passion and power. A modern-day Pharisee would be a man “who follows the customs, knows the jargon, engages in the practices of religion, but who knows no living source of power within the will, whose life has never been transformed, whose ears are no longer sensitive to the voice of Christ.” (Whitehead; pg. 54)

“Let us keep religion fresh and fragrant within us, never letting it sink to mere form and convention and custom. To do this, to keep the channels unblocked, to keep the springs pure and sparkling and unpolluted, there is only one way – to keep near to Him who can renew us day by day, and to whom religion was the sunniest, strongest, purest, loveliest, and most important thing in the world.” (Whitehead; pgs. 54, 55)

B. Religion That Lacks Tenderness (Pharisees)

The religion of the Pharisees made laws more important than principles, as we have noted earlier in the message. Paul said, “The letter kills, but the spirit-gives life.” The legalism of the Pharisees did not bring life, vitality, and joy; rather, it brought despair, dread, condemnation.

Says William Sangster, “It is a sad thing when the warm life of God in Jesus, is chilled by the rigor and coldness of our moral codes. Such things can happen. I have known good men, men whose word was their bond, which were honest in all their business dealings, just and above reproach in the commerce of the nation, and yet strangely lacking in tenderness and in that melting love we look for in a follower of Christ.

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The Pharisee had lost tenderness. If we lose tenderness, we shall be guiltier than they because we have a Nobler Example.” (They Met At Calvary; pg. 22.)

C. Religion That Lacks Person-Orientation (Sadducees)

The Sadducees teach us that there is always danger in religious leaders (and if you have any job in God’s Church which works with people, this applies to you) becoming more interested in ecclesiastical machinery and so-called ‘Church politics’, than in people. Remember, the Sadducees started out well and degenerated into political power-seekers, with no real concern in the common populace or in spiritual matters.

CONCLUSION:

There are wrong types of orientation in a Church, such as program-orientation, organization-orientation, and competition-orientation. All programs, organizations, competition contests, etc. must minister to individuals, or they are useless.

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CHAPTER 8
"PERSONALITIES AROUND THE CROSS" –
'Judas Escariot'!

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OUTLINE – CHAPTER 8

SCRIPTURE: *"When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."*
(Matthew 26:30)

"Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them, went away once more, and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." (Matthew 26:36-50)

"When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5)

INTRODUCTION:

How many people have you known by the name of Judas? When the question was asked, of a group of 100 adults, only one in a hundred had.

PROPOSITION:

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

The betrayal of Judas, in varying degrees, has been repeated many times. To avoid the failure of Judas in our lives, let us look carefully and prayerfully at this personality.

- I. JUDAS WAS A MAN WITH THE SEEDS OF GREATNESS IN HIM
(Evidence)
 - A. Jesus Chose Judas To Be His Disciple (From Among The Grater Group Of His Followers).
 - B. Judas Willingly Entered Into Discipleship With Christ, And At First Responded To His Discipleship With Enthusiasm.
 - C. Judas Traveled With Jesus For Three Years, Fully Involved In Ministry.
 - D. Judas' Fellow Disciples Saw Judas' Ability, And Gave Judas The Much-Respected Position As Treasurer Of The Band (Group).
 - E. When Jesus Learned Of Judas' Sins, Jesus Gently Warned And Continued To The Very End To Hold Out Hope For Judas.

- II. JUDAS WAS A MAN WHOSE HEART'S DEVOTION TO CHRIST BECAME DEFECTIVE, LEADING TO TRAGEDY

- III. JUDAS IS A MAN WHO TEACHES US THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING CLOSE AND WARM FELLOWSHIP WITH THE MASTER
 - A. Deceitfulness of Riches.
 - B. Lack of Spiritual Perception
 - C. Seriousness Of The Warnings Of The Scriptures To: Continue To Watch, Pray, To Obey And To Believe.
 - D. Possibility of True Repentance and Forgiveness Of Any Sin.

CONCLUSION:

The greatest danger that a Christian faces is the danger of gradual drifting away from Jesus, the gradual evolving of his love for the Master, the slow accumulation of little sins until there is a mountain of guilt to deal with, the subtle hardening of his heart until he is no longer sensitive to the appeals of God's love.

CHAPTER 8

"PERSONALITIES AROUND THE CROSS" – 'Judas Iscariot'!

INTRODUCTION:

The personalities surrounding the cross are the kinds of personalities that are all around us today. Perhaps we even see ourselves reflected in one or more of the persons who met at Calvary. If not, I am sure we know persons today who would easily fit into the shoes of those who trod the streets of Jerusalem at the time of the Crucifixion.

Were YOU there when they crucified my Lord? It is a troubling question, but nevertheless an honest question: "Have your sins helped crucify Jesus?" Remember, "The sins that brought Jesus to the Cross were not diabolical crimes. They were the sins of the kind of people like you and me." (Personalities of the Passion; Weatherhead; pg. 30)

Our Scripture reading reveals something of the character of the first personality, which we will look at – Judas Iscariot. How many people have you known by the name of Judas? When that question was asked of a group of 100 adults, only one in a hundred had.

PROPOSITION:

The personality of Judas has troubled and perplexed multitudes throughout the centuries. To understand what can be learned from Judas' life, we must look at him. Judas was a man with the seeds of greatness in him, but a man whose default discipleship makes him one of the most tragic figures on the stage of human history. The betrayal of Judas, in varying degrees, has been repeated, many times. To avoid the failure of Judas in our lives, let us look carefully and prayerfully at this personality.

I. JUDAS WAS A MAN WITH THE SEEDS OF GREATNESS IN HIM (Evidence)

A. Jesus Chose Judas To Be His Disciple (From Among The Greater Group Of His Followers).

Jesus spent a whole night in prayer, going over each disciple in his mind, earnestly seeking the Father's direction. "In getting, the right

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blends of abilities and devotion”. Judas is product of Jesus’ earnest prayer.

“Those who contend that Judas was an imposter from the beginning appeal to John 6:65, *‘Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.’* However, we believe Robertson is correct in observing that ‘John does not say here that Jesus knew that Judas would betray him when he chose him as one of the twelve, least of all that he chose him for that purpose. What he does say is that Jesus was not taken by surprise, and soon saw signs of treason in Judas...Judas had gifts and was given his opportunity. He did not have to betray Jesus.’” (Life in the Son; pgs. 179, 180)

If Jesus chose Judas, knowing all the time he would betray Jesus, ‘It would be history’s foremost example of one man using another, yet Jesus did not use people.’ (Bastian)

“One thing is certain! He (Judas) cannot have been the creeping, crawling, potently worthless villain that some simple-minded people would like to make out; that would be to cast too grave a slur upon the brains or the character of Jesus. Too choose an obvious crook as one’s follower...would be the act of a fool; and Jesus of Nazareth was no fool.” (Dorothy Sayer)

**B. Judas Willingly Entered Into Discipleship With Christ,
And At First Responded To His Discipleship With
Enthusiasm.**

“Here is the man Judas, who, after all, like the rest, has left his home, friends and business for a great idea, and who, for obvious reasons, could not have done that for what he was going to get out of it.” (Personalities of the Passion; Weatherhead; pgs. 29, 30)

**C. Judas Traveled With Jesus For Three Years, Fully
Involved In Ministry.**

There had been nothing about his (Judas’) career as an Apostle which had distinguished Judas in any way from the other eleven.” (Robert Shank; Life in Son; pg. 180)

1. Preaching on the Kingdom of God.
2. Observing the miracles of healing.
3. Casting out demons.
4. Learning at the feet of Jesus.

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- D. Judas' Fellow Disciples Saw Judas' Ability, and Gave Judas the Much-Respected Position as Treasurer Of The Band (Group).

Only a most respected one, and competent disciple, would have been given this job. Until the very last, the disciples maintained confidence in Judas' character. Only after the tragic events were history could the Gospel writers see Judas' surfacing greed and thievery. When Jesus at the Last Supper said: *"One of you will betray me!"* No one looked at Judas. Even then, Judas was above suspicion of the other disciples. Even then, all consider Judas just as loyal to Jesus as they are. Each disciple looks at himself.

Jesus chose Judas because there was something great locked up in him. Jesus knew men, and He saw Judas' possibilities. Nevertheless, sadly those possibilities never came to fruition. That is the tragedy of Judas Iscariot." (Bastian)

Honored seat; honored gift of food. Judas, was given, a special place of honor at the Last Supper.

- E. When Jesus Learned Of Judas' Sins, Jesus Gently Warned And Continued To The Very End To Hold Out Hope For Judas.

"At the Last Supper, He offered Judas a piece of dipped bread – a gesture of fellowship. He said to him later in the Garden, *"Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"* These are words of gentle chiding. In other words, He seemed to offer Judas every opportunity to change his mind." (Bastian) even at this point, Jesus calls Judas a *'FRIEND!* "Jesus replied, *"Do what you came for, friend."* Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. (Matthew 26:50, Phillips)

Would not Jesus have forgiven Judas of his terrible sin, just as Jesus forgave Peter of his terrible sin, and just as he pardoned the thief on the Cross? Indeed so, for the gravity of the sin of denial of the Lord with cursing (as in the case of Peter), is no less than the gravity of the sin of betrayal of the Lord. Judas was just as valuable and redeemable as Peter, and Jesus saw the seeds of greatness in Judas just as clearly as he saw the seeds of greatness in Peter. Could not Judas have had as bright and fruitful a future as Peter, in spite of his terrible failure? Peter repented and turned back to the Saviour. Judas, filled with regret and remorse of conscience, turned to the hangman's noose.

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For Judas, in whom Jesus saw great possibilities, to have travelled with Jesus three years, and finally betray Him and then die prematurely at his own hand is the essence of Tragedy (Bastian).

True – Judas ended in disaster – but let us never forget that Judas began in promise. Only as we see the tragedy against the background of the promise, can we fully appreciate the Scriptural warnings, which the life of Judas teaches. But before we look specifically at those warnings, let us ask what factors led to the tragedy.

II. JUDAS WAS A MAN WHOSE HEART’S DEVOTION TO CHRIST BECAME DEFECTIVE, LEADING TO TRAGEDY.

Says Bastian, “The nature and outworking of sin in the human heart are so mysterious that we can only speculate with awe what led to the tragedy of Judas’ self-destruction.”

Among several explanations given for Judas’ defection from Christ, the most likely reason seems to be that Judas’ conception of the Kingdom of God (of which Jesus often spoke) and Judas’ conception of the long-awaited Messiah (which Jesus claimed to be) were materialistic or militaristic.

“Perhaps his faith was undermined by disappointment at the martyrdom of John, which occurred shortly before the occasion of Jesus’ statement that ‘one of you is a devil’. Martyrdom, he may have reasoned, was not the sort of thing that should happen to the friends of the REAL Messiah. That was too unlike the triumph, which the Jews anticipated at the appearance of the Messiah. And doubtless Judas, like the crowds (and like the other Apostles), was disappointed that Jesus refused to accede to the popular desire to make Him king merely for immediate temporal advantage. *“Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. (John 6:15).”* “Jesus no longer fit his conception of the Messiah”. (Shank; pgs. 180, 181)

Perhaps until the very end, Judas hoped that Jesus would show Himself to be the kind of Messiah that Judas had trained his mind to anticipate – a Messiah who would destroy Israel’s enemies, the Romans, and who would restore glory and military power to God’s Chosen People. It is likely that Judas never meant Jesus to die. Betrayal of a friend or of Church or of a family is largely due to disappointment and disillusionment. Someone doesn’t live up to expectations, so we leave them.

Says Whitehead, Ginger.Fancy@frontrange.edu “I don’t believe, for a single moment that Judas ever dreamed that Jesus would allow himself to be put to death. If you had seen a Person raise people from the dead, would you image that that Person would allow himself to be murdered? And, of course, the idea

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of a triumph, in spite of and by means of the Cross, was as far from Judas' mind as, quite frankly, it is from the mind of the modern man." (pg. 34) Using Jesus to, advance our own selfish goals of glory and trying to fit Jesus into our own molds of power, etc.

William Barclay has some deep insights into Judas' motive: "It is almost certain that Judas was a fanatical nationalist and that he had seen in Jesus the one person who could make his dreams of national power and glory would come true. But now he saw Jesus drifting to death on a cross. So it may be, in one last attempt to make his dream come true, he betrayed Jesus in order to force Jesus' hand. He delivered Him to the authorities with the idea that now Jesus would be compelled to act in order to save Himself, and that that action would be the beginning of the victorious campaign he dreamed of. It may be that that idea of Judas is supported by the fact that when he saw what he had done he went and flung the accursed money at the feet of the Jewish authorities and went out and hung himself and so committed suicide. *"When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.*" (Matthew 27:3-5). If that is so, the tragedy of Judas is the greatest tragedy in history.

"Both Luke and John say the same thing. They say quite simply, that the devil entered into Judas. *"When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.* (Luke 22:3) *"As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly."* (John 13:27).

In the last analysis, that is what happened. Judas wanted Jesus to be what he wanted Him to be, and not what Jesus wanted to be. In reality, Judas attached himself to Jesus, not so much to become a follower of Jesus, as to use Jesus to work out the plans and desires and schemes of his own ambitious heart. So far from surrendering to Jesus, he wanted Jesus to surrender to him, and when Jesus took His own way, the way of the Cross, Judas was so incensed that he betrayed Him. The very essence of sin is pride. The very core of sin is independence. The very heart of sin is the desire to do what we like and not what God likes. That is what the Devil, Satan, the Evil One stands for. He stands for everything which is against God and which will not bow to God. That is the very spirit, which was incarnate in Judas. (Mark; pgs. 345, 346)

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The real problem then with Judas was that he had never really put his own ego at the disposal of Christ's Kingdom. He was with Jesus, but not of Jesus. The surfacing of greed and thievery was simply the manifestation of a cooling devotion, which ended in a calculated act of hate and betrayal. “Way back before these events involving money took place, had Judas' enthusiasm for Jesus began to cool? A passionless heart is a dangerous heart when it comes to matters of faith. It is love for Christ that keeps any disciple clean and wholesome in his inner life. Nothing less than that will do it.” (Bastian)

III. JUDAS IS A MAN WHO TEACHES US THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING CLOSE AND WARM FELLOWSHIP WITH THE MASTER.

A. Deceitfulness Of Riches.

Said Jesus, *“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”* (Mark 4:19) Judas was guilty of stealing from the Treasury of Christ.

Says William Sangster, “With some natures there is nothing so holy that money cannot besmirch it. Watch money. It is so enormously useful and so terribly dangerous. The Bible does not say that money is the root of evil but it does say dangerous. The Bible does not say that money is the root of evil but it does say that the love of money is the root of evil.” (pgs. 40, 41) A love for things can cool our love for the Master! Spending our tithe on things rather than giving our tithe to God is a betrayal of Jesus!

B. Lack Of Spiritual Perception.

Job said, *“Though He slay me, I will serve Him!”* *The reason some superficial Christians: ‘If I do all of this (in Christianity and the Church), then I will have all of this (money, home, health, success, and honor). We must rather serve Christ because He is the Lord of all of Life, (not for the side benefits, we will derive from Him). Serving Christ will not guarantee material wealth, status, or peace in the home. Said Jesus; “Never think I have come to bring peace upon the earth. No, I have not come to bring peace but a sword! For I have come to set a man against his own father, a daughter against her own mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be those who live in his own house.”* (Matthew 10:34-36)

Look at the great apostle Paul.

“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times, I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times, I was

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shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, and I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, know that I am not lying. In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands. (II Corinthians 11:24-33)

Some yet, like Judas, have a materialistic concept of the Kingdom of God. Being a subject of the Kingdom of God may or may not bring material prosperity – but it will bring peace with God, love of the brethren, vision and energy to do great exploits for God, and abundant life here and eternal life hereafter.

Judas attempted to force Jesus into his materialistic mold, and, having his misconception destroyed, ended in destroying himself. Let us remember that Jesus said, *"My kingdom is not of this world."* Jesus came to establish His kingdom of love and peace in the heart of every man. Let us not follow Judas' example by attempting to exploit Christ and His cause for our own selfish advantage. Let us accept Jesus' interpretation of life and enter into the spiritual Kingdom, but surrender to a God of love – for better, for worse. "Judas had started with as great commitment and promise as any of the twelve, but he had never put his ego at the disposal of Christ's Kingdom." (Bastian) there is no substitute for surrender to God – on His terms.

As William Sangster writes, "Every Christian should periodically question his own soul: 'Am I really in this because of devotion to my Lord? Would I stand if a crucial test came?'" (They Met at Calvary; pg. 40)

C. Seriousness Of The Warnings Of The Scriptures To:
Continue To Watch, Pray, To Obey And To Believe.

The Scriptures contain many warnings, warnings that must be taken seriously. The modern-day spirit argues that warnings are unhealthy. Says one man who was a counselor "God's wrath has been neutralized by the teachings of John Dewey and Sigmund Freud. Unconditional love

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and the removal of all frustration have been seen erroneously as the cornerstones of a healthy personality.” (Quoted by Bastian)

Christians are warned, to guard against over-confidence. *“So let the man who feels sure of his standing today be careful that he does not fall tomorrow.”* (I Corinthians 10:12, Phillips)

Exhortation to repentance with acceptance of Jesus’ call to: complete surrender and full devotion. How shall we escape if we neglect our Salvation, our Church, etc.?

Are you with Jesus or against Jesus? Jesus said, *“He that is not with me, is against me.”*

Has your hearts devotion cooled? Jesus appeals to you to allow him to warm your heart with His love.

Does Jesus speak to you by His Spirit of the perils of your heart’s defection? Remember – Jesus held out to Judas the appeal to close the widening gap. He offered him the Bread of fellowship. He chided him about his kiss. Does He speak to you in little ways to alert you to your wanderings and to call you back to full devotion?” (Bastian) “How shall we escape if we neglect our Salvation, our Church, etc.)?”

Relates William Sangster: “It is possible to live near to Christ and then to fall away. We learn that it is possible to be in his company, and be regarded as one of his intimates, and then to be guilty of the foulest betrayal. If any man, in some place of security, asserts in self-confidence that ‘nothing could happens to me here’, that man has added by his over confidence, to the danger we mortals are always in.”

I never go to Aber Falls in North Wales, without feeling the pathos of something that occurred there years ago. A brilliant young lawyer, of whom I knew, was climbing the mountain near Aber Falls with a friend. His friend noticed the green slime on the rocks as they climbed and called out ‘Do be careful’, to which the young Mr. Payne relied: ‘Oh it’s as safe as anything. I couldn’t fall here.’ They were the last words he uttered. I know the spot at the bottom of the falls where his mangled body was picked up.” (William Sangster)

D. Possibility Of True Repentance And Forgiveness Of Any Sin.

This truth was mentioned earlier in this message. Instead of turning to Christ in true repentance, Judas died by his own hand, filled with regret and bitter remorse. The Scriptures tell us that ‘he went to his own place,” a sobering picture of the destiny of the man who does not find

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peace through true repentance. How tragic to minimize Jesus' power to forgive - even the foulest sin as betrayal. There is power in the blood of Jesus. Have you plunged into the sin as betrayal? There is power in the blood of Jesus. Have you plunged into the fountain of blood to have your sins washed away?"

CONCLUSION:

If your devotion for Christ has waned then, come back to Jesus today. Confess Your Sins! Review your commitments! Ask God to rekindle your zeal! A passionless, indifferent heart always invites disaster in the spiritual life. A heart aflame with God's love is a heart, which is kept safe and healthy.

"Revive us again fill each heart with thy love;
May each soul be rekindled with fire from above."

Remember, "The degeneration of Judas was no sudden affair, it was a long process." (Barclay) The greatest danger that Christian faces is the danger of gradual drifting away from Jesus, the gradual cooling of his love for the Master, the slow accumulation of little sins until there is a mountain of guilt to deal with, the subtle hardening of his heart until he is no longer sensitive to the appeals of God's love.

"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?"
(Hebrews 2:1-3)

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CHAPTER 9

"WHAT SHALL I DO WITH JESUS?"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 9

SCRIPTURE: *"Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now, it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled. Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this, he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?" They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion."*

"Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him." The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who

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handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on his judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified." (John 18:28 -19:16)

TEXT: *"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" (Matthew 26:30)*

INTRODUCTION:

Pilate hated the Jews over which he governed, he showed his contempt for the Jewish population by treating them cruelly, and on occasion, he even allowed them to be slaughtered!

PROPOSITION:

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and he tried to evade personal responsibility in His trial, but personal responsibility in confronting and deciding either for or against Jesus, cannot be evaded. All men must decide what they will do with Jesus. Pilate crucified Jesus because Pilate counted loyalty to truth too costly.

- I. PILATE KNEW JESUS WAS INNOCENT (Evidence)
 - A. Pilate Tried To Refuse To Deal With The Case. (John 18:28-31)
 - B. Pilate Tried To Release Jesus On The Ground That At The Passover A Criminal Was Always Released.
 - C. Pilate Tried To Deal With Jesus Through Compromise, By Scourging Jesus.
 - D. Pilate Attempt To Save Jesus By Making One Last Appeal To Jesus' Innocence.
- II. PILATE WAS BLACKMAILED BY THE JEWS INTO CRUCIFYING Jesus
 - A. Pilate Struggled Within Himself Before Giving Guilty Verdict To Jesus.

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- B. Pilate Feared That His Job Would Be Taken From Him If The Jews Reported Him To The Emperor One More Time.

CONCLUSION:

If you don't meet him personally as your Saviour, you must meet Him someday as your Judge. Will Jesus be your Saviour or your Judge?

CHAPTER 9

"WHAT SHALL I DO WITH JESUS?"

INTRODUCTION:

"Pilate saith unto them, what shall I do then with Jesus who is called the Christ? They all say unto him, let him be crucified." (Matthew 27:22)

Pilate's "position in Judea was that of procurator - sub governor under the governor who ruled all Syria. In itself it was not a high position, but was often sought as a steppingstone to bigger things." (Sangster's 'They Met at Calvary'; pg. 53)

Pilate hated the Jews over which he governed. Two incidents from his dealings with Jews illustrate this.

Incident One: "The Roman soldiers were being encouraged not only to recognize their emperor as king, but to worship him as God, and accordingly they carried out on their standards little images to which they offered adoration. Now the special privilege granted the Jews was just this: it was agreed that these idols should not be used in the vicinity of their holy place; no image was to be brought to the precincts of the temple. Pilate arrived in Judea and, almost at once, scornfully disregarded this concession. He spent his garrison troops to Jerusalem to winter and ordered that the standards, with the idolatrous images upon them, should be taken by night into the sacred city. The Jews awoke next morning to discover the vile things under the shadow of the temple. Their religious sentiment was outraged. Multitudes of them marched all the way from Jerusalem to Caesarea (where the procurator normally lived) and pleaded for an interview. For five days, Pilate would not see them, but on the sixth day, he admitted them to his presence, and they begged him on their knees to remove the hateful things...Suddenly, in the midst of their pleading, Pilate ordered his troops to surround them and threatened them with instant death if they persisted in their request. To his utter amazement, they stretched themselves on the ground to a man and declared that death was better than the violation of their laws. Pilate was beaten. Even a Roman procurator could not indulge in wholesale massacre. He granted their request and let them go." (Sangster; pg. 54)

Incident Two: "The Jerusalem water supply was inadequate. Pilate determined to build a new aqueduct. Where was the money to come from?"

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Pilate raided the Temple treasurer. There were millions in the treasury...Pilate's aqueduct was much needed; it was a worthy and a great undertaking; the water supply would even be of much benefit to the Temple, which needed much cleansing with its continual sacrifices. But the people resented it; they rioted and surged through the streets. Pilate mingled his soldiers with them in plain clothes, with concealed weapons. At a given signal, the soldiers attacked the mob and many a Jew, was clubbed or stabbed to death. Once again Pilate was rendered unpopular – and he was rendered liable to report to the Emperor.” (Barclay's John, vol. 2, pg. 279)

PROPOSITION:

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and he tried to evade personal responsibility in His trial, but personal responsibility in confronting and deciding either for or against Jesus, could not be evaded. All men must decide what they will do with Jesus. Pilate crucified Jesus because Pilate counted loyalty to truth too costly.

I. PILATE KNEW JESUS WAS INNOCENT (Evidence)

Pilate tried to evade personal responsibility in the following ways:

A. Pilate Tried To Refuse To Deal With The Case.

“Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now, it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?” “If he were not a criminal, they replied, we would not have handed him over to you.” (John 18:28-31)

Let someone else deal with Jesus. Later, to attempt to escape personal decision regarding Jesus, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, hoping Herod would give a verdict. Neither the Jews nor Herod could make the decision for Pilate. Pilate alone had to make the decision.

Everyone must personally face the question for himself – What shall I do with Jesus?’ Jesus is on your hands as he was in the hands of Pilate. You must do something with Jesus. Some say, “Religion is not my bag!”, but that attempt at evasion will do you no good. You have to make a choice. No one else can make it for you.

B. Pilate Tried To Release Jesus On The Ground That At The Passover A Criminal Was Always Released.

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This was after Pilate had a personal interview with Jesus. *"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this, he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?" They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.*" (John 18:38-40)

Again, Pilate did not want to deal directly with Jesus. However, there is no substitute for personal confrontation with Christ. We must go to Jesus personally. There is no substitute for this personal confrontation with Christ and personal decision.

Christian parents cannot make the decision for their children. (I one time thought that since my grandmother and mother were Christians, that I must automatically be). God has no grandchildren – only children! First-hand contact.

Church membership is no substitute for personal acceptance of Christ as personal Saviour. "Countless numbers of people rely upon their Church membership for salvation. They have relinquished all personal responsibility for their relationship to God, having committed that matter to their Church as confidently as they have committed a health problem to a hospital or the education of their children to a school." (Mavis; Conversion; pg. 32) We must deal directly with God – not indirectly with him through the Church, as good as the latter is. Observance of a religious ritual such as 'general confession' in a public service is no substitute for personal confession' of sins to Jesus. "A general confession is good but in it lurks the danger of 'acknowledging and bewailing' humanity's sins and not our own." (Ibid, pg. 54) Again, confession must be directly to God and personally and concretely entered into.

Have you come to Jesus personally, or are you trying to deal indirectly with Jesus?

C. Pilate Tried To Deal With Jesus Through Compromise,
By Scourging Jesus.

"Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." (John 19:1-4)

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Jesus had to be an unusual man to last through the terrible scourging. “When a man was scourged he was tied to a whipping-post in such a way that his back was fully exposed. The lash was a long leathern thong, studded at intervals with pellets of lead and sharpened pieces of bone. It literally tore a man’s back into strips. Few remained conscious throughout the ordeal; some died; and many went raving mad. Jesus stood that. And after it, Pilate led Him out to the crowd and said ‘*See! The man!*’” (Barclay’s John, pg. 285) In addition, we would have to respond: ‘indeed, what a MAN!’

Pilate thought the scourging would satisfy the Jews, and keep Pilate from a verdict of crucifixion. The way of compromise will not work, however. Either you must say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ directly to Jesus, just like Pilate had to directly say either ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to crucifixion. The sight of Jesus’ blood simply caused the mad crowd to holler louder: ‘*Crucify Him!*’ ‘*Crucify Him!*’ Will you crucify Him or take Him into your life? That is the big question.

D. Pilate Attempt To Save Jesus By Making One Last Appeal To Jesus’ Innocence.

“When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!” As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!” Nevertheless, Pilate answered, “You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.” (John 19:5-6)

Perhaps the pitiful sight of the tortured Jesus before the crowd will cause the crowd to become more merciful and finally satisfied, short of crucifixion. Nevertheless, no way! The crowd still wants crucifixion.

Again, appeal to others will not take the place of personal decision. We must decide for ourselves. The crowd could not decide for Pilate, so others cannot decide for you personally. You are singled out, and you alone must decide for yourself. The crowd cannot make the decision for you. You must make your own decision and live with either results or consequences. What will your decision be?

II. PILATE WAS BLACKMAILED BY THE JEWS INTO CRUCIFYING JESUS

A. Pilate Struggled Within Himself Before Giving Guilty Verdict To Jesus.

“Pilate was a man who had a bad record. He had not scrupled to mingle blood of the Galileans with the blood of the sacrifices they brought to the Temple. Why should he be troubled when he beheld Jesus? Why

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should the question of putting him to death have perplexed Pilate, who had put so many men to death without the slightest compunction of conscience? Yet the moment he looked upon Jesus, the voice of conscience began to speak in Pilate's heart. The better man that lies within all men, sleeping but not dead, was awakened. Pilate knows that the man before him was innocent. Perhaps he said to himself at the very beginning: 'He is not only an innocent man, but may be more than a man.'" (The Greatest Questions of the Bible and Life; pg. 47; Macartney)

Pilate was suspicious of Jesus' Identity.

Pilate's wife's dream, which was reported to Pilate, disturbed him all the more. Because of a disturbing dream about Jesus, Pilate's wife sent a message to Pilate, while he sat on the judgment seat: *"Have nothing to do with this just man, for I have suffered much because of him, in a dream"*.

And what with the protest of his wife, the voice of his own conscience and the entire failure of the Sanhedrists to make out their case, Governor Pilate resolves to discharge the prisoner from custody." (Talmage) However, as we have already noted, Pilate tried to evade responsibility in several ways, none of which worked. He had to finally decide the verdict.

It was really Pilate on trial - not Jesus - as Jesus stood silent before Pilate. In Jesus' presence, every man is revealed for what he truly is. *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."* (John 3:18-21)

When an individual is in the presence of the Nazarene, it is a disturbing experience. Just as the Light of the world shone on the darkened heart of Pilate, exposing sin and calling him to repentance, so the Light of truth still brings sharp conviction.

Pilate was suspicious and filled with fear because of Jesus' dignified presence and his calm composure during His infamous trial. Shakespeare wrote, "Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind: the thief doth fear every bush an officer." (Mavis; pg. 41) When Sampson Stanforth was under the conviction of God, he later wrote of these

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feelings: “I thought the very stones in the street, and the timbers in the wall, cried out against me for my enormous wickedness.” (Ibid; pg. 41) As Jesus’ blood stained the mosaic of the pavement on the judgment hall, I wonder if Pilate felt like the very stones were crying out against the grossest crime of the history.

B. Pilate Feared That His Job Would Be Taken From Him If
The Jews Reported Him To The Emperor One More Time.

“From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.” When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. “Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priest’s answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.” (John 19:12-16)

Recall the past record of Pilate and his hateful dealings with the Jews, and the Emperor’s rebukes of Pilate’s conduct. When the crowd yelled: “If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend, for Jesus makes himself out to be a king in challenge of Caesar”, “that was the end of that long hard battle that Pilate had fought to do the right thing. He trembled at the thought of having the people accuse him as an enemy to Caesar.” (Macartney; pg. 53)

Would Pilate be true to his conscience and release Jesus? Would he take the costly way of honesty, which would probably mean losing his position and job.” Justice or prudence? Right or wrong? Honesty or dishonesty? Heaven or hell?

“John Bunyan, having become guilt-conscious, was playing a game with his friends on Sunday, when he thought that God looked upon him and a “voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul and said, “Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven? Or have thy sins, and go to hell?”” At this Bunyan left the game and, looking up to heaven, he envisioned the Lord Jesus looking down upon him, hotly displeased and threatening him with grievous punishment for his ungodly practices.” (Mavis; pg. 41) Bunyan had to make a choice, just as Pilate had to make a choice, and just like each one of us has to make a choice. Joshua had to make a choice: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.”

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Pilate’s “fault at heart was such a common one. He would not be loyal to the highest that he knew, when to be loyal was costly. He would not maintain such moral integrity as he had if its maintenance threatened to involve him in personal loss.” (Sangster; pg. 60)

Like Pilate, loyalty to the highest may be costly. One of Jesus’ hard saying is this: *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword...A man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”* (Matthew 10:34, 36)

To choose Christ and follow Him is very costly in the country of India. “To a high-caste Indian anyone not belonging to his own caste is unclean; if that person becomes a Christian, he is still more seriously unclean. Premanand, the great Indian Christian, tells us in his autobiography what happened to him. He became a Christian; his family rejected him. Sometimes he used to come back to see his mother, who was broken-hearted at what she considered his apostasy, but who still loved him dearly. Premanand tells us ‘As soon as my father came to know that I was visiting my mother in the daytime while he was away at the office, he ordered the door-keeper, a stalwart upcountry man, Ram Rup not to allow me to enter the house.’ Ram Rup, was persuaded to slacken his vigilance. ‘At last my mother won over Ram Rup, the door-keeper, and I was allowed to enter her presence. The prejudice was so great that even the menial Hindu servants of the house would not wash the plates on which my mother fed me. Sometimes my aunt would purify the place and the seat on which I had sat by sprinkling Ganges water, or water mixed with cow dung.’ Premanand and was unclean, and everything he touched became unclean.” (Barclay’s Matthew; vol. 2; pg. 122)

Contrast these stories of loyalty with the following as told by Robert Andrews: (“Bill had listened soberly as I talked with him about becoming a Christian. He seemed to be moving toward a real commitment to Christ. Suddenly his whole attitude changed as he pointed toward his beautiful, big car, with the expansive cabin cruiser on the trailer behind it. ‘I can’t be a Christian’, Bill exclaimed; ‘I love my boat, my car, and my airplane too much! I don’t want to give them up!’ These were his status symbols, his passport to friends.” (Note that Christians can have a car, a boat, or an airplane. They just can’t give them the place of God.”)

Pilate didn’t become a Christian because of his prestige, power, position, and job. We hope that Pilate repented in later life and turned to the true Judge of the World. If not, when Pilate comes into the Judgment at the Last Day, is it not likely that one of the witnesses who testify against Pilate, will be Pilate’s own wife? “I warned you. Why did you not heed the warning I received from my dream!”

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CONCLUSION:

What will you do with Jesus? It is a decision that you must NOW settle. Will you come unto Jesus while he is now the World's Saviour and receive forgiveness of Sins? If you don't meet him personally as Saviour, you must meet Him someday as Judge. Will Jesus be your Saviour or your Judge? Make Him your Saviour just now! Confess, Believe, Accept, and begin living daily for Him, whatever the cost to you personally. "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the world, and in the end lose his own soul?"

"What will you do with Jesus?' On Sunday night, October 8, 1871, Dwight L. Moody was preaching to a great congregation in Farwell Hall, Chicago. This was the text of his sermon: 'what shall I do then with Jesus?' at the close of the sermon he said: 'I wish you would take this text home with you and turn it over in your minds during the week, and next Sabbath we will come to Calvary and the cross, and we will decide what to do with Jesus of Nazareth.' Then, as usual, he turned to Sankey and asked him to sing a hymn. 'Sankey sang:

'Today, the Saviour calls,
For refuge fly;
The storm of justice falls,
And death is nigh.'

However, the hymn was never finished, for while Sankey was singing there was the rush and roar of fire engines on the street outside and the heavens were crimson with the reflection of the great Chicago fire. In the morning, Chicago lay in ashes. To his dying day, Moody was full of regret because he had told that congregation to wait until next Sabbath to decide what to do with Jesus, 'I have never dared', he said, 'to give an audience a week to think of their salvation since. If they were lost, they might rise up in judgment against me. I have never seen that congregation since. I will never meet those people until I meet them in another world. However, I want to tell of one lesson I learned that night which I have never forgotten; and that is when I preach to press Christ upon the people, at that moment, and try to bring them to a decision on the spot. I would rather have that right hand cut off than to give an audience a week now to decide what to do with Jesus.'" (The Greatest Question of the Bible and of Life; Macartney; pgs. 55, 56)

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QUESTIONS ONE SHOULD ASK: *"WHAT SHALL I DO WITH JESUS?"*

(John 18:28-19:15)

1. According to John 18:28-33, how could you counsel an indifferent person who says, "Religion is unimportant to me? I don't even wish to think about Jesus"?
2. Give illustrations of persons who, like Pilate, in John 18:38-40, have tried to evade personal responsibility of dealing directly with Jesus. Is it possible for one to rely upon his Christian heritage, or his church membership, or a Church ritual like "general congregational confession", rather than to personally and directly confront Christ and to accept responsibility for moral decision?
3. In what way did Pilate attempt to deal with Jesus through compromise, according to John 19:1-4? How do people today seek to deal with Christ through compromise, rather than by direct and personal surrender to Christ and to His claims on their lives?
4. Why should the question of putting Jesus to death have perplexed Pilate so very much, in light of the fact that Pilate had put so many men to death without the slightest compunction of conscience? (Note John 19:7-12 and Matthew 27:19)
5. Give an illustration, which demonstrates the truth of the following statement: "When an individual is in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, it is a disturbing experience. Just as the Light of the World shone on the darkened heart of Pilate, exposing sin and calling him to repentance, so the Light of Truth still brings sharp conviction!" (Note John 3:18-21)
6. What was the 'final blow' that caused Pilate to be persuaded to crucify Jesus, even though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent? (Note John 19:12-16)
7. Have you ever observed persons who, because of fear of personal loss, have chosen to reject Christ rather than to be loyal to their moral convictions and to be honest with their conscience?
8. Give your interpretation of the following words of Jesus, "*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*" (Matthew 10:34)
9. As in the case of Pilate, is it possible for people yet today to fail to become a Christian because personal prestige or political power or high- paying jobs are more important to them than Christ is?

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10. If a person refuses to accept Jesus as his Savior in life, in what way must he confront Jesus following physical death?

CHAPTER 10
"WHO'S ON TRIAL HERE?"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION:

As Jesus stands before His accusers, is Jesus the Victim? Yes! He was treated grossly and unjustly! Was he the victim? Yes! Was He on trial? No!

PROPOSITION:

Jesus is not on trial. The people and the people's philosophies are on trial! A man's responses are on trial before Jesus!

- I. THE GOD OF MATERIALISM IS ON TRIAL. (Exemplified by Annas and Caiaphas). (Matthew 26:57, 62-68)
- II. THE GOD OF PLEASURE AND SENSATIONALISM IS ON TRIAL. (Exemplified by Herod) (Luke 23:8-11)
- III. THE God OF OSITION AND POWER IS ON TRIAL. (Exemplified by Pilate) (John 18:28-31; 19:1-6)

CONCLUSION:

“The gods of Materialism, Pleasure, and Power have been condemned by God, in the person of Christ! These gods lead their worshippers to selfishness, deception, injustice, and greed! Jesus is the Judge! Humanity is on trial! Our response to the Way, the Truth, and the Life will determine the verdict.” (John 3:18-21)

CHAPTER 10

"WHO'S ON TRIAL HERE?"

INTRODUCTION:

"It would be impossible to exaggerate the horror and the shame and the humiliation of the last twelve hours of Jesus' life immediately preceding his crucifixion. He was, arrested in the garden, probably about nine o'clock in the evening. Between then and nine o'clock the next morning he underwent no fewer than six different trials. We have this not from any one gospel – we have to put the whether and work out the pattern of the six...We can list those six trials in the one night; first to Annas, then to Caiaphas, then to the Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court), then to Pilate, then to Herod, and then back to Pilate." (Barclay's 'The Life of Jesus For Everyman'; pgs. 56, 60)

As Jesus stands before His accusers, is Jesus the Victim? Yes! He was treated grossly and unjustly! Was he the victim? Yes! Was He on trial? No!

PROPOSITION:

Who then is on trial? Everyone before whom Jesus stood! Annas, Caiaphas, Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod! Jesus is not on trial. The people and the people's philosophies are on trial! A man's responses are on trial before Jesus! The man, who rejects Jesus' call of love, judges and condemns himself to death. The man who accepts Jesus' offer of love, judges himself worthy of eternal life. Who is on Trial?

- I. THE GOD OF MATERIALISM IS ON TRIAL. (Exemplified by Annas and Caiaphas).

"Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled." (Matthew 26:57)

"Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" "He is worthy of death," they answered. Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others

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slapped him and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?" (Matthew 26:62-68) "Annas, at this time held no office at all, but had been High Priest. But although not in office, Annas was the power behind the throne. Four of his sons had been High Priests and Caiaphas, the reigning High Priest, was his son-in-law. Jesus first was first to Annas for the very simple reason that Jesus had done something, which touched Annas on the raw, and Annas wanted to gloat over him. The point was this – in his cleansing of the Temple. Jesus had driven from the Temple Court those who sold pigeons and doves. These, were sold to the pilgrims who wanted to make sacrifices for sin, for thanksgiving, for peace, when they came to the Temple. Because every sacrifice, that was offered, had to be without spot and without blemish, and in order that it might be certain that, the sacrifices were without sport or blemish, the temple had appointed inspectors. Pilgrims could buy their victims, their pigeons and their doves, outside quite easily, but if they did buy them outside and then took them into the temple and submitted them to the inspector, they could be quite, quite certain that he would find a flaw in them. When he found a flaw in them he would say, 'Don't you think you'd better buy your pigeons at our stalls? Our stalls have already been tested and you'll have no bother and no worry if you buy there.' Very well, and very convenient – except for this one thing, that outside the Temple one could buy two pigeons for nine pence and inside the same two pigeons would cost fifteen shillings! The stalls where they sold the pigeons belonged to Annas. (Actually, they were called; "The Bazaars of Annas.) Annas and his family made thousands a year out of them. Annas was glad then to get the chance to gloat over this upstart Galilean who had tried to hit his vested interest by cleansing the Temple in that way." (Barclay; pgs. 56, 57)

Annas' treatment, along with that of the entire Jewish Sanhedrin (the supreme court of the Jews), reveals the cutthroat tactics of gross materialism. Thus, Jesus really was not on trial before Annas and Caiaphas, but they (and the materialistic way of life, which they represented) were on trial before Jesus.

They put money and selfish, materialistic interests before the interests of truth and honesty and righteousness and justice.

The God of materialism demands that people worship money instead of Christ. The God of materialism leads its worshippers to, falsely suppose, that 'life consists in the abundance of things which a man possesses.' That, creature comforts' will give comfort to the soul.

Someone has said, "O Money, Money, Money – he that hath thee hath health and life. He can rattle his pockets at the devil." (Jones' 'How to Be A Transformed Person; pg. 85)

Those who worship "Materialism" are like Annas and Caiaphas, "greedy for gain". Although professed believers may not consciously admit love of money,

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too many believers show by their values that they have too much attraction for the mammon of this world. Many years ago, William Law, in the form of a prayer, satirizes the real intent of those who seek for more than natural needs require:

"O Lord, I thy sinful Creature, who am born again to a lively Hope of Glory in Christ Jesus, beg of thee, to grant me a thousand times more Riches than I need, that I may be able to gratify Myself and Family in the Delights of Eating and Drinking, State and Grandeur, grant that as the little Span of Life wears out, I may still abound more and more in Wealth, and that I may see and perceive all the best and surest Ways of growing Richer than any of my Neighbors; this I humbly and fervently Beg." (Tenney; Blueprint for a Christian World; pg. 188)

One may say, "That is an unchristian prayer!" Right! However, let us remember that the same things, which make an unchristian prayer, also make an unchristian life! Jesus said, *"You cannot serve God and money at the same time. You must serve one and deny the other."*

It is not money, itself, that is evil. Christianity has advocated private property and material prosperity. He who has the gift of making money must not rob God by not using this gift.

It is not money that is evil it is the misuse of money that is evil. It is not money that is evil it is the love and worship of money that is evil. The value of money is in the use of money.

"If anyone is stealing he must stop it and begin using those hands of his for honest work so he can give to others in need." (Ephesians 4:28, Living Bible)
Why earn money: To use it in helping the needy.

"Tell those who are rich not to be proud and not to trust in their money...Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in needs; always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them." (I Timothy 6:17a, 18)

Materialism; is judged as deceptive, cruel, and selfish, as shown by the example of Annas and Caiaphas. He who worships at the shrine of materialism is inviting destruction to his own soul.

Listen to the indictment of Scriptures. *"So we should be well satisfied without money if we have enough food and clothing. 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*

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away from God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows.” (I Timothy 6:8-10, Living Bible)

II. THE GOD OF PLEASURE AND SENSATIONALISM IS ON TRIAL.
(Exemplified by Herod)

“Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.” (Luke 23:8-11)

There are still those, like Herod, who are more interested in the spectacular than in the truthful. Herod was not interested in seeking truth, but in seeing Jesus perform a trick, a miracle, or a sign. Herod was not seeking evidence for belief, but he was seeking entertainment and amusement from a miracle. Herod wanted Jesus to put on a show for him, to excite his emotions and to satisfy his pursuit for pleasure.

There are still those who are worshipping pleasure, and who would involve themselves in religion only if it helps satisfy their goal of pleasure, sensationalism, and entertainment. There are those who judged religion not by its solemn teachings, by its declarations of truth, its call to service, its love for humanity, its preaching of repentance, or by its standards of morality. But by its ability to excite the emotions, by its involvement in sensationalism, by its revelation of the mystical and the miraculous, but by its features of the bizarre and the supernatural.

Christianity has its wonders. It has its miracles. It has its signs. It has its emotion and its ecstasy. It has its supernatural, and it is mysterious.

Nevertheless, Christ will never bow to men’s’ perverted whims and desires to use Christianity to provide emotional entertainment, or ecstatic pleasure, or mystical wonder. Christ will never seek to win people to the truth by sensational wonders!

Satan sought to get Jesus to cast himself off the temple roof and allow God to rescue him from any danger by allowing Jesus to float down to the ground unharmed. The many people who would be jammed into the temple precincts would be so impressed that they would follow Christ. Jesus responded to this temptation: “No – you don’t want to follow a policy of sensations, because you know yourself that a nine-day wonder is a nine-day wonder, and on the tenth day no one will cross the street to see it. If you commit yourself to a policy of

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sensations you have to offer bigger and better sensations all the time – there is no future, in that.” (Barclay’s *Ibid*, pg. 30)

Herod looked at Jesus with curiosity, and eventually regarded Jesus as a joke. There are yet thousands, who are attracted only to the sensational aspects of religion and who use Jesus, and his followers as the object of their jokes.

The man who worships pleasure and sensationalism will not take Jesus seriously. Pleasure is more important than truth. Sensationalism is more important to them than saneness and rationalism. Emotionalism is more important than volitional commitment to the Right. The pleasures of the moment are more important than the hard acceptance of eternal truth.

He who refuses, like Herod, to take Jesus seriously, but who instead makes a joke of the sacred, is forever, judged as a perverted, pleasure-obsessed, self-condemned fool!

“But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.” (Jude 17, 18)

Those comedians who jest, joke and imitate the modern evangelists on T.V. are among the ‘mockers’ in the last time. You make your own list of such mockers, but remember that those who worship the God of pleasures; are judged! *“Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”* (Jude 14b-15)

III. THE GOD OF POSITION AND POWER IS ON TRIAL. (Exemplified by Pilate).

Pilate was the Roman Governor who ruled over Palestine and who questioned Jesus. Pilate was hated by many of the Jews, because of his disrespect of the Jewish religion with its emphasis on the worship of only one God. Further, Pilate was insensitive to the Jewish economic needs.

“He wanted to bring a water supply into Jerusalem and to build an aqueduct an entirely laudable and praiseworthy undertaking. But, aqueducts cost money. He had no money, and so raided the Temple treasure (which counted its money in nothing less than millions). Of course, the Jews wanted water all right, but they did not want the Temple treasury raided – they went up in a blue light straight away and rioted. Pilate then dressed his troops in plain clothes, gave them cudgels beneath their cloaks, and sent them in among the crowds. Unless the riot stopped, at a given signal the soldiers were to do a bit

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of beating up. However, something went badly wrong. Instead of just beating up, the soldiers got quite out of control and two thousand Jews lay dead in the streets of Jerusalem that night.” (Barclay; *Ibid*; pg. 59)

The Jews did not easily get over this episode, as well as other insensitive treatment by Pilate.

In spite of Pilate’s great flaw in his character, he nevertheless knew that Jesus was innocent. At first, Pilate tried to refuse to deal with the case altogether. *“They lead Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium: and it was early; and they themselves entered not into the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. Pilate therefore went out unto them, and saith, what accusation brings ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, if this man were not an evildoer, we should not have delivered him up unto thee. Pilate therefore said unto them, Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law. The Jews said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:”...* (John 18:28-31) Later, to attempt to escape personal decision regarding Jesus, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod (as we have already noted), hoping that Herod would give a verdict.

When this tactic failed, Pilate tried to release Jesus on the ground that at the Passover a criminal was always, released.

Next, Pilate tried to deal with Jesus through Compromise, by scourging Jesus. *“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!”* And they slapped him in the face. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, *“Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.”* (John 19:1-4) Pilate thought the cruel scourging would satisfy the Jews, and keep Pilate from declaring a verdict of crucifixion.

Finally, Pilate attempted to save Jesus by making one last appeal to Jesus’ innocence. *“When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”* As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, *“Crucify! Crucify!”* But Pilate answered, *“You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.”* (John 19:5-6) Perhaps the pitiful sight of the tortured Jesus before the crowd will cause the crowd to become more merciful and finally satisfied, short of crucifixion. Nevertheless, no way! The crowd still wanted crucifixion!

In light of all the evidence for Jesus’ innocence and in light of all the attempts, which Pilate made to demonstrate Jesus’ innocence, why then did the Roman governor Pilate finally, give permission to the Jews to crucify Jesus?

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The simple answer is that the Jews into crucifying Jesus blackmailed Pilate. Pilate feared that his job; would be taken from him, if the Jews reported him to the Emperor one more time.

"Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha...Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away." (John 19:13-16)

Pilate's past record of hateful dealings with the Jews could be immediately reported to the Roman Emperor, and in that event, Pilate would likely be dethroned and possibly even banished from society. "Pilate trembled at the thought of having the people accuse him as an enemy to Caesar." (Macartney)

Would Pilate take the costly way of honesty, and declare Jesus as innocent and release Him, or would he take the way of prudence and self-centered interest? To choose honesty would be to choose personal loss of job, position, power, and status.

Pilate's "fault at heart was such a common one. He would not be loyal to the highest that he knew, when to be loyal was costly. He would not maintain such moral integrity as he had if its maintenance threatened to involve him in personal loss." (Sangster)

Thus, it was really Pilate on trial – not Jesus – as Jesus stood silent before Pilate. In Jesus' presence, every man is revealed for what he truly is. "Pilate is bound by his need for place and position." (The Trials of Jesus; Frederick Kemper; pg. 13)

The god of position and power; is forever judged, as inadequate and dishonest. Are there modern-day gods of power, technology, position, status and honor, before whose shrines many followers are worshipping?

Robert Andrews wrote, "Bill had listened soberly as I talked with him about becoming a Christian. He seemed to be moving toward a real commitment to Christ. Suddenly his whole attitude changed as he pointed toward his beautiful big car, with the expensive cabin cruiser on the trailer behind it. 'I can't be a Christian', Bill exclaimed; 'I love my boat, my car, and my airplane too much! I don't want to give them up!' These were his status symbols, his passport to friends." (A Christian, of course, can have a car, a boat, or an airplane. One just cannot give them the place of God.)

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Bill's response to the call of Christ did not judge Christ; it judged Bill! A man is judged, by what he values. Bill valued his status symbols more than he valued Christ! Such a man, like Pilate, has made a God of position and power, and such a man, like Pilate, is a fool among fools!

CONCLUSION:

Who is on trial here? You, me, and everyone! Our responses to Christ are on trial! The gods of Materialism, Pleasure, Power, are on trial! In fact, they have been already condemned. The Light of the World has exposed them for what they are, not only inadequate but also cruel and destructive! These gods lead their worshippers to selfishness, deception, injustice, and greed.

Jesus is the Judge! Humanity is on trial! Our response to 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life will determine the verdict. *“He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.”* (John 3:18-21)

Will you come to the light just now? Every man is on trial before the Light of Heaven. Your response constitutes your verdict. What will the verdict be for you? Come to Jesus. Let the Judge become your Saviour and your Lord! Repent, believe, accept Jesus, and you will be saved.

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CHAPTER 11
"CHRIST'S KINGSHIP!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 11

SCRIPTURE: *"Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"³⁴ "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"³⁵ "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"³⁶ Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."³⁸ "What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this, he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. (John 18:33-38)*

TEXT: *"Jesus answered; my kingship is not of this world."* (John 18:36; RSV)

INTRODUCTION:

Christ acknowledged that He was a king, but the kingship of which Christ spoke was much different from the popular idea of kingship.

PROPOSITION:

Let us note the unique character of Christ's Kingship.

- I. CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S KINGSHIP
 - A. Not Hate – But Love
 - B. Not Political Freedom – But Spiritual Freedom

- II. POWER OF CHRIST'S KINGSHIP
 - A. Christ Is The Great Divider In Time
 - B. Christ Will Be The Great Divider In Eternity

CONCLUSION:

Christ's Kingship appeals to the heart of man. He who responds to Christ's appeal is a member of Christ's Kingdom and will hear someday, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

CHAPTER 11

"CHRIST'S KINGSHIP!"

INTRODUCTION:

Throughout Christ's ministry, he often spoke of the Kingdom of God. On certain occasions, the multitudes sought to make Christ a king, but Christ refused and even escaped from the multitudes. However, on Palm Sunday Christ permitted the multitude to throw palm branches before Him as he rode on a donkey, which was a Messianic symbol. As Christ was before Pilate the subject of, Christ's Kingship, was earnestly discussed. Christ acknowledged that He was a King, but the kingship of which Christ spoke was much different from the popular idea of kingship. Christ acknowledged that He was a king, but the kingship of which Christ spoke was much different from the popular idea of kingship.

PROPOSITION:

It is important for us briefly to note the character of Christ's kingship. Kingship was the idea of power in it. Let us also note the power of Christ's kingship.

I. CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S KINGSHIP

A. Not Hate – But Love

At the time Christ came into the world, the Jews were a subject people under the dominion of the Romans. The popular talk among the Jews was conversation concerning the coming of the Messiah.

The formulation of the Messianic concept came about through the wistful longings of the Israelite people during the dark days of their nation's decline, many centuries before the time of Christ. The Jews wistfully longed for a king who would reign like King David. David was Israel's greatest king, and it was David, who reigned during the Golden Age of Israel's history. David was Israel's greatest king, and it was David, who reigned during the Golden Age of Israel's history. David was idolized, as the ideal king. One who gave Israel its military, political, material, and spiritual success. Ever after the time of David, the Jews looked back upon his age as the ideal age and upon David as the ideal king.

At the time of Christ, the Jews expected God to send a Messiah whose power would be in the sword, whose genius would be in military

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organization, and whose glory would be in the destruction of the Roman Army. The Jews expected the Messiah to establish his kingdom on earth, with Jerusalem as His headquarters. The Messiah would be David incarnate. The borders of Israel would be expanded more than ever before, and all nations would bow in servitude to Israel. The Messiah would usher in an age of unprecedented power and prosperity for Israel.

There was existent at the time of Jesus a group of revolutionaries who worked for the overthrow of Roman oppression. These revolutionaries who were called Zealots were willing to go to any end to accomplish their goal. It is very possible that Barabbas – the prisoner released at the time of Jesus’ mock trial – was a Zealot. It appears that Barabbas was a man who was willing to murder, rob, assassinate, or commit any crime to accomplish his purpose. His career was a career of hate. He was a man of violence, and as such was a type of hero to many Jews who were inflamed with a zeal for military revenge.

Jesus’ Kingship, or Messiahship, was characterized not by hate but by love. Jesus’ power as the Messiah would not be in terms of military power, but quite the contrary – it would be in terms of the power of love, which would find its expression in the experience of suffering and sacrifice. Jesus came to show the true meaning of the Messiah. The Messiah must suffer, not seek revenge. The Messiah must love, not hate. The Messiah must save, not conquer. The Messiah must rule by love in the hearts of men, not rule by hate over the Jews’ earthly enemies.

Barabbas was the man of force. A man of blood, that chose to reach his end by violent means. Jesus was a man of love and of gentleness. One who would have nothing to do with force and whose kingdom was in the hearts of man. It is the tragic fact of history that all through the ages men have chosen the way of Barabbas and refused the way of Jesus.” (Barclay’s John, ph. 290)

B. Not Political Freedom – But Spiritual Freedom

Jesus taught that the Messiah’s Kingdom; would be established on the foundation of suffering and sacrifice, not on the foundation of military force and arms. 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.” (Barclay’s Matthew, pg. 264) The crowd on Palm Sunday addressed Jesus as the Son of David, which was a Messianic title. The excitement of the Jews was great as they hailed the long expected king. When they cried out;

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"Hosanna in the highest! They must have meant, "Let even the angels in the highest heights of heaven cry unto God, Save Now!"

Modern man would quickly welcome Jesus today if He would only promise to change society and 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 sufferings sacrifice, a cross, and death, the popular cry of the crowd is no longer "Hosanna!" but "Crucify Him!"

Say's Barclay, "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." (Barclay's Mark, pg. 279)

Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not founded in this world - if it were, my servants would have fought to prevent my being handed over to the Jews. But in fact my kingdom is not founded on all this!" "So you are a king, are you?" asked Pilate. "Indeed I am a king," Jesus replied: "the reason for my birth and the reason for my coming into the world is to witness to the truth. Every man who loves truth recognizes my voice." (John 18:38, 37; Phillips)

"Hat He came not for the purpose of giving political freedom, but rather to give spiritual freedom. Throughout Jesus' entire public ministry, He refused to become an earthly revolutionary leader. The people attempted to make him a king, but Jesus refused. John records the following incident in Jesus' public ministry: "Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself." (John 6:15)

Jesus well knew that it is possible for a man to be free physically and politically and yet be a slave to self, to passion, to pride, and to falsehood. Jesus could point to the Romans, who enjoyed prosperity and political freedom, and yet, Jesus knew that the Romans were slaves to idolatry, hate and suspicion.

Jesus came to give spiritual freedom. Jesus said,

*"Every man who loves truth recognizes my voice."
Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. (John 8:32)*

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Jesus answered, *"You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."* (John 18:37)

True freedom comes through the truth. *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* Christ came to give freedom from guilt, fear, hate, and suspicion. The freedom Christ came to give is not dependent upon external circumstances.

Madame Guyon was a Christian who was imprisoned and suffered greatly. However, although her body was confined, her spirit was not confined. She was able to write:

"A little bird I am
Shut from the field of air;
To Him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleases Thee.

Naught have I else to do;
I sing the whole day long;
And He whom most I love to please,
Doth listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing
But still He bends to hear me sing.

My cage confines me round;
Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of the soul.

Oh! It is good to soar
These bolts and bars above,
To Him whose purpose I adore,
Whose Providence I love;
And in Thy mighty will to find
The joy, the freedom of the mind.

(Prayer and Life's Highest; pgs. 65, 66)

Christ gives freedom to the spirit. A freedom that is able to soar above every circumstance of life.

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II. POWER OF CHRIST’S KINGSHIP

Christ’s kingship is powerful but not powerful militarily. Christ’s kingship is powerful in that it is the great divider in time and in eternity. No man can remain neutral to Christ. He must either accept or reject Christ’s kingship.

A. Christ Is The Great Divider In Time

Barclay notes various ways in which Pilate sought to avoid any personal decision regarding Christ. Pilate first tried to put the responsibility for handling Jesus on someone else. Pilate said to the Jews when they brought Jesus to him, *“Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.”* (John 18:31a) However, this did not work. The Jews replied to Pilate, *“It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.”* (John 18:31b) No man can evade personal responsibility in dealing with Jesus. The question is asked of each man, *“What will ye do with Jesus?”* Each man must answer that for himself.

Pilate then tried to engineer Christ’s release by appealing to the custom of releasing a prisoner. Pilate’s attempt failed when the crowd asked for Barabbas’ release instead of Jesus’ release. This shows that no man can resort to the world or to a group to make his decision regarding Christ. The world is hostile to Christ and is still crying out, *“Crucify Him!”* Each person must decide for himself, either to accept or to reject the Saviour.

Pilate tried the way of compromise, Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus, and thought that the mob would surely be moved to pity if they saw Jesus scourged. *“When a man was scourged he was tied to a whipping post in such a way that his back was fully exposed. The lash was a long leather thong, studded at intervals with pellets of lead, and sharpened pieces of bone. It literally tore a man’s back into strips. Few remained conscious throughout the ordeal’ some died’ and many went raving mad. Jesus stood that. Moreover, after it Pilate led Him out to the crowd and said, ‘See the man!’ It must have been Pilate’s first intention to awaken the pity of the Jews. ‘Look!’ he said. ‘Look at this poor, bruised, bleeding creature! Look at this wretchedness! Can you possibly wish to hound a creature like this to an utterly unnecessary death?’”* (Barclay’s John, pg. 285) Nevertheless, Pilate’s attempt at compromise – seeking to satisfy the Jews by scourging Jesus instead of crucifying him – did not work. When Pilate brought Jesus before the Jews again, the Jews cried out, *“Crucify him, crucify him.”* (John 19:6) Compromise will not work. Pilate had to; out rightly decide either to crucify Jesus or to release Jesus. The decision was that explicit. Each man must out rightly decide whether to accept Christ or to reject Christ.

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Jesus divides all men into one of two categories – those who accept Christ and those who reject Christ. No man can remain neutral. Jesus said that anyone who was not for him was against him. Every man is either a child of the light or a child of the darkness. Every man either has responded to the truth or has hardened his heart to the truth. Every man is given the choice between Barabbas, who represents hate and violence, and Jesus, who represents love and peace. “The choice of the mob has been the eternal choice.” (Barclay’s John, pg. 290)

After hearing about Christ, each man must make his decision. “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve” was the command of Joshua. After Paul preached on Mar’s hill, a decision had to be made: *“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter.”* (Acts 17:32) Christ’s kingship is powerful, for its claims divide all men into either acceptors or rejecters of the Truth.

B. Christ Will Be The Great Divider In Eternity

It is possible that the last action of Pilate in regards to Jesus is the most dramatic act and the act that is filled with the most irony. *“Pilate therefore...brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha...and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!”* (John 19:13, 14)

This passage possibly means that Pilate, with one last mocking gesture, brought Jesus out, clad in the terrible finery of the old purple robe and with His forehead fit with the crown of thorns and the drops of blood the thorns had wakened, and set Him in the judgment seat, and with a wave of his hand said: *‘Am I to crucify your king?’* I may be that Pilate jestingly caricatured Jesus as judge. If that is so, if Pilate really set Jesus in the judgment seat to make a fool of Jesus, what dramatic irony is there? That which was a mockery was the truth. And one day those who had mocked Jesus as judge would meet Him as judge – and would remember.” (Barclay’s John, pg. 287)

The Scriptures make it very clear that Christ shall judge all men someday. Thus, Christ will be lord of lords and king of kings. He will divide all men into two categories. There will be the lost and the saved. *“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”* Paul preached that God *“hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.”* (Acts 17:31) Jesus Himself will be that Judge. *“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”* (John 5:22)

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“When he was a young man Judge Warren Candler practiced law. One of his clients was charged with murder, and the young lawyer made the utmost effort to clear his client of the charge. There were some extenuating circumstances and the lawyer made the most of them in his pleas before the jury. Moreover, there were present in the court the aged father and mother of the man charged with murder; and the young lawyer worked on the sympathies and emotions of the jury by frequent reference to the God-fearing parents. In due course, the jury retired for deliberation. When they had reached a verdict, they returned to the jury box. Their verdict read, ‘We find the defendant not guilty’. The young lawyer, himself a Christian, had a serious talk with his cleared client. He warned him to avoid evil ways and to trust God’s power to keep him straight. Years passed. Again, the man was brought into court. Again, the charge was murder. The lawyer who had defended him at his first trial was now the judge on the bench. At the CONCLUSION: of the trial, the jury rendered its verdict as ‘Guilty’. Ordering the condemned man to stand for sentencing, Judge Candler said, ‘At your first trial, I was your lawyer, today I am your judge. The verdict of the jury makes it mandatory for me to sentence you to be hanged by the neck until you are dead.’ Today Christ is our Lawyer, our Saviors, willing to forgive and to cleanse and forget. However, there is coming a fearful day when He will be our Judge.” (World Aflame; pg. 244, 245)

CONCLUSION:

Jesus came not into the world to Judge – but to save. However, those who refuse Jesus as Saviour, accept Him as Judge. It is true God is Love; but love spurned becomes love Indignant. God is love, but is just also. He, who rejects God’s just provision for salvation, receives God’s just provision of punishment.

“All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day, he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. (II Thessalonians 1:5-10)

God’s Just Provision for Salvation
God must remain Just in His character.

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God desires to release the sinner from his penalty.

This causes a dilemma.

Therefore, God became man, and took upon himself His own wrath toward sin and died as the penalty for Sin.

Result: God can remain consistently just in His character and at the same time release the sinner (justify him or acquit the sinner).

Men's salvation has been justly purchased without God's just character being altered or destroyed.

God is both just (Sin must be penalized), and God is also love (Sin's penalty is borne by God Himself, thus releasing the sinner).

Christ's Kingship appeals to the heart of man. He who responds to Christ's appeal is a member of Christ's Kingdom and will hear someday, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." He who rejects Christ's appeal is outside of the kingdom and will be rejected eternally. Thus, Christ's kingship is powerful in that it divides all men, some to heaven and some to hell. Make sure you are a member of Christ's Kingdom, for to be a member of His kingdom affects your destiny, for time and for eternity.

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CHAPTER 12
"CHRIST'S RECONCILIATION!"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 12

SCRIPTURE: *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”* (Romans 5:8-11)

TEXT: *“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.”* (II Corinthians 5:18)

INTRODUCTION:

The Cross is the most important and basic theme of the New Testament. It is the essence of the Gospel.

PROPOSITION:

Let us seek to understand the necessity, the means, and the result of reconciliation.

I. NECESSITY OF RECONCILIATION

- A. Man's Fall
- B. God's Wrath
- C. Man's Despair And Hunger

II. MEANS OF RECONCILIATION

- A. God's Imitation
- B. Man's Part

III. RESULT OF RECONCILIATION

CONCLUSION:

Actual or subjective reconciliation is only possible because reconciliation was brought about in an objective way by Christ's death on the Cross.

CHAPTER 12

"CHRIST'S RECONCILIATION!"

INTRODUCTION:

In discussing Christ's work on the Cross, certain words that describe that accomplished work must be understood.

Sacrifice describes the atoning power of Christ's blood, which results in the resolution of man's guilt. Propitiation describes the substitution of Christ for man in order to appease God's wrath and to satisfy God's justice. Redemption describes the deliverance of man from the bondage of sin, accomplished through the ransom price of Christ's blood. Reconciliation describes the objective work of Christ on the Cross that makes it possible for God and man to be as one again.

The Cross is the most important and basic theme of the New Testament. It is the essence of the Gospel. We should never be ashamed to preach it. Said Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:15) Said Spurgeon about the preaching of the Gospel, "If I only had about a dozen words to speak and knew I must die, I would say, 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'" (The Passion and Death of Christ; pg. 41)

PROPOSITION:

Today we want to discuss the work of Christ's reconciliation on the Cross. Let us seek to understand the necessity, the means, and the result of reconciliation.

I. NECESSITY OF RECONCILIATION

A. Man's Fall

Man was created in God's own image, and as such was made only for greatness and fellowship. Man had blessed communion with his Creator. He was meant to enjoy God's presence forever. Innocence, uprightness, strength, and obedience characterized man's beginning. God gave man superior intelligence, and permitted him to subdue the earth. Man's body was strong, his mind superb, his spirit unblemished.

However, man lost his greatness. Man fell from splendor to despair, from the beauty of perfection to the vileness of distortion, from the joy

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of fellowship to the anguish of separation, from the freedom of innocence, to the bondage of guilt, from health to weakness, from life to death. Man is estranged, haunted by loneliness, and paralyzed by fear. He is alienated from God, from his fellowman, and from himself. Made for greatness, he wallows in despair. He was made for communion, but is plagued by feelings of separation and rejection. Man was made to enjoy peace, but hears constantly the clamor of disharmony. He was made for love, but is too often a creature of hate. He was integrated; now he is a bundle of frayed nerves. He is a rebel against God's perfect will. Man's sensitivity to fellowship is dulled by sin. Man's innocence became blemished, and his capacity for nobility shriveled by self-centeredness. Every area of man's activity feels the pollution of sin. Man's will is weak, his knowledge inadequate, his nature warped and corrupted.

B. God's Wrath

Because of man's disobedience, man is the object of God's wrath. Man was made to be the greatest reflection of God's glory, but man marred that reflection. Man has erected a barrier between himself and God. Sin is that barrier.

God's wrath is kindled because of man's sins. Wrote James, *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”* (James 4:4) Paul speaks of man as being *“alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works.”* (Colossians 1:21) Paul taught that all of humanity indulged in sin and that the blanket wrath of God covered humanity. Paul states, *“We all...followed the impulses and imaginations of our evil nature, being in fact under the wrath of God by nature, like everyone else.”* (Ephesians 2:3, Phillips)

Some make light of sin and advocate free expression of self, with all its lust. But Paul warns such people of the wrath of God. *“For of this much you can be quite certain: that neither the immoral nor the dirty-minded nor the covetous man (which latter is, in effect, worshipping a false God) has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Don't let anyone fool you on this point, however, plausible his argument. It is these very things which bring down the wrath of God upon the disobedient.”* (Ephesians 5:5, 6; Phillips)

God's wrath, however, “does not compromise the conception of the love of God. We are not forced to choose between a God of wrath, and a God who loves; rather, the wrath is the obverse side of the love. E. H. Gifford has an opposite remark, ‘Human love here offers a true analogy: the more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard,

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the liar, or the traitor.’ If this be quite possible in a human father with all his failings we cannot account it incredible in God from whose wrath is absent all those imperfections which mar the human emotion of righteous anger even at its purest.” (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross; Mooris; pgs. 224, 225)

C. Man’s Despair And Hunger

Man fell from God, and is under the wrath of God. Said Dr. Howard Kelly, the great surgeon, to a patient, “What you need is a New testament.” (Abundant Living; pg. 94) Man is heaven-starved and in need of forgiveness and reconciliation.

“And here at last we find
Strict diagnosis of our malady,
Which is, in short, that man is heaven-starved –
Men are born thirsting for infinity.” (Ibid; 95)

To illustrate the deep despair of modern=man, combined with an inner craving for reality, the following letter which E. Stanley Jones received from a woman, is cited. “Someone gave my husband your book, THE WAY, as a graduation present. It stood on our bookshelf gathering dust, unread. I lost my faith while in the university. I became negative, cynical, and bitter. I trusted few and hated many, including myself. I became so negative and bitter that I couldn’t live with myself, nor could I live with my husband, and our home was about to go on the rocks. I had no inner resources to meet this impending tragedy, so I saw no way out except suicide. I bought some pills and put them in a bureau drawer awaiting, the time, when my plans were perfected to take them. The day came. I went to the bureau drawer, took out the pills, and started to go to the bathroom to get some water to swallow them. As I went through the living room, I tripped on a rug. I fell against the bookcase, and your book, ‘THE WAY’ fell from the topmost shelf at my feet. I thought that was strange so I picked it u p and began to read it. In this book, you gave the steps. I took them, there and then. I suppose you call it a conversion. At any rate, I’m a changed person and a happy one. And my home has been rehabilitated.” (Conversion; pg. 123)

Some there are who have despaired altogether and some have a bitter outlook on life. Bertrand Russell’s, a despairing clergy, is well known: “Brief and powerless is man’s life; on him, and all his race, the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark.” (Prayer and Life’s Highest; pg. 17)

Many there are, however who are inwardly hungry and are seeking spiritual satisfaction. Says E. Stanley Jones, “A girl of German

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extraction, used to being told just what to do and what to believe wrote to me and said, ‘Please tell me that I am forgiven. If you say I am forgiven, I can be assured.’” (Abundant Living; pg. 95)

Says Billy Graham, “When I visited a group of men on death row in a prison, a strong and intelligent-looking man listened to what I had to say. Then I asked the men if they would be willing to kneel down while I prayed. Just before we knelt there, the man said, ‘Can you explain once again what I must do to be forgiven of my sins? I want to know that I am going to heaven.’” (World Aflame; pgs. 147, 148)

Man is in need of reconciliation. The question is, “Is it possible to be reconciled to God?” The answer is ‘Yes’. That takes us into a discussion of the means of reconciliation.

II. MEANS OF RECONCILIATION

A. God’s Imitation

Says Leon Mooris, “Reconciliation is not something in which we have the decisive part. It is worked out by Christ and we enter into it by our repentance and faith. But it is his work first and foremost. This is the main thrust of New Testament teachings on reconciliation.” (Christianity Today; Jan. 17, 1969, pg. 4)

In another place, Mooris continues with this theme: “First of all there is an aspect of reconciliation which is outside man, an objective element. We are said to have received the reconciliation, which, therefore, is in some sense independent of us. Obviously, reconciliation must be personal to be effective, and we must enter into a state of being reconciled; nevertheless, there is a sense in which a reconciliation can be said to be proffered to us. In other words, the New Testament view is that reconciliation was wrought on the cross before there was anything in man’s heart to correspond. There is an objective aspect to reconciliation, and this may well be held to imply that there is a sense in which God can be said to be reconciled to man.” (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross; Mooris; pgs. 225, 226) In a footnote in his book, Mooris quotes P.T. Forsyth as saying, “Reconciliation was finished in Christ’s death. Paul did not preach a gradual reconciliation. He preached what the old divine used to call the finished work...He preached something done once for all – a reconciliation which is the base of every soul’s reconcilment, not an invitation only.” (Page 226)

That means that if Christ had not died on the cross, then reconciliation would have been totally impossible. God looks at man differently, simply because Christ died on the Cross. Wrote Paul; *“But now, through*

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the blood of Christ, you who were once outside the pale are with us inside the circle of God's love in Christ Jesus. For Christ is our living peace.” (Ephesians 2:13, 14a) Through Christ's death on the cross, God is able to be reconciled to man.

Says P.T. Forsyth; “God's reeling toward us never needed to be changed. But God's treatment of us, God's practical relation to us – that had to change.” (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross; pg. 247) Leon Morris then comments, “His (God's) love is consistent and does not alter; but we cannot reason from that that the expression of that love is always the same. Love, may be likened to a flame. Without changing its essential nature it may give warmth and light, or it may sear and burn. All that sinful men can see of a holy God is that aspect that we call the wrath of God. But when the Son of God Himself has dealt with that wrath, then men may know the warmth of His love.” (Ibid; 248)

Christ makes it possible for man to be at one with God. “When William Tyndale was translating the New Testament into English, he encountered great difficulty in finding a word big enough to convey the meaning of the redeeming work of Christ. Finding no adequate word, Tyndale joined two simple words – ‘at’ and ‘onement’, thus making ‘atonement’ and giving in its etymology a clue to the Bible's teaching of salvation by reconciliation. In Christ's death on the cross, God and man, who had been severed by sin, were brought together by the cross.” (World Aflame; pg. 116)

B. Man's Part

Reconciliation acknowledges that there is a barrier which has caused estrangement, and that that barrier must be removed. “If harsh words have been spoken, they are withdrawn with an apology. If money has not been paid, it is paid. If a letter has not been written, it is written. Whatever is the root cause of the trouble must be identified and dealt with.” (Christianity Today, Jan. 17, 1969; pg. 4)

Man attempts to deal with his sins in his own way. Man suppresses his guilt and is glad to let bygones be bygones. As C. S. Lewis says, “We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. I have heard others, and I have heard myself, recounting cruelties and falsehoods committed in boyhood as if they were no concern of the present speaker's, and even with laughter. However, mere time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of a sin. The guilt is washed out not by time but by repentance and the blood of Christ.” (Ibid; pg. 4)

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No matter how much man attempts to suppress his sins, and no matter how much time has elapsed since the transgression, still *“God requireth that which is past.”* (Ecclesiastes 3:15) “In our own affairs we never doubt that the past is important. When a student fails his exams, he cannot laugh it off and proceed to the next unit of his course as though nothing had happened, when as though nothing had happened. In every area of life, we recognize that our actions have consequences and that we are responsible. We cannot cut ourselves adrift from the past.” (Ibid; pg. 4)

Man must face the fact of his estrangement and acknowledge that he can only be at one with God through faith and repentance. The object of man’s faith is Christ who objectively accomplished man’s reconciliation on the Cross. The meaning of man’s repentance lies in his denial at attempts of self-reconciliation, and genuine sorrow for his sin.

Man must appropriate Christ’s accomplished work of reconciliation, in order for man to be reconciled to God. The objective aspect of reconciliation is, first; the subjective aspect of reconciliation is secondary and derivative. Man can only be reconciled to God because God has taken the initiative and made provision for man’s reconciliation.

III. RESULT OF RECONCILIATION

What is the result of man’s reconciliation to God? The New Testament describes that result in terms of ‘Peace’. “A striking feature of the New Testament use of **εἰρήνη** (peace) is the frequency with which it is associated, directly or indirectly, with God. It may be said that of the ninety-two times the word occurs, fifteen refer to peace as opposed to war, personal strife, or confusion, while in all the others it is possible to see implied the thought that God is the giver. So completely is the idea accepted that peace comes from God. That He can be referred to as ‘the God of peace’, an expression which implies that the bringing about of peace is a characteristic feature of His activity. A particularly instructive example is Romans 16:20, (*“and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under shortly”*). In the very sentence in which He is designated ‘God of peace’ that same God is pictured in the warlike activity of bruising Satan. Nothing could more graphically illustrate the fact that peace in the New Testament is not simply, the absence of war. It is a much more positive concept, and one, which, as here, may be compatible with struggle. It stands for spiritual well-being at the highest level, prosperity of soul resulting from being in right relationship with God. God brings about this relationship by His victory over Satan. The thought that God is the God of peace, the connection with the atoning work of Christ are to be, discerned. Also, in the great benediction at the end of the Epistle to the Hebrews: *“The*

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God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus." (Hebrews 13:20). From such passages it is clear that the giving of peace is a distinctive divine activity, and that it is associated with the atoning death of Christ." (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross; Mooris; pgs. 241, 242)

Peace is the tranquility of mind that comes from the realization that one is in a right relationship with God. The peace, which God gives, is not dependent upon the external conditions of the world. It is not subject to the changes and chances of life, but God's peace is an abiding peace. External circumstances do not mold God's peace, but God's peace molds the circumstances of a Christian. The Christian peace is like the peace of the bird that is resting secure on a nest overhanging a mighty waterfall. Amidst the roar and confusion, the bird is peaceful, just as the Christian is tranquil as he rests secure in the arms of Jesus, amidst the turmoil about him. Said Jesus, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. (John 14:27) "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer' I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) Because Christ has overcome the world, He enables His followers to be masters of their circumstances.

The important thing to remember about peace is that it is a gift – the gift of God. It is not something, which we earn, merit, or achieve. It is a basic conviction of the New Testament that man cannot atone for his own guilt or become reconciled to God by his own power. "A big businessman said to me: 'I have an awful sense of guilt in my life. I tied my arm to the bedpost night after night so I couldn't sleep decently to punish myself, to atone for my sins.' I asked, 'Has that taken away the guilt?' 'No', he replied, 'it is still there'. I replied: 'You're on the wrong track you are trying to offer your suffering, your blood as atonement for your sins. Don't try to offer your blood, but accept the blood of the Son of God. He died for you. It's a gift. Empty your hands of your attempts at self -salvation. 'By grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God''. 'Isn't that too cheap?' he asked. 'No, not cheap. It is a very expensive gift, for if you take the gift you will belong forever to the Giver. He will bind your heart with cords of love, but you wouldn't have it otherwise for worlds'. We prayed, and he made the surrender of himself. A few days later I received this letter: 'I didn't know a man could be as happy as I am. All that sense of guilt is gone. On Sunday, I went to Church and sang hymns I had never sung before. I had sung the words, but now I really sang the hymns. And the next day I went to my work with lightness of step I'd never known and for the first time in my life I let my full weight down on the universe.'" (Conversion; E.S. Jones, pgs. 206, 207)

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CONCLUSION:

In summarizing Christ's reconciliation, we must say that:

- (1) Man in his estranged condition can only be reconciled to God because Christ died on the Cross to make that reconciliation possible. Actual or subjective reconciliation is only possible because reconciliation was brought about, in an objective way, by Christ's death on the Cross. Thus, God is the originator of reconciliation and a change was brought about in God's relationship to man because of this initiated reconciliation on God's part.

- (2) Peace or tranquility of mind and heart is the characteristic of reconciliation. Man who lost his greatness in the Fall can regain that greatness through Christ's work of reconciliation on the Cross.

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CHAPTER 13

"CONQUERING KING – DEFEATED FOE!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 13

SCRIPTURE: *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* (Hebrews 2:14-15)

INTRODUCTION:

What an irony! Through Jesus' death, death for humanity is destroyed! What Satan thought was his greatest victory, became instead his greatest defeat! The Resurrection is what makes Jesus the Conquering King and Satan the Defeated Foe!

PROPOSITION:

To understand the fall of man is to appreciate the triumph of God!

I. SIN AND SIN'S CONSEQUENCES

- A. Man's Free Moral Choice (Requirement Of Love)
- B. Man's Wrong Moral Choice (Cause Of Sin And Misery)

II. CHRIST AND CHRIST'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A. Christ's Free Will Sacrifice
- B. Christ's Victorious Accomplishments
 - (1) Meaning of Death of Christ
 - (a) Appeased God's Wrath
 - (b) Satisfied God's Justice
 - (c) Demonstrated God's Love
 - (2) Meaning of Resurrection of Christ
 - (a) Vindicated God's Righteousness
 - (b) Proved God's Promises
 - (c) Demonstrated God's Power
 - (d) Sealed Satan's Fate
 - (e) Provided Man's Salvation
 - (f) Guaranteed Man's Future Resurrection Life

CONCLUSION:

Turn your life over to the One who has conquered your enemy, death. Confess your sins today and let the power that raised Christ from the dead touch and transform your life.

CHAPTER 13

"CONQUERING KING - DEFEATED FOE!"

INTRODUCTION:

War took place in heaven! The most beautiful and powerful angel of heaven, who was himself a created being, became drunken with pride and decided to replace God on His throne. The origin of sin is found in this treasonous act of God's beautiful angel seeking to exalt himself above his created position. "In thus exalting himself against God, 'Lucifer' became 'Satan' for 'Satan' means 'Adversary' - (The Spirit World; pg. 12; Larkin)

Satan; was cast out of heaven only to cause problems on earth. Satan; caused humanity to fall into sin and into rebellion. Satan became known as; 'the prince of this world' for he usurped God's rightful place of authority.

Considering the power of Satan and the sway of evil, can we truthfully say that Jesus is Lord of History?

"Read one line of truth separately in the New Testament and Jesus Christ will not appear to be the Lord of History. He was born in a cattle shed *"and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them."* (Luke 2:7) He grew up in Nazareth, off the beaten track and in the modest home of a carpenter: *"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?"* (Matthew 13:55) He lived a life of poverty: *"As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."* (Luke 9:57, 58) In His most exalted moment, He entered Jerusalem, not on a Roman charger but on a lowly donkey: *"As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:*

*"Say to Daughter Zion,
'See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"*

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The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.” (Matthew 21:1-7) and He died the death of a condemned criminal: “Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. (Matthew 27:38). This was all part of His humiliation.” (Belonging; pg. 44; Bastian)

Considering Satan’s cruel power, and considering Jesus’ humble earthly life, how can one say that Jesus is Conquering King and Satan is the Defeated Foe?

The Resurrection is the foundation for such a positive declaration! Our text says that by Jesus’ death, Jesus destroyed him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and frees those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (Hebrews 2:14, 15).*

What an irony! Through Jesus’ death, death for humanity is destroyed! What Satan thought was his greatest victory, became instead his greatest defeat!

Why did Jesus’ death destroy death? Because Jesus’ death was followed by His Resurrection! The death and resurrection of Jesus are two parts of one whole. The death of Jesus must always be interpreted in light of the resurrection of Jesus. The greatest tragedy of history – the death of Jesus – turned out to be the greatest triumph of history – because of the Resurrection!

The Resurrection is what makes Jesus the Conquering King and Satan the Defeated Foe!

“Christians, though living in a world still under the prince of darkness, give daily testimony that the prince of darkness has already been judged and the lordship of Jesus is already affirmed. We await the coronation.” (Bastian; pg. 45)

However, to understand the Works of God on the Cross, let us also look at the ways of man in the Garden. To understand better the work of Redemption, one needs to look at the work of Creation.

PROPOSITION:

To understand Christ and Christ’s Accomplishments on the Cross and in the Empty Tomb, one needs to understand sin and sin’s consequences in the Garden of Eden. [To understand the fall of man is to appreciate the triumph of God!

Let us first look at sin and sin’s consequences, and then secondly look at Christ and Christ’s Accomplishments. In looking at Man’s Fall in light of Christ’s Victory, we can confidently declare, “Jesus is the Conquering King; Satan is the Defeated Foe!”

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

I. SIN AND SIN'S CONSEQUENCES

A. Man's Free Moral Choice (Requirement of Love)

Man is not the strongest, fastest, or largest creature, but he is the only rational or knowledgeable creature, because of his unique creation in God's own image.

God placed one limitation upon man in the Garden. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, *“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (Genesis 2:16, 17)

Only as man could freely choose to obey and to serve God, could man's love for God proceed and develop. A puppet is manipulated; it has no ability to choose and no ability to love. A slave is not much better. A slave is forced to obey and serve his master even against his will, at times. The attitude of the slave's resentment for his master is vastly different from the attitude of love with which a son willingly performs duties for his father. The slave has no choice but the son does. Only the son, who has the power of choice, can prove his love for the father. Each time the son chooses to obey his father, his love increases.

Which to determine obedience or disobedience could not test love without the presence of a standard. God's commandment forbidding man to eat from the tree was the standard by which either to praise man for his obedience or to condemn man for his disobedience.

The fact man's freedom is well described by Suzanne de Dietrich in her book, in these words, “The thing that makes us uniquely human is that, unlike the other creatures, we are able to say both ‘yes’ and ‘No’ to God. Man does not do the will of his Creator by necessity. The stars in the sky follow their prescribed orbits, the animals of the field obey their instincts, but man has this unique and frightening ability - he can refuse to be obedient to his Creator. For God does not want slaves, but sons.” (God's Unfolding Purpose; pg. 36)

B. Man's Wrong Moral Choice (Cause of Sin and Misery)

Man, possessed with the freedom to choose, determined his own destiny. Man yielded to the subtle temptation of Satan: and was enticed by Satan's false allurements.

Satan implanted the seeds of doubt into Eve's heart. Appealing to the gratification of man's desire, Satan succeeded in getting man to

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overstep his God-imposed limitation, and thus to challenge God's sovereignty.

Satan's, whose own fall is attributed to the drunkenness of pride, became the instigator of man's pride, which caused man's fall.

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, 'this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

*"In the pride of your heart you say, "I am a god;
I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas."
But you are a mere mortal and not a god, though you think you
are as wise as a god.
Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you?
By your wisdom and understanding, you have gained wealth for
yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries.
By your great skill in trading, you have increased your wealth,
and because of your wealth, your heart has grown proud.*

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

*"Because you think you are wise,
as wise as a god, I am going to bring foreigners against you,
the most ruthless of nations; they will draw their swords against
your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendor. They
will bring you down to the pit, and you will die a violent death in
the heart of the seas.
Will you then say, "I am a god," in the presence of those who kill
you?
You will be but a mortal, not a god, in the hands of those who
slay you.
You will die the death of the uncircumcised at the hands of
foreigners. I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD."
(Ezekiel 28:1-10),*

When man ate of the tree, he declared his independence of God and his desire to 'run his own life'. Man's disobedience to God led to his fall. Man failed to stand the test and thus prove his love for the Creator. Man's rebellion against God resulted in a distortion of man's relationships. Sin replaced innocence with guilt, and caused man to run from God's presence and hide. *"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden."* (Genesis 3:8) No longer could he enjoy intimate fellowship with God, but became an alienated, estranged rebel afraid to face God.

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Adam and Eve not only hid from each other and God, but also hid from themselves. Inability to face each other, God, and themselves caused them to live a lie. Neither of them was willing to accept personal responsibility for their own disobedience, but blamed it on another. The man blamed his actions on the woman, and the woman, on the serpent. Whatever else can be said about our world, one thing can be said with certainty: God never intended this world to be infected by sin, misery, and suffering. God created man with greatness, but man lost his greatness. Man overstepped his God-imposed limitations. He disobeyed God's command, became infected by sin in the emotions, will and intellect. Man's sufferings are largely due to sin. The Fall of man brought mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering.

Sin has caused emotional suffering. Sin is largely to blame for man's guilt, man's fears, man's insecurity, man's inferiorities, and estrangements, and carnal angers. Man is emotionally disrupted because of sin's grip.

Sin has caused spiritual suffering. Sin has separated man from his God. Man was created to have fellowship with God and sin has caused an aching void in man's heart. The Bible says that man is dead in trespasses and in sin

Sin will ultimately cause eternal death – separation from God eternally. Jesus warned man of the ultimate and terrible consequences of sin. Jesus often talked of hell – a place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels, but a place that man is destined for if he persists in his sins.

II. CHRIST AND CHRIST'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In light of sin and sin's consequences, is there any hope for humanity? Immediately following man's fall, a brilliant ray of hope shown over the horizon of man's history revealing God's future plans for man's salvation. That ray of hope was found, in the curse God pronounced on the serpent: *“I will put enmity between you and the woman; also between your offspring and her offspring; he will crush your head and you will crush his heel.”* (Genesis 3:15) This prophecy refers to Jesus who was born of the Virgin Mary, a descendant of Adam and Eve. Although Satan inflicted injury on Jesus, through crucifixion, Jesus crushed and destroyed the works of Satan through His redemptive death on the cross, and proved to be the Victor over Satan through His glorious resurrection.

A. Christ's Free Will Sacrifice

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Just as humanity (in the person of Adam) freely chose to disobey the Father, so the second Adam, Jesus Christ, freely chose to obey the Father.

Jesus freely chose to come to earth to give his life a ransom for sinners. Jesus came to earth for a specific purpose. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. *“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.”* (John 3:8b, NIV) As our text says, it was through Jesus' death that Jesus was able to destroy the work of Satan. *Through Jesus' death, he who had the power of death (i.e., the devil) was destroyed.* (Hebrews 2:14)

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus often said, “My hour has not yet come.” What did He mean? He meant that God's appointed time for Him to die a redemptive death had not yet come. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed, *“Father, the time has come, Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”* (John 17:1)

Said Jesus, *“No man takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own accord.”* Jesus willingly gave His life for the sins of the world.

As Jesus stood before Pilate, Pilate said to Jesus, *“Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or to crucify you?”* Then Jesus said, *“You would have no power at all over me unless it were given to you from above.”* (John 19:10 -11, Living Bible)

Jesus' death was not an accident of history. Jesus' death was not the mere result of the cruelty of humanity. Rather, Jesus' death was the result of God's grace and of Jesus' free choice.

He could have called ten thousand angels to rescue Him from the cross, but instead he died alone for you and me.

B. Christ's Victorious Accomplishments

Christ's death on the cross was not an accident of history or a mere incident of human cruelty. Rather, the death of Christ was an absolute necessity, if humanity was to be saved from sin and from hell!

(1) Meaning of Death of Christ

On the cross, Jesus said, *“It is finished.”* What did He mean? Only eternity will fully reveal the meaning of that phrase. We do know however, that Jesus did not mean by this phrase, “the work

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of human cruelty is done.” No, I believe he was saying, “The work of reconciliation and salvation has been accomplished for humanity.” The death of Jesus accomplished many things.

- (a) Appeased God’s Wrath. God hates sin and those who practice sin will be destroyed along with God’s destruction of sin. Jesus bore our sins in His own body, as He died on the Cross. Therefore, Jesus took God’s wrath against sin upon Himself, by becoming the perfect sacrifice for sin. Thus, Jesus’ death saves humanity from God’s just wrath.
 - (b) Satisfied God’s Justice. God wanted to save humanity, but a universe run by justice and by a just God must appropriately punish sin. The wages of sin is death; therefore, the sinning one must die. If God were to remain just in His character, he could not allow sin to go unpunished. The Cross is the answer to this dilemma. If God should die on a cross then sin, would be justly punished. Through that substitutionary death, and yet the sinner himself could be saved. The Cross allowed God to remain just in his punishment of sin and yet merciful and loving in his treatment of the sinner himself. God is both just and the justifier of the ungodly, because of Christ’s death on the Cross.
 - (c) Demonstrated God’s Love. Greater love cannot be manifested than this that God should lay down His sinless life for sinful humans. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, the godly for the ungodly. The Cross on Mount Calvary is the earthly elevation of the Cross that has eternally been on the heart of God, and is thus the supreme demonstration of inherent Divine Love. For God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die on the Cross.
- (2) Meaning of Resurrection of Christ
- (a) Vindicated God’s Righteousness. If Jesus would have not been raised from the dead, certain Conclusions would have to be drawn (1) Jesus was a mere man, (2) Death is more powerful than life, (3) God is not just and loving.

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“Long ago someone read the story of the death of Jesus to King Clovis, who was a barbarian, not a Christian; and suddenly, as the story went on, his had reached for his sword, and drew it, and ‘Oh,’ he cried, ‘if only I had been there with my Franks! We’d have charged up the slopes of Calvary, and smashed those Romans, and saved Him!’ But if God, watching Calvary, did nothing – left it at that, and knew this was the end of Christ forever? Then we are back where Huxley was. ‘I cannot see,’ he said, ‘one shadow or tittle of evidence that God is love.’” (Stewart; pg. 163, *The Gates of New Life*)

For God to allow Jesus to remain in the tomb would have been a sign that Jesus was not God, that Jesus was not righteous, that death was stronger than life, that evil was stronger than righteousness!

During Jesus’ lifetime, God declared Jesus, as Righteous, but such a claim would be invalidated if Jesus would have remained sealed in a tomb. The Resurrection of Jesus is an absolute necessity if God’s claim to Jesus’ righteousness is to be validated. God had to raise His Son to life to show that the sinless, Son of God could not be overcome by the sinful sons of the devil. If the evil plots of men are to be revealed for what they are, and if the righteousness of Jesus is to be vindicated, then Jesus must rise from the dead! Evil must be cut down, if not on the 1st or end day, then always on the 3rd.

- (b) Proved God’s Promises. For generations, God promised to establish His Messianic Kingdom. The death and resurrection were the fulfillments of that promise. God is never slack in fulfilling His promises, as some men count slackness. *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* (II Peter 3:9A) The Resurrection is the badge of Christ’s authority to establish His long – predicted Messianic Kingdom in the hearts and lives of people.

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(c) Demonstrated God's Power. "The clash you see at Calvary was not only between Jesus and His enemies: it was between God and the devil – the two great worlds – powers grappling there, locked in wrestler's grip. If the cross finished things, then down in the underworld that night there must have rung a savage cry, 'We win! We win! God is blotted out.' Powerful! If Christ be not raised, don't tell me God is power." (Stewart; pg. 163)

"The triumph of the resurrection was conclusive evidence of the vast spiritual power exerted through Christ against those enemies of man which had never previously been defeated – sin and death...God, by spiritual power, raised his Son from the dead. The physical force which moved the stone from the tomb and reduced the tough Roman soldiers to terror was only a trifle, a mere straw in the wind which in its holy blast destroyed the power of sin and death. Can you hear the ring of holy joy behind these exultant words of Paul: 'And then, having drawn the sting of all the powers ranged against us, he exposed them, shattered, empty and defeated, in his final glorious triumphant act.'" (Good News; pgs. 200, 201; J.B. Phillips)

(d) Sealed Satan's Fate. What Satan thought was his greatest triumph became in reality his greatest tragedy! Satan claimed victory when he saw Jesus hang His head in death on the Cross. Satan was crushed three days later when he looked into an empty tomb and knew that Jesus had ascended to the right hand of His Father's Kingly Throne! The demons' cries of triumph on Calvary's Friday suddenly turned into cries of terror on Easter Morning!

"Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus, my Saviour!
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, my Lord!

Up from the grave he arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with his saints to reign:

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He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

The greatest weapon of Satan has always been death. When Christ arose from the dead, Jesus captured Satan's chief weapon!

*"Death has been swallowed up in victory.
Where, O death is your victory?
Where, O death is your sting?"
"The sting of death is sin, and the power of
sin is the law. But thanks to be to God! He
gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus
Christ."*

I Corinthians 15:54-57)

By His death and resurrection, Jesus has destroyed him who holds the power of death. – That is, the devil - and Jesus frees those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* (Hebrews 2:14-15)

The object of your faith determines the value of your faith! When you place your faith in Jesus, you are placing your faith in one who has conquered your greatest enemy - death! You do not work for a victory; you work from a victory. The victory over Satan has been already won. Satan's head has been crushed.

*"And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."* (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus is the Conquering King. Satan is the Defeated Foe!

The prince of this world – Satan – has been, judged. His sentence of death has been, pronounced. God

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has appointed his day of execution: *“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”* (Revelations 20:10)

While he awaits his final day of execution, Satan is taking out his bitterness upon God’s creation, especially humanity. However, remember, that though the wrong seems often so strong, God is the Ruler yet! Jesus is the Conquering King; Satan is the Defeated Foe! Jesus guaranteed final victory for his Church when He arose victorious from the dead. He promised victory to His Church, even though Satan is still on the loose. *“I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it!”*

- (e) Provided Man’s Salvation. Because Jesus died for your sins and because He demonstrated His power over sin, death, and hell, you are now provided opportunity for salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life!

- (f) Guaranteed Man’s Future Resurrection Life. Is there any hope for life hereafter? Without Jesus’ Resurrection, there would be no hope for the future, after death. Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”* (John 11:25) Belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus gives the foundation of Hope in the subsequent resurrection of the body of true believers.

Within the heart of every man is a longing for future resurrection life! Man is over built for this world, and aspirations call for a fulfillment that is beyond the scope of time. However, the fulfillment of man’s aspirations for the immortal realm is only made possible because of Christ’s resurrection.

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,

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'You're going to be born. You're not going to stay here.' He would learn that by being born, he would leave this warm secure place. That would not be being born to him that would be dying for him. Dying is an end. The baby would say, 'I don't want to be born. I don't want to die. I like it here. I'm warm. I feel love all around me. I'm happy and content. Just leave me alone. I don't want to leave this nice place.'

"But comes the 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, happy, and life is good. The world is good. And the years begin to add up. His hair becomes white, and his form a bit feeble. He knows he has to die, to leave all this and go into another place. But he protests: 'I don't want to die. I like it 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 the beauties that he sees will take his breath away. 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!'

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"And the Christian will live forever!" (Quoted by Andrews on Light and Life Hour; April 22, 1973)

However, if Christ had not conquered death through the Resurrection, man could not live forever.

CONCLUSION:

Friend, I want to tell you again, "Jesus is the Conquering King. Satan is the Defeated Foe!"

Do you possess and enjoy the hope, which the Resurrection has brought into our despairing world? That hope has been given to our world, through the sacrificial death and glorious resurrection of Jesus. However, that hope becomes your personally and experientially as you take the living Christ into your life as Saviour and Lord. You must abandon all hope for salvation, aside from Jesus Christ. You can't save yourself. Only the resurrected Christ can save you. Turn your life over to the One who has conquered your enemy, death. Confess your sins today and let the power that raised Christ from the dead touch and transform your life.

He can deliver you from the bondage of fear and death, and give you new life. He can write your name in the Book of Life. You can live an abundant life on earth and an eternal life with Christ someday in heaven. Turn your life over to Christ. Remember, the object of your faith determines the value of your faith. Put your faith in the Resurrected Christ - and you will live forever.

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CHAPTER 14
"RESURRECTION –
FOUNDATION OF HOPE!"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 14

SCRIPTURE: *“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” (I Corinthians 15:12-19)*

INTRODUCTION:

Hope is so beautiful and able to drive men to great exploits, yet one must recognize that hope is also very fragile, and thus, must be kept alive by faith in God.

PROPOSITION:

There is one and only one ground for the Christian hope – the objective, the actual, the real atonement accomplished by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- I. HOPE FOR VICTORY OVER EVIL
- II. HOPE FOR CHANGE OF HUMAN NATURE
- III. HOPE FOR FUTURE RESURRECTION LIFE

CONCLUSION:

“Any person who is in Jesus is deathless, for he is under the principle and power of resurrection.”

CHAPTER 14

"RESURRECTION – FOUNDATION OF HOPE!"

INTRODUCTION:

Emily Dickinson once wrote, "Hope is a thing with feathers." Comments John Cooper: "By this she expressed the beauty and the fragility of hope as we experience it in human life."

Hope is beautiful. It is the dash of flavor in the stuff of everyday life. Without hope, a person becomes ill and depressed. Hopelessness and despair take place when one thinks that his actions make no difference to the outcome of his life.

But hope, while it is so beautiful and able to drive men to great exploits, yet one must recognize that hope is also very fragile and thus must be kept alive by faith in God. One could call our age an age of hopelessness, and even believers in Christ are not immune to the threat of despair.

When one looks at the outward world, he is tempted to throw away hope. The acceleration of pornographic and literature in the name of art. The liberalization of abortion laws. The secularization of American Higher Education, which is having its influence in the lower grades, the growing disillusionment with the American political process and judicial system, the inflationary spending habits of Americans, which is precipitated by exploitative advertising, and the recent waves of political terrorism – all of these have combined to attack the very foundations of Western Civilization.

The 'Golden Calf' of Science, before which many Americans have naively worshipped for decades, has failed to give soul security and lasting peace. Men's hearts are failing them for fear of what is coming upon the world. World-wide starvation is increasingly becoming a fearful possibility. Lynn McMillon, a leading observer of the occult movement in America, asks, "Has the occult peaked out?" To his own question, he answers, "Popular occultism is waning, but serious devout occultism is stronger than ever before."

It is true that the forces of evil are at work in American society. From some angles, the picture is very dark. But, despite the once-popular motto of 'God is Dead', there is sufficient evidence that 'God is Alive and Well On Planet Earth'. God is doing something wonderful today.

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PROPOSITION:

There is one and only one ground for the Christian hope – the objective, the actual, the real atonement accomplished by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The fact of the Resurrection gives the foundation for hope in the future that Evil Will Be Overcome, gives the foundation for hope that Human Nature can be changed, and gives the foundation for hope that there is a future resurrection life for the true believer.

I. HOPE FOR VICTORY OVER EVIL

In the kind of world in which we live, one is prone to ask if there is any real justice, especially when it appears too often that right goes unrewarded and wrong goes unpunished. Is God a just and a loving God? Does He vindicate righteousness and still offer mercy to the undeserving?

Christ's historic death is the answer to God's Justice and to God's love. Because God is inherently Just in His character, sin must be punished. Because God is loving in character, He seeks to save the sinner. Answer to this dilemma: God took upon himself his own wrath against sin, by becoming a man, dying, and thus paying the penalty of sin, and at the same time making it possible to save the sinner whom He loves. Thus God remains Just in Character and at the same time is able to satisfy His love by providing a means (substitutionary) of saving the sinner from eternal death.

The Cross and Resurrection of Christ answers some of our most troublesome questions regarding the seeming triumph of evil and injustice.

"First, how far can force go in a world of this kind? As long as people believe that the last word in human affairs goes to force, force can go a long way. It can crucify the Creator of the universe on a cross. That is a very long way. It can do that today and tomorrow, but the third day – no! For Goodness rises from the dead and goodness is the last word. The guards were like dead men, and Jesus was alive. Force can go a long way, but it can only go two days. The third day God raised him from the dead. He himself is the answer, and illustrates that answer in his own body.

"Second, how far can lies go? Lies can put the purest and gentlest and most truthful person on the Cross today and tomorrow, but the third day – no! The universe is not built for the success of a lie...Life cannot stand upon the insecurity of a lie. A lie has nothing behind it except itself. The universe makes a lie break itself upon the universe. The universe is not broken for it is established on God's truth. So how far can lies go. A long way. They twisted his words and made them into lies. He was crucified on lies. Therefore, lies can go the first day and the second day, but the third day – no! How many lies did it take to try to break the truth of the Gospel? They gave

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some persons money in those days to say that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus. Jesus raised the question on the cross and answered it in the resurrection. How much money do you think it will take to stop the Christian Gospel now?”

“Third, How far can evil go in a world of this kind? Does the moral universe bend to evil? The answer is No! Today, tomorrow, but the third day – No! The third day, evil breaks itself upon the facts of life. The word EVIL in English is the word LIVE spelled backward. In other words, the universe is not built to accept evil. Only truth has the moral universe behind it. There is nothing behind evil except evil. Today and tomorrow evil may be strong, but the third day evil breaks itself upon the nature of reality. For the Christian Gospel and reality are one – in fullest accord. The sum total of reality is behind the Christian Gospel. Therefore, the Christian code which is now a character becomes a question mark today, tomorrow, but the third day it becomes an exclamation point. Jesus is alive! He is risen!” (The Divine Yes; pgs. 105-107)

“Evil is an attempt to live life without the Divine Plan. It can’t be done. It turns out badly and sadly every time it is tried.” (Ibid; pg. 136)

The Resurrection teaches us that ultimately all evil and wrong will be destroyed. However, what about the righteous who suffer now? “The New Testament nowhere teaches that if you are righteous, you will be exempt from suffering. Sometimes the righteous are in trouble because they are righteous. Society demands conformity. If you fall below its standards, it will punish you. If you rise above its standards, it will persecute you. Jesus said, “Beware when all men think well of you.’

Jesus took the worst thing that could happen to him, namely, the Cross, and turned it into the healing of sin. The Cross was hate, and Jesus turned it into a revelation of love. Jesus took everything that spoke against the love of God, and through it, showed the love of God. It is a Yes, a Yes over the very worst.

Everything furthers those who follow Christ. Just as an airplane goes up against resistance, against the wind, so the Christian rises on the wings of resistance, against the wind, so the Christian rises on the wings of resistance. He knows how to use everything that comes, if not on account of, then in spite of.” (The Divine Yes; pgs. 100, 101; E. Stanly Jones)

II. HOPE FOR CHANGE OF HUMAN NATURE

The resurrection is the only foundation of hope for a new and transformed life. Do you ever long to be different: to be controlled, serene, loving, contributive, winsome, faithful, growing, and confident? Do you ever wish that you could start life all over again? Do you ever wish that your secret past would no

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longer haunt you? How you have wished that your guilt could be resolved and that your future could be bright with hope and cheer!

"You don't need to be the kind of person you are. You can be born anew and this new birth extends to the conscious and subconscious mind. You can start anew. The accumulated guilt of the past is removed, - forgiven. You can be released by a new birth. *'Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'* (II Corinthians 5:17)

Jesus is that Yes that you can be different and need not be the same. But, can human nature be changed? It is more changeable than anything on earth. It is the nature of human nature to change. The new birth can turn you from hate to love, from defeat to victory, and make you a different person. I don't care what you have been or what you are. Jesus is the Yes to a new birth." (The Divine Yes; pg. 20)

"An Indian lawyer who has visited several Hindu ashrams said, 'I have sat at the feet of many gurus, worshiping them and lauding them, but I came back unchanged. They did not know how to redeem human nature. I came to Christ and everything is different.'" (Ibid; pg. 88)

One girl who accepted Jesus as her Saviour was so changed that someone told her that she appeared to have 'swallowed sunshine'.

The editor of a hippie journal in Berkeley was converted and started running a Christian journal. The most barren has become one of the most productive. A group of seven thousand ex-hippies says that they can cure addiction in three minutes by surrender to Christ, and it is true. "The newspaper and magazines were forced to draw attention to this marvelous phenomenon that is sweeping across the younger generation who were the most riotous, but have now become one of the most righteous, forces of our generation." (Ibid; 90)

"An alcoholic came to a place of prayer and said, 'O Jesus, if you are going to save me, why don't you do it?' Then he opened his eyes and claimed, 'Boys, he has done it.'" (Ibid; pg. 92)

The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to transform lives and to change society today. When resurrection power has touched individuals or society, things have changed. Do you have habits, desires, attitudes, actions, and relationships that need to be changed? Then pray something like this: "O thou Christ who defied the power of death and who left the tomb empty, let that same power that accomplished the humanly-impossible be exercised in my life to change me into a new person."

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III. HOPE FOR FUTURE RESURRECTION LIFE

Is there any hope for living hereafter? Without Jesus' resurrection, there would be no hope for the future. Said atheist Bertrand Russell: "Brief and powerless is man's life. On him and his entire race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way."

How different is this cynicism and gloom, compared to the glorious hope of the Christian who has built his life upon the words of Jesus: *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."* (John 11:25)

"I dreamed that I was growing old
(It may be it was not a dream),
I shivered in the frosty cold
And trembled in the summer beam;
It cost me many a bitter sigh, Until I knew, it was not I.

The house my Maker for me made
Received His likeness in its form;
His wisdom all its parts displayed,
His beauty clothed its chambers warm;
It is not so fair as years go by; What matter - for it is not I.

The lamp that light its rooms burn low,
Its music sounds more dull of late,
And one - it may be friend or foe,
Knocks loudly often at its gate;
I tremble then - I scarce know why, - My house he claims, it is not I.

I am indeed a dweller there,
A winter and a summer guest;
Its rust and its decay I share,
But cannot look therein to rest.
I'm sure to leave it by and by - 'Tis but my house - it is not I.

I sometimes think, when lying down.
For the last time I lock the door,
And leave the home so long my own,
That I shall find it yet once more
So changed and fair I scarce shall know, -
The house I lived in Long Ago.

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Belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus gives the foundation of hope in 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)

Resurrection "means more than reunion of spirit with the old body. It means reunion of spirit with a new and different body, yet a body which is the particular person's own body under the law of identity; a body which can be traced back to its conditioning clue, namely, the body which was that one person's during life." (White, on Resurrection Body)

CONCLUSION:

Wrote E. Stanley Jones only a few days before he died at age 89: (In his diary): "Sometimes I find myself musing in this way: Dear old body - for the past nine decades we've walked the dusty roads together, we've flown across continents, and you've been uncomplaining even when I've put impossible loads upon you. Thank you for your faithful service, and now you say you'll be faithful till death us do part. When that parting comes, I'll look back at you and salute you and thank you, and I'll say to you, 'When I get my immortal body, I hope there will be a lot of you there incorporated.' Thank you again, for everything." (The Divine Yes; Jan. 1973; pg. 149)

"I have often said that when the people stand around and say, 'Well, Brother Stanley is gone,' I want to be able to wink at them, and if I have enough strength I would like to laugh and say, 'Jesus is Lord,' because, this will not be death. It will be a fuller life. I say this as a half joke, but I believe it will turn out to be reality. Because any person who is in Jesus is deathless, for he is under the principle and power of resurrection." (Ibid; pr. 150)

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CHAPTER 15

"HOW TO FIND THE WILL OF GOD!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 15

SCRIPTURE:

*"My son, do not forget my teaching,
but keep my commands in your heart,
for they will prolong your life many years
and bring you prosperity.
Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.
Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight."
(Proverbs 3:1-6)*

TEXT: *"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."* (Psalms 40:8)

INTRODUCTION:

Decisions must be made but the Christian desires to know how he can make wise decisions - decisions that are in conformity to God's perfect will.

PROPOSITION:

God reveals His will to man through one or more of the following ways: (1) Counsel of others, (2) Circumstances, (3) Prayer, and (4) Bible.

I. COUNSEL

Sometimes God uses one man to reveal His will to another man.

II. CIRCUMSTANCES

- A. God to Sovereign
- B. God to Love

III. PRAYER

- A. Conditions For Answered Prayers

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

B. Ways of Answered Prayer

IV. BIBLE

A. What The Bible Is Not

B. What The Bible Is

CONCLUSION:

Before God will make His will known to us, we must be willing to accept that plan, whatever it is. The gateway to enlightenment is submission to the Almighty.

CHAPTER 15

"HOW TO FIND THE WILL OF GOD!"

INTRODUCTION:

Every Christian must make important decisions that will influence his future work and life and eventual destiny. Decisions are oftentimes difficult to make. However, the anxiety caused by indecision is unhealthful and can even be destruction. Therefore, it is important for one to make definite decisions when choices are offered.

Decisions must be mad, but the Christian desires to know how he can make wise decisions - decisions that are in conformity to God's perfect will.

PROPOSITION:

The purpose of this message is to discuss various ways in which one can discover God's will as the basis for making decisions. God reveals His will to man through one or more of the following ways, (1) Counsel of others, (2) Circumstances, (3) Prayer, and (4) Bible.

I. COUNSEL

Sometimes God uses one man to reveal His will to another man. The Scriptures point out the importance of seeking the counsel of others. *"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.* (Proverbs 11:14) *"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise."* (Proverbs 12:14) *"Only by pride cometh contention, but with the well advised is wisdom."* (Proverbs 13:10) *"Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established."* (Proverbs 20:18)

Often times the young or immature can save himself from many a pitfall by heeding the advice and counsel of a more mature person. Moses saved himself much physical exertion and mental anxiety when he heeded the advice of Jethro, his father-in-law, who counseled Moses to appoint leaders and judges to administer justice among the Israelite people.

Rehoboam was foolish in rejecting the wise advice of the mature Israelite elders who counseled Rehoboam to lighten the financial burdens of the people. As a result, Israel rose up in rebellion against Rehoboam.

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A mature and wise counselor may sow an idea in the mind of another which may influence the future mission and destiny of one's life. Barclay tells the story of how William Wilberforce, was inspired by a friend to dedicate his influence to freeing the slaves. "In the British Empire it was William Wilberforce who was responsible for the freeing of the slaves. The idea of that liberation came to him when he read an exposure of the slave trade by Thomas Clarkson. He was a close friend of Pitt, the great Prime Minister. One day he was sitting with Pitt and George Grenville in Pitt's garden at Holywood. It was a scene of beauty with the Vale of Keston opening out before them, but the thoughts of Wilberforce were not on the beauty but on the blots of the world. Suddenly Pitt turned to him: 'Wilberforce,' he said, 'why don't you give a notice of a motion on the slave-trade?' The idea was sown in the mind of the one man, and the idea changed life for hundreds of thousands of people." (Barclay's Matthew, Vol. 2; pg. 85)

Never make hasty, impulsive decisions without consulting a wiser, experienced, and tested friend and counselor.

II. CIRCUMSTANCES

God many times reveals His will through circumstances. To believe that an earnest Christian discovers God's will in circumstances, one must believe that God is sovereign and that God is loving.

A. God To Sovereign

One's understanding of reality and nature is determined according to which one of the following views he espouses: either the mechanical view of nature or the purposive view of nature. To adopt the mechanical view, is to say that, the universe is closed-system with fixed laws. It is to say that, the universe is like a perpetual motion machine, over which God has no control, and in which there is no such thing as a supernatural occurrence. To adopt this view of nature is to say that all reports of God's providence are untrue.

To adopt the purposive view of nature is to believe that the universe is orderly and that nature is controlled by laws, but it is also to believe that God is sovereign and thus can override his set laws to introduce a supernatural event which best serves his eternal purposes. One, who believes in this view, believes that God is altogether Sovereign and that he controls nature with its laws and that he controls history with its events.

To the Christian, history has a goal. History is not an endless maze of detached events with no cohesion or consummation. History is not cyclic, endlessly repeating itself for no purpose. Rather, history is

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dynamic and all leading to God who will have the last word and the final battle. A Christian is an optimist, despite the sin, suffering, and crime all around. A Christian cannot view history's consummation as H. G. Wells does. Said Wells once, "Man, who began in a cave behind a windbreak, will end in the diseased soaked ruins of a slum." The end of history is not despair but it is hope, for Christ stands at the end of history as the final Consummator.

When wrong goes unpunished and right goes unrewarded, it is good for us to remind ourselves that:

"This is my Father's world,
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
The battle is not done;
Jesus who died shall be satisfied,
And earth and heaven be one."

B. God To Love

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

Says the Scripture, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Comments Barclay; "It is the experience of life for the Christian that all things do work together for good. We do not need to be very old to look back on life and see that things that we thought were disasters worked out to our good; things that we thought were disappointments worked out to greater blessings. We can look back, and we can see a guiding and a directing hand in it and through it all." (Barclay's Romans, pg. 117)

I feel personally that God worked through circumstances to direct me to Fort Collins. I had planned for years to attend Asbury Seminary upon completion of my college, career since I had been accepted at the seminary, even before my college graduation. My wife had written to some schools in Kentucky, hoping to receive reply of a job opening. For weeks, she waited for a reply. No word came of a job. Then Rev. Williamson offered us the Fort Collins pastorate. We thought and prayed about the offer and accepted it about four days after the superintendent asked us. We felt that it was God's will for us to come

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to Fort Collins. We pastored the Free Methodist Church in Fort Collins, Colorado for more than 25 years!

"He leadeth me: O blessed thought!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."

III. PRAYER

Prayer is one means whereby many find God's will and guidance in decision – making. For prayer to be effective in finding God's will, one must first understand the conditions for answered prayer.

A. Conditions For Answered Prayers

Effective prayer must be in Christ's name. As Donald Demaray shows (*Alive to God Through Prayer*, pgs. 79, 80) praying in Christ's name shows that we recognize that Christ was in God and that Christ is God. Praying in Christ's name recognizes the power of Jesus and recognizes that Jesus is our High Priest and Intercessor.

Effective prayer, must be accompanied by, obedience and whole-heartedness. For one to say that he willing to be anything for God except one thing, is to be less than whole-hearted. There is no 'ifs', 'buts', 'excepts', or 'maybe's in effective praying.

Effective praying must be accompanied, with a spirit of surrender, submission, and contrition. He who prays aright must follow the example of Christ who said, 'Not my will, but thing be done'. Barclay notes that "When Bunyan was due for trial 'Not my will, but thing be done'. Barclay notes that "When Bunyan was due for trial he said: 'With God's comfort in my poor soul, before I went down to the justices, I begged of God that I might do more good by being at liberty than in prison, that then I might be set at liberty. But if not, His will be done.'"

If effective prayer is in Christ's name, accompanied by obedience and submission, what are the ways in which prayer is answered?

B. Ways of Answered Prayer

God sometimes answers prayer in a very definite and immediate manner. Cries out the Psalmist, "Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily." *"Do not hide your face from me when I am in*

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distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.
(Psalms 102:2)

Sometimes God does answer speedily. Sometimes while we are still praying, the answer is already on the way.

Sometimes God's answer to prayer is prolonged or delayed. Jesus prayed earnestly, persistently, and importunately and oftentimes spent hours in prayer. "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear."

Sometimes God's answer to prayer is, temporarily hidden. Comments Paul Rees: "There is the hidden direction of our Lord. The yielded heart trusts it Lord for a guidance that is effective even when there is no consciousness of it. Indeed the proof of its effectiveness may not be known until long afterwards. This is what my esteemed friend, J. Danson Smith, has sought to say to us in the simple lines:

'Tis good to dwell on years now past,
And on those problem days,
When we could only on Him cast
The future with its maze;
To find He brought us through at last
By unexpected ways."

Prayer and Life's Highest: pgs. 122, 123)

IV. BIBLE

Often time's people come to know the will of God through reading the Bible. To properly appreciate why the Bible is one important source for coming to know God's will, a person must understand what kind of book the Bible really is. Let us first note primarily what the Bible is not and then note what the Bible really is.

A. What the Bible Is Not

The Bible is not primarily a book of science. Many criticize the Bible because it was written in a 'pre-scientific age'. Such people realize that the purpose of the Bible is not to present a scientific treatise on the origin, nature and structure of the universe. Because the Bible is largely eschatological in nature, it is not as concerned with man's beginning as it is concerned with the direction, goal, and purpose of man's life.

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The Bible is not primarily a book of history. It is true that the Bible presents an interesting and intriguing account of much ancient history, with special attention given to the history of ancient Israel. However, if one merely reads the Bible as any other history book, then he has frustrated the purpose of the Bible. The Bible does not contain merely secular history, but the Bible is better understood in terms of ‘salvation history’ – an account of God’s dealings with men and his power over nature and events, which led eventually to God’s redemptive revelation.

The Bible is not primarily a book of literature. No greater literature has been written than Biblical literature but nevertheless, the Bible is more than great literature. Biblical literature appeals to the emotions of men, as does other literature, but it does more than that. Biblical literature is the composite of the eternal truth of the Almighty God. The Bible is Divine truth communicated through the language of the greatest literature.

The Bible is not primarily a book of Philosophy. The Bible contains philosophy, but it is more than philosophy. The Bible speaks about the ultimate realities of life, but the Bible is not speculative, systematic, or abstract but dogmatic, spontaneous, and practical. The Bible is singular in its goal and points to one way of life as the only true and successful way of life.

If the Bible is not primarily a book of science, history, literature, or philosophy, what is the Bible?

B. What the Bible Is

The Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is a book, the contents and message of which man would never have been able to devise or think up. The Bible is the personal revelation of God to man and contains knowledge that is unique because it is divine in nature.

God inspires the Bible. It is not the product of man’s discovery or genius, but instead is the product of God’s plan and purpose, which He communicated to chosen men. God gave the message; men merely received it and wrote it down. *“For no prophecy of Scripture was ever thought up by the prophet himself. For the Holy Spirit was within these men of God, giving them true messages from God.”* (2 Peter 1:20)

The Bible outlines God’s plan for man’s salvation, and gives instruction for right living. The Bible tells us how to live life successfully. “The whole Bible was given by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God’s way of

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making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone." *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (II Timothy 3:16, 17; Living Letters)

If the Bible is the kind of book as above described, is it not reasonable to expect guidance from its reading? However, for one to receive guidance from the Bible, he must not read it mechanically or magically, but instead read it with consideration of its total context.

Some try to use the Bible for their own advantage or search for proof texts as ammunition for their own arguments. Peter spoke of those who "twisted his (Paul's) letters around to mean something quite different from what he meant, just as they do the other parts of the Scriptures, and the result is disaster for them." (2 Peter 3:16)

To get guidance from, the Bible, one must approach it reverently, humbly, and open-mindedly. The one who can say 'I delight to do thy will, O' God' will come defiantly to know God's will. *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path...The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."* (Psalms 119:105, 130) The Bible should be used, as the final guide in making decisions, for the Bible is God's own Word and revelation.

CONCLUSION:

God is very willing to reveal his plan for our lives. Before God will make his will known to us, we must be willing to accept that plan, whatever it is. The gateway to enlightenment is submission to the Almighty.

God reveals his will through the counsel of others. Be willing to listen to others, and don't feel that your wisdom is all-sufficient or that your judgment is infallible.

God reveals his will through the counsel of others. Be willing to listen to others, and don't feel that your wisdom is all-sufficient or that your judgment is infallible.

God reveals his will through the circumstances of life. When God closes one door and opens another, be ready to walk through the new opened door. God is sovereign and living and makes all circumstances work together for good to the one who loved God.

God reveals his will through the prayers of a believing heart. Pray in faith and expect God to answer. God will surely answer in His own time and way. God is the one who is the Infinite Source of wisdom who has promised to guide your path.

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God reveals his will through the Bible. Spend much time mining the exhaustless treasure of truth and wisdom, which will be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. *"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."* (Psalms 119:105)
Counsel, Circumstances, Prayer, Bible - these are the 'green lights' to look for in making decisions of life.

Before God will make His will known to us, we must be willing to accept that plan, whatever it is. The gateway to enlightenment is submission to the Almighty.

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CHAPTER 16
"OUR WONDERFUL BIBLE!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 16

TEXT: *"The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*
(Hebrews 4:12)

INTRODUCTION:

Isaiah wrote that God's Word would not return unto Him void, but that it would faithfully accomplish that for which it was intended.

PROPOSITION:

Why is the Bible so influential? Because it is the Word of God, and the Word of God is living, powerful and penetrating.

- I. THE LIVING WORD
- II. THE POWERFUL WORD
- III. THE PENETRATING WORD

CONCLUSION:

In the Book of Books – the Bible – is found the answer to man's longings. It is the answer to man's needs – therefore read it, memorize it, and support those who are distributing it.

CHAPTER 16

"OUR WONDERFUL BIBLE!"

INTRODUCTION:

Isaiah wrote that God's Word would not return unto Him void, but that it would faithfully accomplish that for which, it was intended. This library of books written over a period of hundreds of years by about forty different writers is still the greatest of all volumes. It can sway the masses or give instruction to the individual. It can turn the countenance of sorrow into the countenance of joy. It can still the tempest of man's troubled soul, and reawaken the lost aspirations in man's breast. Kings and nobles submit to its instructions.

PROPOSITION:

Why is the Bible so influential? Because it is the Word of God, and the Word of God is living, powerful and penetrating.

I. THE LIVING WORD

The writer of Hebrews says, *"The word of God is quick, and powerful."* (K.J.V.) the Revised Standard Version translates this verse: "The Word of God is living and active." Barclay's translation is, "The word of God is instinct with life." Says Barclay, "There are certain books and words which have no living interest whatever. There are certain words, which have a very great interest for a limited circle, but not for all men. Plato was one of the world's supreme thinkers, but it is unlikely that there would be any public for Daily Studies in Plato. The great fact about the word of God, the demand of God, the offer of God is that it is a living issue for all men for all time. Other things may pass quietly into oblivion; other things may acquire an academic or antiquarian interest; but the word of God to men is a living issue for every man. Its demand is something that every man must face; its offer is something which every man must accept or reject." (Barclay's Hebrews; pg. 35)

The Bible is not a dead book; it is alive and relevant. It speaks to men of all ages, in all circumstances, of all classes. It nourishes the small child and it challenges the greatest intellect. It gives instruction for right living, and offers solution to the baffling problems of life. Its issues are always alive and its message is clothed in the garments of the most modern age.

B. T. Roberts, the founder of the Free Methodist Church, spoke the following about the Bible over a hundred years ago: "The Bible is a wonderful book. It

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never ceases to be interesting and instructive. The more we read it, the more we enjoy it. We always find in it something new. It is a field, the fertility of which increases the longer, and the more thoroughly, it is cultivated. The more there is, taken from it, the more it is capable of yielding. It is a mine, which grows: richer and richer the deeper it is worked. We lose our interest in other books after reading them a few times. It is not so with the Bible. It is the oldest book in the world, and yet it is always fresh and new to those who devoutly read it. It was adapted to every period of the world's history in the past; it is especially adapted to our times. Beloveds, read your Bibles.” (Living Truths)

The Bible is filled with the diamonds, pearls, and jewels of truth, which are ready to be discovered through earnest searching and diligent mining. To approach the Bible casually, is to miss the delight of finding the deep treasures of truth. As one experienced man says, “Scripture is like the deep sea, beautifully clear, but unfathomably profound. It seems to say to its millions of students: “My treasures shall never be exhausted, put me not to the rack, but question me incessantly. The fairest productions of wit, after a few perusals, is like gathered flowers that wither in our hands and lose their fragrance. But these undying flowers of Divine truth, become still more beautiful beneath our gaze, daily emitting fresh odors and yielding new sweets, which he who tastes will desire to taste again , and he who tastes oftenest will relish the most.” (Binney's Theological Commend, pgs. 33, 34, 35)

The Bible has shaped the lives of men and nations and greatly influenced the course of history. No book has been more cherished no book has played a more important role in decision-making.

“In a museum in Dresden, among many other gems and treasures, may be seen a silver egg, which, when you touch a spring, opens and reveals a golden yoke. Within this is had a chicken, whose wing being pressed, it also flies open, disclosing a splendid golden crown studded with jewels. Nor is this all; another secret spring being touched, hidden in the center is found a magnificent diamond ring. Si it is with every truth and promise of God's word – a treasure within a treasure. The more we examine it the richer it becomes.” (Binney's Theological Commend, pg. 36)

II. THE POWERFUL WORD

The Bible has shaped the lives of men and nations and greatly influenced the course of history. No book has been cherished more and no book has played a more important role in decision-making.

The course of modern English History has largely been shaped under the powerful influence of the Bible. John Wycliff's version of the English Bible

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was important for influence of the Bible. John Wycliff's version of the English Bible was important for paving the way for the Reformation. As one man comments, "He had the vision to see that the best way to overcome the power and corruption of the Church of Rome, was to put the Bible into hands of the common people." (Our Inspired Bible, pg. 18) Because the printing press had not yet been invented, copies of the Bible were copied by hand. Throughout England, Wycliff had groups of men go from door to door, reading from the Bible or reciting portions of it to the common people. Many of the men who circulated the Scriptures were imprisoned and some became martyrs for this cause. However, the common people of England were so anxious to read the Bible that a load of hay, was sometimes given, in order to get to read the Bible for a certain period one hour a day.

Forty years after the death of Wycliff, the Council of Constance decreed that the bones of Wycliff should be dug and burned, as a symbol of the contempt, which the Church authorities had toward Wycliff. Later in history, to express the real symbolic meaning of what Wycliff's persecutors did, the following was written:

As the Swift bare tem into the Sovern,
And the Sovern into the narrow seas,
And they again into the ocean, thus
The ashes of Wycliffe is in emblem of
His doctrine, which is now dispersed
Over all the world. (Ibid, pg. 19)

William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament also greatly influenced the course of English history. One hundred forty-five years after the translation of Wycliff, Tyndale made his translation. Tyndale too had to endure persecution for his work of translation. One day when Tyndale was arguing with a priest, the priest said, "we had better be without God's law than the Pope's." Tyndale prophetically answered: "I defy the Pope and all his laws; and if God spare me I will one day make the boy that drives the plough in England to know more of Scripture than the Pope does." After much difficulty, Tyndale succeeded in having 6000 copies of his English New Testament printed, but he was forbidden to distribute, any of his testaments in England. In order to secretly get Testaments into England, "he arranged with merchants who shipped goods to England, to conceal the Testament in cases of merchandise, in barrels, in bales of cloth, or in sacks of flour or grain." (Ibid, pg. 21) Eventually Bibles were scattered all over England.

After the Bishop hired men to buy Tyndale's Bibles in order to burn them, Tyndale said, "In burning the book they did none other thing than I looked for; no more shall they do if they burn me also, if it be God's will that it should be so." (Ibid: 22, 22).

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Finally, through a series of manipulations, Tyndale, was tried and condemned. He was strangled to death, and then he was burned. Just before his death, he prayed with a loud voice: “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes!”

Thanks largely to the work of Tyndale, England eventually became enlightened and finally a King of England, James, ordered the translation of the Bible, which we know as the King James Version. Tyndale’s prayers were answered and England eventually came to reverence and to cherish the Bible.

Doubtless, the Bible has influenced the English-speaking people more than any other book. The Bible has been the inspiration for great English literature. The Bible has given leadership in great reform movements, which have changed the lives of thousands. The Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln; was influenced by the Bible more than any other book. Says J. W. Bready about the Bible’s influence in Lincoln’s life, “The first influence which molded his boyish mind, were his mother’s Scripture reading and her simple piety, together with the administration of itinerant preachers, which he rarely failed to attend despite the slush or snow of frontier tails. The Bible throughout life remained to Lincoln ‘the Book of books.’ Always was it on his Presidential desk; daily he perused its pages; his spiritual outlook was formed and colored by it; his great heart was warmed by its prophetic utterance; his tender sympathies were kindled at its sacred fires: and who will deny that the clear, tense imagery of his speech derived from this intimacy with Holy Write?” (Faith and Freedom; pg. 101)

The Bible remains to be the most influential and most loved book the world possesses. A nation is, blessed or cursed, according to its response to this book.

III. THE PENETRATING WORD

“The word of God is...sharper than a two-edged sword; it pierces right through to the very division of souls and spirit, joints and marrow; it scrutinizes the desires and intentions of the heart.” (Barclay’s Translation)

The Word of God penetrates the heart and it reveals man as he really is. One who honestly reads the Bible is compelled to say, “That book describes me, just as I am.”

The word ‘soul’ describes the life principle or earthly life of man. The word ‘spirit’ describes the quality in man which is distinct and which sees man apart from all other animals of the earth. It describes man’s spiritual existence. The writer of Hebrews is saying that the Word of God scrutinizes man’s bodily life and his spiritual life alike. ‘Desire’ describes man’s emotional part, and ‘intention’ describes men’s intellectual part. Both man’s emotional and intellectual parts are brought under the scrutiny of God’s inspection. The

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Word of God removes the wrappings, disguises, and masks of men and reveals things in all of their stark nakedness. *“No created thing can ever remain hidden from His sight; everything is naked to Him, and is compelled to meet the eyes of Him with whom we have to reckon.”* (Hebrews 4:13)

Mr. Jerome Hines, a composer and actor in sacred opera, vividly describes the penetrating action of the Bible in his life, and says the Bible was the changing agent in his life. I relate to you his story. “If I were cast upon a deserted island and could choose only a Christian or a Bible for my companion, I would choose the Bible, chiefly because of a personal experience of the power of God’s Word. I became a Christian about 13 years ago when Jesus Christ spoke to me through the Bible. One night I dreamed that I was on a hillside with a book open before me. I saw that the book was the Bible. Two lines stood out: *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* I suddenly and strangely felt that by birth and heritage I was not a Christian. Suddenly I was looking at myself through the eyes of God. It was a devastating experience and I wept bitterly...On other occasions during the next month I had dramatic experiences involving the Bible. We had lost our first child and I sought the Lord in a desperate moment when our second child was in great danger. The Lord told me to open the Bible. I found myself reading these words from the 113th Psalm: *‘He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.’* The child lived and we named him David. The Bible over these 13 years has come alive to me. The Word of God and the Holy Spirit, present a union that cannot be surpassed. I would suggest to this gathering that it make every possible effort to place the Bible in the hands of all the people on this globe. It is the only hope for this sad world today.” (Bible Society Record Magazine, December 1967; pgs. 154, 155)

CONCLUSION:

The Bible is the Word of God. *“The word that God speaks is alive and active: it cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword: it strikes through to the place where soul and spirit meet, to the innermost intimacies of a man’s being: it exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man’s heart.”* (Hebrews 4:12, Phillips)

In the Book of Books – the Bible – is found the answer to man’s longings. It is the answer to man’s needs – therefore read it, memorize it, and support those who are distributing it.

We search the world for truth; we cull. The good, the pure, the beautiful
From graven and written scroll, from all old flower – fields of the soul.
And we are seekers of the best; we come back laden from our quest,
To find that all the sages said, Is in the Book our mothers read.

Whittier

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CHAPTER 17

"HOW TO COPE WITH TEMPTATION!"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 17

TEXT: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* (I Corinthians 10:13)

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian commits not only the past with its sins to God; the Christian commits not only the present with its temporal needs to God; but the Christian also commits the future with its threats and temptations to God.

PROPOSITION:

There is an effective way to cope with temptation.

- I. RECOGNIZE THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION
- II. MAINTAIN RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD TEMPTATION
- III. RECOGNIZE THE NATURE OF SIN AND TEMPTATION
 - A. Sin Is A Perversion Of Natural, Legitimate Desires.
 - B. Vigilance Is Important Because Of The Subtle Forms, Which Temptation Takes.
 - C. It Is Important To Recognize The Difference Between Temptation And Yielding To Temptation.
- IV. USE THE RIGHT WEAPONS AGAINST TEMPTATION
 - A. Resist The Devil.
 - B. Arm Yourself With The Word Of God.
 - C. Submit Yourself Into The Hands Of Almighty God.

CONCLUSION:

While never denying the existence of Satan, on the other hand, do not become too preoccupied with Satan. Concentrate instead on God's love and on His providential power to enable the believer to overcome temptation.

CHAPTER 17

"HOW TO COPE WITH TEMPTATION!"

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian cannot be sure what the future holds, but he can be sure who holds the future. The Christian commits not only the past with its sins to God; the Christian commits not only the present with its temporal needs to God; but the Christian also commits the future with its threats and temptations to God.

PROPOSITION:

There is an effective way to cope with temptation. We must recognize the source of temptation, maintain the right attitude toward temptation, recognize the nature of sin and temptation, and use the right weapons against temptation.

I. RECOGNIZE THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION

James says, *"A man must not say when he is tempted, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, and does not himself tempt anyone."* (James 1:13, Phillips)

Satan is the source of temptation. Evil is not an abstract entity, but evil is a personified power. The Bible speaks of evil in terms of a spiritual person who is in opposition against God and man. The Bible speaks of Satan – man's adversary. The Bible pictures Satan as the Prince of the Power of the Air and he is, said to be the leader of a demonic kingdom, which is constantly plotting evil against man. Satan is also called the Devil (*"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."* Matthew 4:1), which means the slanderer par excellence. He is called the Accuser of the Brethren (*"Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night Matthew 4:3, has been hurled down.'" Revelations 12:10*). Satan is called the Tempter in Matthew 4:3, (*"The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'"*), who seeks the ruin of humanity. In John 8:4, Satan is called a murderer and liar :(*"...and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.'" Satan is described as the roaring lion in I Peter 5:8, "...and He is called the Wicked One); in I John 2:13, ("I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one."* In Revelation 20:2, (*"He seized the dragon, that*

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ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.") He is called the old Serpent - reminiscent of Satan's first appearance to man. ("He is a Robber, stealing the seed of God's Word out of the heart of man (Luke 8:12)

The power of Satan in the world is not illusionary but very real. While Luther was in his room in the Castle of the Wartburg in Germany one day, he felt the power of Satan so greatly that he threw his inkpot at the devil. Robert Louis Stevenson was convinced that Satan was a personal active power of evil. He said one time, "You know the Caledonian Railway Station in Edinburgh? One cold, east windy morning, I met Satan there." It is said of Jesus, that he *"suffered being tempted."* (Hebrews 2:18) on several; occasions Jesus personally encountered Satan.

II. MAINTAIN RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD TEMPTATION

It is helpful to note that the Greek word from which we translate "to tempt" means 'to test' far more than it means 'to tempt' in our sense of the word." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 55)

Satan tempts us with one purpose in mind - to seek to seduce us into sin. However, we must not look at temptation from Satan's viewpoint, but rather from God's viewpoint, God looks at the temptations we endure as mere tests of our character and loyalty. If we look at temptation from God's viewpoint, then temptation becomes not a stumbling stone, but a stepping-stone to God. "Now here is a great and uplifting truth. What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; is meant to enable us to conquer sin. Temptation is not to make us bad, it is meant to make us good. It is not to weaken us; it is meant to make us emerge stronger, finer, and purer from the ordeal. Temptation is not the penalty of being a man, temptation is the glory of being a man. It is the test which comes to a man whom God wishes to use." (Barclays Matthew, pg.56)

Sometimes it is only in the crucible of life's difficult experiences that man can be purified. Often times it is only after man has been triumphant in life's challenging tests that he can meet life with maturity and strength. Life's tests are for the purpose of purifying character. To pass one test successfully is to increase one's strength for the next test.

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding, is sin,
Each victory will help you,
Some other to win."

The man, who has been successful in life's test, is the man whom God can use greatly in His service. Says one, "If metal is to be used in a great engineering

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project, it is tested at stresses and strains far beyond those which it is ever likely to have to bear. So a man has to be tested before God can use him greatly in his service.” (Barclay’s Matthew, pg. 226)

For instance, sorrow is not meant to make us bitter, but it is meant to make us sympathetic and understanding. A difficult life experience is not meant to make us cowardice, but it is meant to make us courageous. Suffering is not meant to develop self-pity, but it is meant to develop strength of character. When life’s tests force us to choose, we are given an opportunity to choose the pathway, which leads to greatness and nobility. Life’s tests give us an opportunity to choose good instead of evil, truth instead of falsehood, bravery instead of cowardice, generosity instead of selfishness.

When a child is given an arithmetic test, he is given the opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge. The test is not given to him, to cause him to fail; it is given to him to demonstrate to him that he is allowed to progress to more advanced math and tests that are more difficult. God permits us to be tested in order to demonstrate our loyalty to him and to better prepare us for greater service for Him.

III. RECOGNIZE THE NATURE OF SIN AND TEMPTATION

A. Sin Is A Perversion Of Natural, Legitimate Desires.

Satan seeks to twist and to pervert that which is wholesome and natural. Let us note some specific examples.

Self-preservation is an inherent instinct in man but it can be misused. There are times that it is better to die than to live. Example: To be loyal to Christ and die rather than to reject Christ and live is to be victor.

The desire for social approval is natural but it can be misused. It is most natural to have the social urge but this urge can become abnormal and it is then sinful. Such an obsession for social approval can lead to a sacrifice of one’s witness, a compromise in ones standards, and even a surrender of one’s integrity. “Once, President Garfield was urged to take a, profitable but dishonorable, course of action. It was said, ‘No one will ever know.’ His answer was, President Garfield will know – and I’ve got to sleep with him.” (Barclays’ Matthew, pg. 232)

The desire for success is natural but it can be misused. God wants us to be creative in our work and diligent in our labors. However, to desire success and advancement at any cost is a temptation, which one must not succumb too. An obsessive desire for success can cause a

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disregard for other people, a sacrifice of personal integrity, and the adoption of secular and materialistic standards.

The desire for sex fulfillment is wholesome but it can be misused. Man can change love into lust, the beautiful into the ugly, and the sacred into the profane. Satan wants man to treat sex lightly, but sex is not a sensual toy. Sex is a God-given joy to be used under God's control.

The legitimate desire for food can be misused and gluttony results.

The natural desire for ease and pleasure must be guarded, lest one misuse time, develop laziness, or spend money needlessly on entertainment.

The inquisitive urge is normal but it too can be misused and then the horrible sin of gossiping and tale-bearing results.

Satan seeks to ruin men by perverting natural and legitimate desire.

**B. Vigilance Is Important Because Of The Subtle Forms,
Which Temptation Takes.**

“Be self-controlled and vigilant always, for your enemy the devil is always about, prowling like a lion roaring for its prey.” (1 Peter 5:8)

One must be vigilant because Satan is a lying deceiver. “Satan promises the best, and pays the worst. He is a liar from the beginning. The foolish are deceived by him...The promised crown becomes a halter; the promised comfort a torment; the promised honor, shame; and the promised heaven a hell.” (Nav. Book No. 5; pg. 20)

One must be vigilant lest Satan attack him at his weakest point. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link; no Christian is stronger than at his weakest point. Satan attacks one at his weakest point. One must guard against bitterness during times of unexplained sorrow. One must guard against skepticism if he finds it hard to accept the unique and miraculous. One must guard against compromise, if he is a person who is easily led. One must guard against egotism and pride if he is an unusually gifted person. If one is a very affectionate type of person, he must guard against undue intimacy in some relationships. If one finds discipline hard to exercise, then he must especially guard against the misuse of time. One who has a vivid imagination must guard against wandering thoughts. If one is inclined to look on the dark side of life, then he must especially guard against pessimistic attitudes. If one is unusually ambitious, he must guard against the temptation to be domineering.

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It is important to realize that Satan not only attacks one at his weakest point, but also oftentimes attacks one at his strongest point. "We must always remember that again and again we are tempted through our gifts. The person, gifted with charm, will be tempted to use that charm 'to get away with anything'. The person who is gifted with the power of words will be tempted to use his command of words to produce glib excuses to justify his own conduct. The person with a vivid and sensitive imagination will undergo agonies of temptation that a more stolid person will never experience. The person with great gifts of mind will be tempted to use these gifts for himself and not for others, to become the master and not the servant of men. It is the grim fact of temptation that it is just where we are strongest that we must be forever on the watch." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 59)

Peter was known for his courage and forwardness, yet Peter's greatest strength failed him in the most critical hour of testing, and the result was denial of his Master. Over confidence has been the downfall of many. *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* (I Corinthians 10:12)

C. It Is Important To Recognize The Difference Between Temptation And Yielding To Temptation.

Jesus was tempted as long as He lived. Satan would tempt and then depart "for a season", only to return later to tempt again. Some conscientious Christians may wonder why they cannot come to a spiritual level in their experience in which they are no longer tempted. Nevertheless, Jesus never came to any such level, for as long as life endures, the Christian must be engaged in the fierce battle against sin and Satan.

Jesus was tempted, but Jesus did not yield to temptation. It is not sin to be tempted; it is sin to yield to temptation. Having evil suggestions come to one's mind is not sin; meditating upon and cherishing those evil thoughts is sin.

IV. USE THE RIGHT WEAPONS AGAINST TEMPTATION

A. Resist The Devil.

"Give no opportunity to the devil." (Ephesians 4:27) *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7) *"Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience is required of your brotherhood throughout the world."* (I Peter 5:8, 9)

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Do not deny the existence of Satan, for Satan then has gained an advantage if you do. Do not ignore him for that is equal folly. Rather resist him, firm in the faith. Do not become preoccupied with Satan.

B. Arm Yourself With The Word Of God.

Jesus always resorted to the Word of God in His resistance of Satan. He said, “It stands written.” What God said in the prophets remains valid and effective into the present.

The Psalmist said, *“Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* (Psalm 119:11)

An important piece of the Christian armour is the Word of God: *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”* (Ephesians 6:17)

C. Submit Yourself Into The Hands Of Almighty God.

Submit everyday into the hands of God and strength, will be given for each day. *“As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”* (Deuteronomy 33:25b) Only one day at a time!

“Submit yourselves therefore to God.” (James 4:7a) *“For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.”* (Hebrews 2:18) The secret to victory is *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”* (Colossians 1:27b) *He “is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing.”* (Jude 24)

CONCLUSION:

How does one cope with temptation?

1. Realize the power of Satan who is the author of temptation.
2. Never look at temptation from Satan’s viewpoint as a stumbling block – but look at temptation from God’s viewpoint as a stepping stone to God and as a perfecter of character.
3. Recognize that sin is a perversion of natural, legitimate desires. *“A man’s temptation is due to the pull of his own inward desires, which can be enormously attractive. His own desire takes hold of him, and that produces sin.”* (James 1:14, 15)
4. Realize the tactics of Satan: Satan attacks the weakest areas of man’s life and seeks to get man to selfishly, use his gifts and talents.
5. Always make a clear distinction between temptation and yielding to temptation.

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6. While never denying the existence of Satan, on the other hand, do not become too preoccupied with Satan. Concentrate instead on God's love and on His providential power to enable the believer to overcome e temptation.
7. Use the right weapons in fighting against temptation. Resist Satan, use the Sword of God's Word, and submit to Almighty God. *“Temptation lose their power when thou art nigh!”*

While never denying the existence of Satan, on the other hand, do not become too preoccupied with Satan. Concentrate instead on God's love and on His providential power to enable the believer to overcome temptation.

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CHAPTER 18 –
"WHY PRAY?"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 18

TEXT: *“A good man’s prayer is powerful and effective!”* (James 5:16)

INTRODUCTION:

In seeking to answer the question, ‘Why Pray?’ we must ask ourselves what our fulcrum for authoritative knowledge is. If we accept Jesus is our fulcrum of authority, then He becomes our gateway to all spiritual knowledge.

PROPOSITION:

If Jesus felt the need of prayer, how much more do we need to pray as a means of fulfilling God’s purposes for our lives.

- I. BECAUSE JESUS TAUGHT US TO PRAY, BOTH BY EXHORTATION AND BY DEMONSTRATION
 - A. By Exhortation
 - B. By Demonstration

- II. BECAUSE WE LIVE IN AN OPEN SYSTEM OPPOSED TO A CLOSED SYSTEM
 - A. Naturalistic View Of Reality
 - B. Super Naturalistic View Of Reality

- III. BECAUSE PRAYER “PERSUADES PEOPLE TO LISTEN TO God.”

CONCLUSION:

There is limitless power in prayer, therefore practice prayer!

CHAPTER 18

"WHY PRAY?"

INTRODUCTION:

We have often read that Scripture "*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*" (James 5:16), but do we really believe it? Some simply do not believe it, as evidenced by the almost total absence of prayer in their lives. Others out rightly and simply, believe it and practice it, whether or not they have faced the intellectual problems connected with prayer. Others want to believe this passage, but are faced with problems relating to God's will. Such people reason that since God is all-powerful, His will can only be accomplished regardless of whether or not man prays. Such people see no real need in prayer, and reason that, at the best, prayer is simply for the purpose of submission to God's powerful will or thanksgiving for God's gifts. They find no place for petition or intercession, but only submission, adoration, and thanksgiving. Those who leave petition and intercession out of their prayers believe, if only subconsciously, that their prayers have no causal affect upon God's will being realized. Such people reason as follows (put in Trueblood's words, "Since this is God's world, His will is bound to be done. If He wills war and disease, then war and disease will occur. Because we are poor finite creatures, we cannot change the course of events except perhaps by our own free will, in matters, which pertain exclusively to ourselves. How could my little prayer possibly make a difference? Do we really expect that the divine purpose will be altered because of what we hap pen to think we need? Is it not grossly presumptuous for a mere human being, a mite on a minor planet, to try to instruct the Lord of heaven and earth? Prayer, then, is either ineffective or superfluous. If what we ask is inconsistent with God's will it will not be done; if it is consistent with His will, it will occur anyway, whether we pray or not." (A Place to Stand; pgs. 87, 88)

The question of 'Why Pray?' may be more relevant than it seems at first. Admittedly, when we are seeking to understand the mysteries of the intangible and spiritual, we are left with some unanswered questions. However, while admitting this difficulty, let us realize that prayer is very intelligible and above all, workable.

In seeking to answer the question, 'Why Pray?' we must ask ourselves what our fulcrum for authoritative knowledge is. If we accept Jesus is our fulcrum of authority, then He becomes our gateway to all spiritual knowledge.

PROPOSITION:

Jesus both demonstrated and taught prayer and believed in it as something intrinsic to life and reality. Jesus believed Himself to be the focus of all of God's purposes,

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which can be summarized by the word ‘Redemption’. Yet, Jesus – the focus of God’s Purposes – felt the need for prayer to His Father as a means of understanding fulfilling God’s purposes. If Jesus felt the need of prayer, how much more do we need to pray as a means of fulfilling God’s purposes for our lives? Why Pray? Because Jesus prayed, which activity showed Jesus’ belief in a purposive preality, a reality that is in need of being perceived and fulfilled.

I. BECAUSE JESUS TAUGHT US TO PRAY, BOTH BY EXHORTATION AND BY DEMONSTRATION

A. By Exhortation

1. Child-like Trust in praying – Matthew 6:9; 7-8, 11
2. Belief in praying – Mark 11:24.
3. Praying in ‘Jesus’ Name’ = John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23, 24.
4. Simplicity in praying – Matthew 6:7-8.
5. Secrecy in praying – Matthew 6:6.
6. Importunity in praying - Luke 11:5-13.
7. Praying in small group – Matthew 18:19, 20.

B. By Demonstration

1. Pray With Whom?
 - a. In Public – John 11:41-42.
 - b. With Disciples – Luke 9:18.
 - c. All Alone – Matthew 14:23.
2. Pray When? Favoring time in morning (Mark 1:35), but at all times throughout day.
3. Pray For What?
 - a. Glorifying Father – John 17. 4.
 - b. For His Own Usefulness – John 17:5.
 - c. For Disciples
Unity - John 17:11
Joy to be fulfilled – John 17:13.
Mighty be sanctified – John 17:17
Behold Christ’s glory – John 17:24
(Practical specific love in prayer for Peter – Luke 22:42- 44)
 - d. To submit His own will to father’s will – Luke 22:42- 44.
 - e. Pray for enemies – Luke 23:34
4. Pray With What Results?
 - a. Father always heard and granted Him results – John 11:43a.
 - b. Desire for prayer was stimulated in lives of disciples – Luke 11:1.

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II. BECAUSE WE LIVE IN AN OPEN SYSTEM OPPOSED TO A CLOSED SYSTEM

Jesus obviously believed in an open system – not a closed system. One's understanding of Reality is determined by which view he adopts – the naturalistic view or the super naturalistic view.

A. Naturalistic View Of Reality

To adopt the Naturalistic position is to adopt a mechanical, close d-view conception which says that the universe is like a perpetual-motion machine with fixed laws over which God has not control, and in which anything that seemingly contradicts the normal laws of nature cannot happen.

Therefore, to pray for healing is useless, for viruses and germs will follow their normal course that leads to infection and destruction. To pray for changes in weather is senseless because, the movements of the clouds are already decided by the natural laws that determine atmospheric conditions. Not only are prayer and miracles impossible, but all reports of God's providence are untrue, for providence is a special miracle of God's intervention in history.

There is a phrase in modern-day song that says, "Whatever will be, will be." This, to me, expresses a fatalistic, almost deterministic, view of life. (It seems to say; that all events are determined ahead of time by nature and that man is totally helpless to do anything about the circumstances of life. Creative changing of one's circumstances seems to be denied). Philosopher Bertrand Russell expresses a deterministic view of reality, when he says, "Brief and powerless is man's life. On him and his entire race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way."

A picture of the naturalistic point of view might be a line of dominos, set on their ends in a row. When one domino is hit, every other domino in the row successively falls down. Thus, every event and happening is determined by the whole. There is no independent action on the part of man. He cannot choose or create independently of the whole and he cannot escape the influence of the Whole. As the whole goes, so goes each part in the whole.

B. Super Naturalistic View Of Reality

To adopt the super naturalistic view of reality is to adopt the purposive view of reality. The purposive view offers a logical explanation for

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novelties or irregularities in nature. Prayer, providence, and miracles are understandable, and science and religion are complementary in understanding reality. It is not a matter of choosing between uniformity in nature's laws and reports of miracles can both, be accepted without conflict.

Because God is the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe and the Creator of all natural laws, it is altogether reasonable to think that He could introduce a supernatural event if it would serve His eternal purposes. This world with its laws is a subsidiary system, subject to God's will and eternal purposes

When we begin to look at the world with any genuine humility, we realize that it is at least thinkable that there may be invasions into our causal system, for there is nothing illogical about the idea that God is superior to what we call natural law. We are helped along this liberating road when we realize that natural laws do not tell us what must be, but are mere generalizations of what, in a very short period of history, has been generally observed to occur. The Christian understands natural law as merely the way in which God's purposive action in our little corner of the universe normally takes place." (A Place to Stand; Trueblood; pg. 93)

Our text says that the good man's prayer has great power and effect (*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16*). Doubtless, prayer has far greater effect on our world than we realize. There is much about prayer that we don't yet understand, but one thing we do know is this: Prayer helps God to fulfill His redemptive purpose for the world.

Frank Laubach, in his book *Prayer the Mightiest Force in the Word*, entitles one chapter 'How Prayer Helps God'. I wish to share with you some of his thoughts.

III. BECAUSE PRAYER "PERSUADES PEOPLE TO LISTEN TO GOD."

When we pray to God for others, we are not trying to persuade God to try harder to win souls to Christ. God is willing to save all, and through Christ, has paid the perfect sacrifice for all. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should be saved. God actually takes the initiative in that He seeks the lost and calls for the sinner to come to Him.

However, as Laubach says, "God cannot get in for most men have their doors closed toward Him nearly all the time, and many have 'lost the key'; they never talk to God." (pg. 56)

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Considering this condition of the sinner, how can the Christian help God carry out His redemptive purpose for humanity? It seems, as Laubach says, "People listen to each other a million times before they listen to God once. Their thoughts are turned outward, not upward." (pg. 56) What about unbelievers thousands of miles away? How do your prayers for their salvation help? Your prayers help persuade them to turn to God. But how can that be if they can't hear your prayers? But they can hear your prayers. At least the evidence seems to show that they can hear your prayers. As Laubach says, "Their subconscious minds might hear us with that sixth sense called telepathy. That is a possible explanation, and recent experiments make it reasonable. Every mind, it now seems probable, unconsciously receives more or less messages from other minds." (pgs. 54, 55) says Dr. Rhine, one who has researched telepathy in detail: "Like radios, we seem to be tuned in to each other a part of the time, and turned off at other times. Our tuning-in buttons' seem to be in the unconscious mind and nearly out of conscious control, just as the heart beat is nearly out of our control. It is likely that every time we think intensely, some people near and far, who happen to be tuned in to us, get our thoughts without knowing where their ideas come from. It is likely that we are catching other people's thoughts all day long without knowing. A broadcasting center never knows who may be tuned in. New discoveries in electronics are being made every month. Possibly telepathy employs electronic energy as the radio does, but on the other hand telepathy may be 'pure mind' or 'purely spiritual', for all we yet know." (pgs. 55, 56)

Thus, the Christian who is praying for the unsaved very likely is sending out beams of persuasive messages, which are being received unconsciously by other minds, perhaps hundreds of miles away. 'If you pray for a man a thousand miles away, his unconscious mind may at that very moment be attuned outward toward you. If so, he will get your prayer and that may start in him a desire for God. Desire in what tunes men in to God. If you thus help turn a man toward God, you perform the service of telephone operator; you connect the man with God. That helps God to speak to him directly." (pg. 56)

Prayer then has much of the same effect that verbal witness, or a sermon, or a book, or a letter, or a telephone call, or a telegram has - it communicates a message to another and persuades another to take a certain course of action, in this case, to turn to God. God has not called all Christians to preach a sermon from behind a pulpit, but God has called every Christian to pray. Probably the most effective way to help God carry out His redemptive purpose for this world is to pray, for through prayer, more people can be persuaded to turn to God than through any other method. There are only a few thousand preachers, but there are millions of Christians, through the world

Imagine each Christian as a radio, beaming out the message of salvation through prayer. Millions of unbelievers would then pick up these beams of message unconsciously, through their mental radio receiving sets. There is

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potential in saving the world through prayer than in any other method. When we preach to a congregation, only a few hear the message. When we speak, our voice carries only a few feet. When we pray, if our prayer is earnest, we are heard hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Many missionaries have testified to being strengthened and undergirded during the very hour while someone in the States was praying for them. We can name examples of how people have been impressed to think about God and found out later that someone was especially praying for them at that very time.

Says Laubach, “Evangelical Christianity is lost unless it discovers that the center and power of its divine service is prayer, not sermons; God, not the preacher.” (pg. 50) If prayer is like a mental radio, sending out beams of messages for God, then there is unlimited power in prayer. Christians have the potential of surrounding the world (like a blanket) with the message of God’s salvation – and all through prayer! Says Laubach; “Prayer is the mightiest power on earth. Prayer’s power has been proven many millions of times. Enough of us, if we prayed enough, could save the world – if we prayed enough!” (pg. 24)

You say you are powerless to do anything to change the world. Not true! You are very powerful and much of your power resides in your prayer thoughts. “When you think, your thoughts go around the world, as far and as fast as the radio...Your thinking this very day has helped make the world what it is. When you think in perfect harmony with God, the titanic forces of the universe bend like gravity to pull things and people in your direction, because you are going in God’s direction. One man with God shall be stronger than then thousand!” (pgs. 111, 118)

If there is this potential power in prayer, ought not we to be praying throughout the whole day? The Scripture says, “Pray without ceasing?” surely this means that we ought to always have the attitude of prayer, but does it not also mean that we ought to literally fill our day making every glance at another a gentle pressure of prayer, until, at last, the whole day is as full of little prayers as the sky is full of stars.” (pg. 87) out days ought to be filled with the broadcasting of prayers. We never know how many may be receiving our beams of mental prayer. Prayer is not so many words, but prayer is thought energy broadcasted to other minds, to influence those other minds for God.

Every Christian ought to fill his day with ‘flash prayers.’ Says Laubach, “Everybody in every ordinary day has hundreds of chinks of idle wasted time which may be filled with flash prayers ten seconds or a minute long. Here are illustrations of such moments:

Upon awakening in the morning.

In the bath.

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Dressing.
Walking down stairs.
Asking the blessing at table.
Leaving the house.
Riding or walking to work.
Entering the elevator.
Between interviews.
Preparing for lunch.
And a hundred more clinks all day long until crawling into bed and;
Falling asleep... (pg. 73)

Mrs. Billy Graham advocated this type of praying throughout the entire day. As a busy housewife, she said that she did not have time to get down on her knees often. She admitted "that id do most of my praying 'on the hoof'. But to know that you can wash dishes, iron, clean, shop, drive, and in whatever you have to do, Jesus Christ is there beside you, urging you to talk over your problems with him - that is a joy and a comfort it is impossible to describe." (Alive To God through Prayer; pg. 89)

To fill your day with 'flash prayers' takes much practice. Says Laubach, "Never fail to pray whenever you think of it, if only for a second. Habit building, is a process of starting and sticking to it." (pg. 87)

The world will be tipped in favor of good or evil, largely depending upon which type of thoughts prevail - Christ-thoughts or evil-thoughts. If enough Christians center their thoughts upon God and think Christ's thoughts after him, the scales can be tipped in favor of Christ. Your thoughts help determine the destiny of the world! Here is the principle to follow: "Fix your thoughts upon what ought to come to pass, and not upon the things you dislike. Let the things we oppose die of neglect. For we help everything we think about - even when we are thinking against it." (pg. 21)

Therefore, if the Purpose of God demanded that He make an intelligent deportation to cope with man's failure by invading human history, the Incarnation is explainable. The Resurrection is not only historically valid, but also rationally possible, and prayer is a human involvement in the Divine Purpose. A miracle is only a conspicuous exception to a natural law to achieve the eternal purpose of God, and is therefore not supernatural but normal, as seen from God's viewpoint. "By miracle a Christian does not mean something mysterious and unaccountable, but rather an event in which the redemptive purpose of God is clearly manifest. A miracle is an alteration in the ordinary course of events which, far from being puzzling, is a clear evidence of divine purpose in God's world." (Ibid; 94)

The stage of human history is in God's providential control, and is further evidence of God's personal involvement with humanity.

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Men help God, through prayer, to work out God's purposes on the stage of human history, which is one facet of God's eternal and total Purposes. To put it another way, the stage of human history is the workshop for God's Purposes and it is man, who is sensitized through prayer that helps God to carry out and complete His Work. Because God is personally concerned in my welfare and wills that man be involved in achieving His Purposes, I have reason also confidently pray.

The logic, put briefly is this:

1. God has a will and purpose to accomplish (which presupposes an open-ended view of Reality – God not bound by Natural Law but His Eternal Purpose includes both the natural and the more than natural).
2. The fulfillment of God's will is subject to, man's freedom, and His will, can be frustrated or accepted by man. “The possibility of the frustration of God's will is a necessary corollary of the truth that there is a sense in which men and women are relay free. Not only are we free to initiate action; we are also free to resist.” (Ibid; 90) (God's will, is only temporarily frustrated by the disobedience of a man, for His will must necessarily triumph ultimately because God is Sovereign and omnipotent).
3. Prayer is “loving communion (with God) which may help in the promotion of (God's) will, whereas without the prayer it might be frustrated.” (Trueblood; A Place to Stand; 90) (Prayer is not an effort to change God's will and purpose, but to know it and to promote it).

Jesus prayed and thus showed His belief in a super naturalistic view of Reality. In fact, Jesus believed Himself and His purposes supernatural. Jesus, who was the very focus of God's purposes, lived and moved in the atmosphere of prayer.

If Jesus felt the need for prayer, how much more should we? God has eternal purposes, which He wishes to accomplish, and there is reason to believe that these purposes are partly fulfilled through the sensitive obedience and cooperation of finite men. Prayer is possible because this is a purposive universe. Prayer is necessary because man cannot help carry out God's purposes through his life without knowledge of those purposes and strength to fulfill those purposes, both of which comes through prayer.

CONCLUSION:

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There is limitless power in prayer, therefore practice prayer! Say's Laubach, “We have enough Christian people to transform the world right now, if only their thoughts were always on Christ's side.” (pg. 120) Learn then to think Christ's thoughts after Him, and you will help change the world for Christ, and thus help God to accomplish His purposes for His world.

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CHAPTER 19
"THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 19

TEXT: *"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* (Luke 18:1)

INTRODUCTION:

Perhaps reasons enough have been given as to why we should pray. Conscientiously accepting these reasons for prayer will result in a daily practice of prayer.

PROPOSITION:

If one is to practice something, he must know some of the answers to the common questions, which are asked of any new venture: 'How?' 'What?' 'Where?' 'When?' and 'Whom?'

- I. HOW TO PRAY
 - A. With Great Earnestness and Desire
 - B. With Simplicity
 - C. With Spirit of Submission

- II. WHAT TO PRAY
 - A. Adoration
 - B. Confession
 - C. Thanksgiving
 - D. Intercession
 - E. Petition

- III. WHERE TO PRAY
- IV. WHEN TO PRAY
- V. WHOM TO PRAY

CONCLUSION:

Just as breathing, the air of the atmosphere is essential for physical life, so breathing from the celestial atmosphere of prayer is imperative to maintaining spiritual health.

CHAPTER 19

"THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER!"

INTRODUCTION:

It is important to give an answer to the question 'Why Pray?' Jesus spent much time in prayer. He not only exhorted prayer but He demonstrated it throughout His entire life. Jesus' practice of prayer demonstrated His belief, that this is a purposive universe in which God wills for man to cooperate with God in fulfilling God's eternal purposes. Prayer is possible then because this is a purposive universe instead of a mechanical universe. Prayer is necessary because man cannot help carry out God's purposes through his life without knowledge of those purposes and strength to fulfill those purposes, both of which comes through prayer. Prayer then is "loving communion (with God) which may help in the promotion of (God's) will, whereas without the prayer it might be frustrated." (Trueblood's A Place to Stand; pg. 90)

Prayer helps God, for prayer "persuades people to listen to God." (Prayer the Mightiest Force in the World; pg. 54) It appears that prayer has much of the same effect that a verbal witness, or a sermon, or a book, or a letter, or a telephone call, or a telegram has - prayer communicates a message to another and persuades another to take a certain course of action, in this case, to turn to God. The evidence seems to show that prayer is like a radio wave, beaming out messages, which are received by the unconscious mental receiving sets of hundreds of people who happen to be tuned in to a particular prayer frequency. If this idea is true, then prayer is probably the most effective means of communicating the Gospel that we know of.

Perhaps reasons enough have been given as to why we should pray. Conscientiously accepting these reasons for prayer will result in a daily practice of prayer.

PROPOSITION:

If one is to practice something, he must know some of the answers to the common questions, which are asked of any new venture: 'How?' 'What?' 'Where?' 'When?' and 'Whom?' These then are the questions, which we will briefly center our attention.

I. HOW TO PRAY

A. With Great Earnestness And Desire

If prayer is as important as we are saying that it is, then we should pray with great earnestness and desire. Prayer is making vital contact with

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God and one cannot be half-hearted if he is to find God. Says Lloyd-Jones; “The most fatal thing in the Christian life is to be content with passing desires. If we really want to be men of God, if we really want to know Him, and walk with Him, and experience those boundless blessings, which He has to offer us, we must persist in asking Him for them day by day. When we feel this hunger and thirst after righteousness, then we will be filled. That does not mean that we are filled once and forever. We go on hungering and thirsting.” (Studies in Sermon on Mount; pg. 201)

The intensity of our desire in praying will reflect itself by the amount of time we spend in prayer. Jesus spent many hours in prayer. Sometimes he spent all night in communion with His Father; other times he arose early in the morning to pray. Jesus sometimes prayed at length and in deep earnestness. The writer to the Hebrews says that; “*Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears.*” (Hebrews 5:7)

It is not that God cannot hear or does not want to answer, that Christians pray at great length. Rather, long prayers are expressions of deep human desires and urgent needs. That which we feel is so important to us; we talk most about, not only to men, but also to even more to God. This constant confiding in God, establishes an even deeper love relationship between God and man. Waiting upon God in prayer does more for us than it does for God. God knows our needs no better after we have prayed to him than He knew before we prayed for them. Rather, extended praying helps us to become more sensitive to God’s presence and power; helps us better to discover our selves; and helps us to become more aware of God’s plan for our life and the lives of others. Extended praying helps us to clarify in our own minds just what God wants specifically to do through us to help another. To pray to God at length de-emphasizes our problems and helps us to center our minds upon God and His boundless resources. Says Dean Inge; “It is quite natural and inevitable that if we spend sixteen hours daily of our waking life in thinking about the affairs of the world, and five minutes in thinking about God...this world will seem two hundred times more real to us than God.” (Donald Demaray; *Alive To God through Prayer*; pg. 84)

E. M. Bounds says concerning the length of prayer, “We would not have any think that the value of their prayers is to be measured by the clock. Our purpose is to impress on our minds the necessity of being much alone with God; and that if this feature has not been produced by our faith, then our faith is of a feeble and surface type.” (*Power through Prayer*, pgs. 37, 38)

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B. With Simplicity

Among many Jews, it was felt that an answer to prayer depended upon its length. Rabbi Levi said, “Whoever is long in prayer is heard.” Another saying is “Whenever the righteous make their prayer long, their prayer is heard.” Barclay notes that “there was and still is – a kind of subconscious idea that if men batter long enough at God’s door, He will answer; that God and even pestered, into condescension.” (Barclay’s Matthew; v.1; pg. 195) It is true that lengthy prayers with excessive repetition can actually show a lack of faith in God. The fault lies not however, in the length of prayers but rather in the attitude of the person who prays long prayers. There is no intrinsic fault in long prayers. It is the purpose of long prayers that either shows them to be evidence of small faith, or that show them to be just the opposite – expressions of deep faith in God. If long prayers are, used to show off one’s piety or one’s doubt, then they are severely condemned of God. If long prayers are expressions of one’s importunity and faith, then such prayers are effective and blessed.

The important thing to remember is this: Our prayers are to be direct, unpolished, sincere communications with God, not to call attention to our piety, but to glorify God and to express our love to God. Jesus practiced what might be called ‘flash prayers’, which are short but regular prayers uttered silently throughout the whole day when meeting every circumstance of life.

C. With Spirit Of Submission

Jesus prayed to His Father ‘Not my will, but thine be done’. His entire life was in submission to God’s will. He did not refuse the tragedy of the cross although it was most undesirable, but submitted himself even to death to fulfill God’s purpose.

Jesus said that when we pray, we should first pray, ‘Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.’ To hallow God’s name is the purpose of prayer. All requests must in some way honor God’s name or character. We cannot pray for something that would hinder the building of His Kingdom, or that would satisfy our own selfish desires. We must pray that, His name and cause will be, honored. Even if it means that, we give up our own life, as Christ did.

If we immediately received everything that we asked for, we might be forgetful of the source of all gifts, and then God’s name, would not be, honored. To save us from presumption and to increase our patience, God may not immediately answer our prayers. As William Temple says, “Though we bring Him all our needs and hopes, we also recognize that

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what we should choose may not be best at all, and check our desires by the overruling petition, ‘Not my will, but Thine be done.’” (The Hope of a New World; pg. 32)

“Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand
Choose out the Path for me.

I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might,
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.
Not mine, not mine the choice
In things or great or small;
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My Wisdom and my All.”

II. WHAT TO PRAY

The next question that seeks a simply answer is ‘What should my prayer consist of?’ The content of prayer includes the following, each distinct but all inter- related.

A. Adoration

What is the purpose of adoration? It is to realize the greatness of the God, to whom we are praying. This is the time in prayer when we wait upon God. The Psalmist wrote, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.” (62:5)

What are some aids to help one to quiet his mind and center it upon God? The recitation or reading of a Psalm is helpful to put one’s mind into the right attitude of prayer. Try Psalms 103 and 104. Some use a hymnbook as a guide to centering their mind on God. Reflect upon the words of the Doxology or great hymns such as ‘Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart’ or the hymn ‘Breathe on me, Breath of God’, or ‘My Faith Looks Up To Thee’.

B. Confession

It is important to have one’s mind and heart cleansed by God’s Spirit. After one acknowledges the holiness of God, he cannot help but cry out for God’s cleansing, just as Isaiah did. (Isaiah 6)

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If one has knowingly sinned against his fellowman, he must immediately confess that sin to God, and plan to make things right with the one who has been wronged.

Not only should outright sin be confessed, to God but also sins of ignorance must be confessed to God. A Christian must confess his unworthiness, weakness, or sin of omission. Confession of unintentional errors in conduct will keep one from pride.

C. Thanksgiving

Americans are the most blessed people in the world, and could not enumerate the countless blessings, that are daily received. Each person could make his own list of blessings. One should never forget the common blessings that are often, taken for granted.

Learning slowly to count one's blessings and thanking God for each one in turn is a very helpful and healthy practice. It gets one's mind off personal problems, and builds an attitude of optimism and gratitude. Thank God regularly for such things as Home, Health, Country, Work, Friends, Opportunities, Nature, Music, Answered Prayers, Bible, Books, Children, Church, Circumstances which bring growth, Guidance in decision-making, Comfort in trouble and Strength in routine, and most of all, God's personal Salvation and Eternal Life.

D. Intercession

A great portion of the prayer time of a mature Christian should be spent in intercession. Intercession centers attention on the needs of others, the richer and more mature one's own life becomes.

Intercession takes time, but the results from earnest intercession are great. The course of men's lives and even the course of nations have been changed, as a result of, intercessory prayer. 'More is wrought through prayer than this world dreams' is more than a classic saying'. It is a classic saying, but what makes it classic is that it is so true; it is a description of reality. When praying for others, don't center attention on the problems, sicknesses, or diseases, but rather on the persons themselves.

During the time of intercession, ask God to show you how you can especially help the ones for whom you are praying. E. Stanley Jones advises the man who prays to "promise God what you will do to make this prayer come true. As the conversation is a two-way affair, so the accomplishment is a double affair. God answers the prayer, not for you, but with you. The answering of prayer is a co-operative endeavor. For,

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God's interest is not to give you things, but to make you through the getting of those things. The end of the whole process of prayer is not the prayer but the person." (Abundant Living; pg. 230)

E. Petition

Petition is prayer for one's self. One should ask God to help him to find solutions to specific problems. Too much time spent concentrating on personal problems may lead to despondency and morbidity, instead of trust in God. One must take his burdens to God and leave them there.

This is the time to ask for guidance in making decisions. Self-dedication of one's desires and judgments is the answer to finding guidance from God. It is rare that God gives a special message to the deeply dedicated Christians. Says William Temple, "Such (special) messages may come and we should be ready for them; but they are rare. More often we hear no special message, but find when the tie comes that we do or say the right things, because our impulse under the influence of God, in whose hands we have placed our lives. We should in that way commit ourselves to God at the beginning of each day, thinking as we do so of the experience which we expect that day to bring." (The Hope of a New World, pgs. 32, 33)

This is the time also to present our needs to God, whatever those needs may be. If it is spiritual problems, we should honestly present them to God, for God made the spirit of man. If it is physical problems, we should plainly tell God about them, it is always God's will to do one of two things about physical ailments - either heal them or leave them and by leaving them, perfect the character of the sufferer. If the need is social, we should frankly acknowledge our problems concerning living with our fellowman. God can heal social relationships. If our need is emotional, we should face the problem and ask God to conquer the enemies within and to give inner strength and stability to live with ourselves. If the need is financial, we should tell God how real the problem is to us, and accept God's counsel in making needed adjustments to live more comfortably. Whatever our need may be, let us confidently claim the promise: *"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:19)

God wants us to tell Him our needs, just like a human father, wants his child to tell him his needs. "Jesus wanted to make very sure that the relationship was personal, warm, is satisfying, as in the case of a little child who is unself-consciously absorbed in conversation with his father. The child asks out of his heart of need; he asks for what he wants. He is not afraid, he simply asks." (Donald Demaray; Alive To God through Prayer; pg. 83)

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III. WHERE TO PRAY

In considering the place of prayer, it is important to realize “it is not the place that makes ones prayer effective.” It is the person, who makes prayer effective. That is to say, that God is not, confined to any one place, and therefore man need not confine his prayers to any one place. The Jews and the Samaritans were both mistaken in their concepts of prayer. The Jew identified the Temple at Jerusalem as the shrine for God’s presence and thus the proper place where one must come to meet God. The Samaritans centered their worship on the top of Mt. Gerizim and considered that the proper place to worship God. The Samaritan woman that the well challenged Jesus with this controversial subject of worship, and asked Jesus what was the proper place of worship. Jesus’ answer to that woman is very significant and helpful, not only to her but to us today. Jesus said, *“The hour is coming – the hour is now here – when the real worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for it is worshippers like that that the Farther is looking for.”* (John 4:23; Barclay)

Because worship is an attitude of the heart and not merely an act connected with a certain religious posture, man may pray to God at any time and in any place. The sincere Christian may whisper a prayer to God at any place and under all conditions.

Although it is true that effective prayer is not dependent upon the place, it is also important to realize that associating prayer with a specific place has certain advantages. Having a specific place for prayer helps one to guard against negligence. Associating prayer with a specific place also helps one to get into the proper frame of mind. Says E. Stanley Jones, “Every home should have a little corner, or room, or private chapel, and it should be understood that anyone who is there is not to be disturbed.” (Abundant Living; pg. 233)

A pattern has advantages, but the pattern must be flexible, in order to lend wholesome variety. This means that an occasional change in place or position may be helpful. Dr. Mary Alice Tenney suggests that sometimes it is good to sit in a relaxed position, with eyes opened while praying, and to pray audibly to God in a conversational tone. This does not mean that one is casual in his approach to God, but it does mean that one acknowledges that he doesn’t need to yell at God or doesn’t need always to be on his knees to be heard. God is nearer to us than hands or feet.

IV. WHEN TO PRAY

It would be impossible to lay down a universal formula of what is always the best time of the day to pray. Each person is different therefore each must find the time of day or night, that is best suited for them.

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It is reasonable to believe, however, that just as there are specific times to eat, to sleep, or to work, that there should be specific times to pray. Specific times of prayer are important, but there is a real danger that regularity can become habitual formality. Barclay notes, “The devout Jew had set times for prayer. The hours were the third, sixth, and ninth hours; that is, 9 a.m., 12 midday and 3 p.m., in whatever place a man found himself he was bound to pray. Clearly he might be genuinely remembering God, or he might be carrying out an habitual formality...It is a lovely thing that three times a day a man should remember God, but there is a very real danger that three times a day a man might gabble his prayers without a thought of God.” (Barclay’s Matthew; pgs. 193, 194)

Daniel, the Old Testament prophet, felt the need to pray to God three times a day, morning, noon, and night. Nothing stopped him from praying, not even persecution. John Wesley spent two hours each day in prayer. A friend who knew him well wrote of him, “He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining.” (Power through Prayer; pg. 38) Luther said, “If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer.” One holy and gifted Scottish preacher said: “I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be, thrust into a corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed; but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession.” (Ibid; pgs. 38, 39)

To avoid negligence, it is important for one to have specific times to pray. Oftentimes Jesus arose early in the morning in order that He might pray to His Father. *“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”* (Mark 1:35) It is good to follow His pattern. One is not ready to meet his fellowmen, until he has first met with God.

V. WHOM TO PRAY

Who should engage in prayer? Is prayer a privilege for some only or for all? Are only certain persons qualified to pray or is prayer an open door to all, regardless of condition?

In the Old Testament, days, preceding the coming of Jesus into the world, there were specially appointed men called priests whose responsibility it was to pray for the multitude of the people. It was they, who offered sacrifices to God, in behalf of the people’s sin.

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The method of praying to God through a human and priestly mediator was superseded when Christ, the Great High Priest, opened the door to God for every man through His sacrificial death. Each man can now be a priest and directly approach God in prayer. No longer is there any need for a human mediator to bear one's prayers to God. All may pray - that is a necessary corollary to the famous doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers. Let all men everywhere lift up their voices to God in prayer!

CONCLUSION:

Just as breathing, the air of the atmosphere is essential for physical life, so breathing from the celestial atmosphere of prayer is imperative to maintaining spiritual health. When breathing ceases, life is “snuffed out!” Spiritual life cannot long last without prayer.

Prayer is our privilege and our responsibility. It is our privilege because God has allowed man to help Him to carry out His purposes for this world. It is our responsibility because there is reason to believe that if we do not pray, God's will is thereby frustrated.

Says E. Stanley Jones; “Most of the casualties in the spiritual life are found at the place of a weakened prayer life.” When the prayer life is toned up, the whole of the rest of life is toned up with it. Prayer is pivotal. I find I am better or worse as I pray more or less. If prayer fades, power fades. When I pray I am as an electric bulb put into the socket, full of light and power. When I don't pray I'm, like that same bulb pulled out of the socket - no light, no power, it is as simple as that. It works with a mathematical precision. In prayer our weakness is linked to Almightyness, our ignorance linked to Infinite Wisdom, our finite self to the Infinite Self. When every other way is closed, the way of prayer is open.” (Christian Maturity; pg. 302)

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CHAPTER 20
"MAJOR IN GRATITUDE!"

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OUTLINE

CHAPTER 20

SCRIPTURE: *"Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?""* (Luke 17:11-18)

TEXT: *"Give thanks in all circumstances."* (I Thessalonians 5:18)

INTRODUCTION:

Paul made a habit of saying 'Thanks'. His life was the life of gratitude. Few it seems, really major in gratitude.

PROPOSITION:

Paul exhorts us to major in gratitude. However, you may ask, 'How?' 'For What?' 'When?' And 'Why?' Such questions deserve an answer.

- I. 'How?'
 - II. 'For What?'
 - III. 'When?'
 - IV. 'Why?'
- A. Because It Makes You Happy
 - B. Because It Will Make Someone Else Happy and Confident
 - C. Because It Will Result In Generosity like God
 - D. Because It Is a Sin to Be Ungrateful

CONCLUSION:

To live is to acknowledge that God is Lord and Sovereign of All of Life. Grow with daily gratitude!

CHAPTER 20

"MAJOR IN GRATITUDE!"

INTRODUCTION:

Clovis Chappell titles one of his messages: 'The Man Who Majored in Gratitude'. He says that man was Paul the Apostle, who not only wrote but also lived the exhortation: 'Give thanks in all circumstances.' Paul made a habit of saying 'Thanks'. His life was the life of gratitude. Few it seems, really major in gratitude.

What is the major of your life? You answer, 'Science', 'Math', 'English', 'Gardening', etc. No, those may be your major interests. However, what is your major attitude in life? That is the important question. Some people major in reaction, or anger, or depression, or grudges, or dos and don'ts, or debate, etc. Few it seems really major in gratitude.

PROPOSITION:

Paul exhorts us to major in gratitude. But you may ask, 'How?' 'For What?' 'When?' 'Why?' Such questions deserve an answer. Let us look at gratitude in terms of these questions.

I. 'HOW?'

Let us assume for the present that gratitude is a good thing to major in. Later we will ask in a formal way, 'Why?'

Jesus showed us how we can express gratitude. *"And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. As he entered into a certain village, there met ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. When he saw them, he said unto them, Go, shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. Jesus answering said, "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." (Luke 17: 11-19)* Actions many times speak louder than words. If we are grateful let, us show it, by our actions.

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That does not mean that words of gratitude are not important. Have you ever been to a funeral in which you heard a person say, "I was too thoughtful and too appreciative of this dear one who has passed"? (Meet These Men; pg. 127)

Flower to the dead are fine, but flowers to the living in the form of kind words are even better. God wants us to express our appreciation, and so do people. Says the Scriptures, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

Regular letters of appreciation to friends and loved ones is a fine way to major in gratitude. Stamps are a cheap means of telling someone across the miles that they are appreciated. Of course, there is the possibility, for many people, to communicate by mailing their words of gratitude! And Then a course, there is the using the phone to encourage people is always appropriate!

II. 'FOR WHAT?'

We ask, 'For what should I express my appreciation?' The answer: For a thousand things.'

For life, and health and all that we
Receive, so bountifully from Thee
Heavenly Father, we thank Thee.

For food and raiment both, that we
Are given so abundantly by Thee
Heavenly Father, we thank Thee.

For the gift of Thy dear Son
Who died to save us, every one;
Heavenly Father, we thank Thee.

It would be hard to list all the things for which we ought to be thankful.

We ought to be thankful for the obviously good things of life.

(1) Home - Home is a haven and a refuge where love mutually abounds, where burdens are unloaded and joys are shared. Home is the school where great principles are learned, and great characters are molded. Be it ever so humble, where love abounds, therein is found joy.

(2) Friends - A friend helps lighten the burden of his companion. The writer of Proverbs says, "*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*" (Proverbs 27:17) "*A friend loveth at all times.*" (Proverbs 17:17a)

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(3) Books – Books add variety and richness to life. A wealth of knowledge and a source of inspiration always can be at one’s fingertips because of the genius of the book.

(4) Health – To be balanced emotionally, to be sound mentally, and to be strong physically is to enjoy one of God’s richest blessings.

(5) Music – Music is the universal language of humanity that can produce any kind of mood within man. The greatest of all truths can be conveyed by music.

(6) Nature – God created this beautiful world for us to enjoy, and God speaks to us with a thousand voices through nature.

(7) Church – It is the place where truth is proclaimed, where God is corporately worshiped, and where the soul finds comfort and strength to live life more effectively.

(8) Work – Man is made to work, and one who has not found the joy of daily routine has failed to find one of the greatest of all joys.

(9) Habits – Habits can be great friends! They add regularity and order to life, when they are well formed little effort is involved.

We ought to be even grateful for the things, which appear to be bad.

(1) Sorrow – Sorrow comes to all but, it can be used for good. It helps one to better face Reality and gives opportunity for one to experience God’s wonderful comfort.

(2) Pain - Pain can result in drawing one closer to God and in developing the beautiful virtue of patience. Said God to Paul, when Paul sought deliverance from his infirmity. *“My grace is sufficient for thee.” “My strength is made perfect in weakness.”*

(3) Loneliness – Loneliness drives one to depend more upon God for companionship. Enoch walked with God and Abraham and was called, the friend of God. One does not have to have human companions to experience joy.

(4) Persecution – Persecution gives opportunity to show courage, which shall in turn draw others to God. After Paul and Silas had been cruelly treated, was cast into the Phillippian jail, they continued to sing praises to God. Because of their courage, joy and calmness, the Phillippian jailer was converted.

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The Christian must always remember that all things work together for good to those who love God. *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28) That includes both bad and good circumstances. This brings us to our next point.

III. ‘WHEN?’

Paul answers in the words of our text: *‘Give thanks in all circumstances.’ At all times! “Both good and bad circumstances.”* Paul learned how to master circumstances instead of letting circumstances mold him. Paul testified: *“I know how to live simply and I know how to relish plenty; I am acquainted with all of it in every way, to be filled up and to be hungry, to enjoy abundance and to suffer privation. I have strength for everything through Him who empowers me.”* (Philippians 4:12, 13)

When one ceases to be grateful, he develops self-pity, and self-pity always leads to depression. There may be many causes of depression, but one sure cause of depression is self-pity. Self-pity stems from an ungrateful heart. One who majors in gratitude will be delivered from self-pity.

“Gratitude is not born of our circumstances; it is a child of the heart.” Clovis Chappell; *Meet These Men*; pg. 128) Circumstances can either use us or we can use circumstances. It all depends on who is our Master – Circumstances or the Lord of circumstances. “We must always remember that if we face the sun the shadows will fall behind us, but if we turn our backs on the sun all of the shadows will be in front.” (Barclay’s *Thessalonians*; pg. 240) Keep looking to God, who is our Sun of Righteousness, and all shadows will fall behind you.

IV. ‘WHY?’

Just why should you major in gratitude?

A. Because It Makes You Happy

You know that by experience. I don’t have to prove that point to you. The Bible says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” However, when you give, you automatically receive. When you express gratitude to others, a noble feeling swells up within you. You feel like you have really found a treasure. You feel like you have come upon the real meaning of life. Life was meant to be bathed in gratitude. You feel unusually clean inside. Gratitude has cleansed you of all ingratitude. Gratitude has cleansed many persons from depression. “The famous Kansas psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Menninger was asked at a forum what he would do if he felt a nervous break-down coming on. Perhaps the questioner expected him to say, ‘I would go to a psychiatrist.’ If so, he

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was disappointed. What Menninger said was, ‘if you feel a nervous breakdown coming on, lock up your house, go across the railway tracks and find someone in need and do something for him.’ What lies beneath that advice is clear enough is it not? Most cases of nervous distress grow out of preoccupation with advice is clear enough, is it not? Most cases of nervous distress grow out of preoccupation with ourselves.” (Paul Rees: Prayer and Life’s Highest; pg. 55)

B. Because It Will Make Someone Else Happy And Confident

Secondly, you should express gratitude, for it will make someone else happy and confident. Says Chappell; “I do not know of any way that we can do so much good with such a small output as we can by being grateful. A friend said to Job, *‘Your words have upheld him who was stumbling.’ I have an idea they were words of appreciation. You have been kept from stumbling by such words as, I have. Not only so but, under the inspiration of such words, we have moved toward richer and fuller lives. This is the case because we bloom into our best in an atmosphere of appreciation as naturally as flowers bloom at the kiss of springtime.”*

C. Because It Will Result In Generosity Like God

Thirdly, you should express gratitude because it will result in generosity like God. “One cold winter morning in the city of Birmingham, a preacher’s wife walked down the street. She noticed just down the street in front of her a small boy with newspapers under his arm. He was without shoes and he stood with his bare feet on the grating of a hot -air vent outside a bakery. Seeing his bare feet, chapped and red from the cold, she was struck with sudden pity, and she stopped in front of him and asked, ‘Son, where are your shoes?’ ‘Lady, I ain’t got no shoes,’ was the simple reply. ‘Well, you come with me and I’ll see if we can’t do something about it.’ Into a department store, they went and she bought some heavy shoes and stockings; something capable of standing the hard wear of the city streets. The little fellow, proud of his new shoes, ran joyfully from the store, without so much as thanking his benefactor. She stopped to pay the clerk and wait for her change, somewhat disappointed at his lack of gratitude, and then she thought, ‘Well, I suppose he never had anyone teach him to be thankful and I should never have expected him to show any appreciation.’ Leaving the store and starting again down the street she saw him coming, running toward her. He stopped before her and exclaimed breathlessly, ‘Lady, I forgot my manners; I want to thank you for these nice warm shoes and stockings.’ ‘Well, Sonny, you are just as welcome as you can be’, she replied. ‘Lady, I wanna ask you a question; are you God’s wife?’ She, taken aback at the audacity of such

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a question, stumbled for a reply and stuttered, ‘Why – ah – er - no; I’m just one of His children.’ ‘Well, I knowed you must be some kin to Him’, was his reply. Somewhere along the way he had caught a glimpse of the goodness of God, and the kindness of this act made him associate the two.” (Shoeleather Faith; Rosell; No 111)

D. Because It Is A Sin To Be Ungrateful

Fourth, you should express gratitude because it is a sin to be ungrateful. “Ingratitude is one of the most cruel and common of sins.” (Chappell; Meet These Men; pg. 129) Why is it a sin to be grateful? Because the ungrateful person is the person who thinks, he has no one to thank but himself for what he possesses. The Christian must say, ‘I am a debtor to all men.’ To the conceited Corinthians, Paul asked the penetrating question: *“What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why doest thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”* (I Corinthians 4:7) all that we have is gifts of God: work, strength, opportunities, money, talents, beauty, everything. There is no place for pride, only praise to God.

The greatest of all gifts is the gift of forgiveness. “When the great Presbyterian preacher, Clarence E. Macartney, announced to his congregation that he was going to bring a sermon on the most beautiful work in the Bible and in human speech, there were those who thought the word would be ‘mother’. Others suggested ‘grace’, ‘salvation’ and ‘come’. The word, which received the greatest vote, however, was ‘love’. Still Macartney chose none of these. In his message he stated, ‘the greatest word in the Bible, the most beautiful word spoken in heaven or on earth is the word “forgiveness”.’” (Transmitter; Sept. 1968)

Forgiveness comes from God. Failing to recognize this fact, results in the chiefest of sins. “When one told the poet Heine that God would forgive him, he gave this devilish answer, ‘Of course, that is his business.’” (Clovis Chappell; Meet These Men; pg. 131)

CONCLUSION:

Do you have forgiveness of sins? If so, be very grateful. If not, ask in humility. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”* (I John 1:9) That is the greatest of all gifts. If one knows the forgiveness of sins, he then is, enabled to give God thanks in all circumstances. He, who is ready to die, is truly ready to live, and to live is to acknowledge that God is Lord and Sovereign of all Life. Grow with daily gratitude!

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CHAPTER 21
"THE STEWARDSHIP OF LEISURE
AND RECREATION!"

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OUTLINE

CHAPTER 21

TEXT: *“Use the present opportunity to the full, for these are evil days.”* (Ephesians 5:16)

INTRODUCTION:

The footprint of every man is marked either on the sandy beach of time or on the Rock of Ages. The influence and memory of the righteous man remains even after death.

PROPOSITION:

The Christian is a servant of his Lord. Therefore, the stewardship of time is of utmost importance to the Christian.

- I. WORK HAR DURING WORK TIME
- II. ORGANIZE YOUR SUSTAINING TIME
- III. SUGGESTIONS FOR CHRISTIANIZING LEISURE HOURS

CONCLUSION:

The Christian is a man who is living so much in eternity's perspective that he is living fully in time.

CHAPTER 21

"THE STEWARDSHIP OF LEISURE AND RECREATION!"

INTRODUCTION:

Advised John Wesley: "Be diligent, never be unemployed, never be trifling employed. Never trifle away time; never spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary." (Quoted in 'A Song of Ascents'; pg. 7)

Wesley took his own advice seriously. The story is told that one-day John Wesley's carriage was delayed beyond the appointed time. While Wesley was waiting at the door for his carriage ride, he was heard to say by one nearby, "I have lost ten minutes for ever." What a contrast is Wesley's attitude toward time and the one who kills time with no apparent sense of moral responsibility.

The footprint of every man is marked either on the sandy beach of time or on the Rock of Ages. The man who is only living for time puts the footprint on the sandy beach there, and thus, his footprint, will soon be vanquished, by the wave of death. The footprint, which is stamped on the Rock of Ages, is put there by the man who is living for eternity, and the wave of death cannot efface the footprint of such a life. The influence and memory of the righteous man remains even after death.

"He being dead yet speaketh."
"Only one life,
Twill soon be past,
Only what is done for Christ
Will last."

Man must give an account to God for the manner in which he uses his time. Says one unknown Author in a poem:

"I have only just a minute
Just sixty seconds in it;
Forced upon me - can't refuse it,
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
I must suffer if I lose it,
Give account if I abuse it;
Just a tiny little minute,
But eternity is in it."
(Author Unknown)

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Ephesians 5:16 says that we are to *"redeem the time, because the days are evil."* Phillips' translation is; *"Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days."*

PROPOSITION:

The Christian is a servant of his Lord. As such, he is accountable for his total life. A steward must give an accounting to his Lord. Therefore, the stewardship of time is of utmost importance to the Christian. How a Christian uses his so-called 'Free time' is therefore very relevant. Christianizing leisure time first involves working hard during work time, and then dividing properly ones sustaining time from his leisure time. (Outline and basic inspiration from Don Bastian)

I. WORK HAR DURING WORK TIME

"Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need." (Ephesians 4:28) As Bastian says, "Work can brighten the personality if done for good reasons. Leisure time has little meaning to those who do not work."

Work, can be transmuted from a mere necessity for earning a living, into a necessity for realizing personal selfhood, and personal fulfillment. Through the redeeming grace of Christ, man can come to see work as a means of making and fulfilling himself, and not merely as a means of earning a livelihood. Work is for fulfilling man. God created a world filled with raw products which man is to creatively work on, and through working on them, to make himself. "The highest reward that a man can receive for doing his best for the glory of the Lord and for the good of his fellow men is not what he gets for his work, but what he becomes by it." (Sermon Builder; Sept. 1971; pg. 23)

Character comes through God working on us, and us working for God, and character is the only thing that we can take with us into eternity; therefore, work actually helps prepare us for eternity.

"The world is one, secular and sacred, and the chief way to serve the Lord is in our daily work." (Common Ventures of Life; Trueblood)

The work we do must contribute to God, man, and the world, and not take away from any of these relationships. "Therefore there is no substitute for work for those who are physically and mentally capable. However, we must re-emphasize the reason for labor. It must be unselfish in its motive. It must contribute to the community and the world rather than take away from it. Each one must be challenged to render his unique service." (Sermon Builder; pg. 17; Sept. 1981)

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“Our happiest moments are not those in which we ask how to be happy, but rather those in which we so lose ourselves in some creative task, which seems to us important, that we forget to take our own emotional pulse. When we plant trees, write books, build houses, or make roads, we often find that we have been having a wonderfully good time, and that we are not immediately driven to do something to have ‘fun’. We have had, all along, something better than anything which commercialized and self-conscious entertainment can ever provide.” (Trueblood; Ibid, pg. 93)

The worldly-minded man “says that leisure is man’s true end, and so he builds one labor-saving device after another, shortens the work week, lengthens the pay, vacations, and waits for the day when machines will do all the work.” (Christianity Today; Aug. 27, 1971; pg. 7) Yet, with increase in leisure and commercial entertainment, there is an increase in boredom, which is another way of saying that life, does not consist in the abundance of leisure and entertainment a man can consume, but rather in the amount, he can give to his fellowman by means of the creative labors of his hands. Happiness comes not by grasping but rather by giving. Man is built to work not to be, idle.

Scripture look upon the idle man with scorn: *“Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.”* (Proverbs 6:6) *“A son who gathers in summer is prudent, but a son who sleeps in harvest brings shame.”* (Proverbs 10:5)

So work itself is re-creating to the mind and soul and even the spirit.

II. ORGANIZE YOUR SUSTAINING TIME

Sustaining time is time spent for sleeping, eating, driving to work, cleaning out the garage, etc. It’s the time required just to keep life going, apart from work and leisure. If you want to Christianize leisure time, don’t let sustaining time spread out till it fills all your waking hours. Get you’re sleeping and eating into a schedule. Group chores like shopping and running errands. A scheduled life is a life with leisure time left to spend in a worthwhile way.

Take time for planning. One hour spent in planning will probably save two or three hours in getting work done during a day.

1. How to plan.

List all that must be done during the week, as duties come to your mind.

Then mark by number the things that must be done, in the order of importance. With this list of priorities, begin with the most important and complete each project before going on to the next project. Not all

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your projects may be completed during the week, but the most important surely will.

2. How to establish priorities?

Remember this principle: People are very important, second only to cultivation of one's personal relationship with God. Therefore, here is the order of importance: (1) God, (2) Persons, (3) Programs and things.

3. Why establish goals?

One must know where he is going if he ever gets there. Goals give direction. One woman asked, "Is anyone here going anywhere in a car?" How meaningless, and yet many people are going in no one direction in life, only where their whims and fancy drive them.

The goal-oriented person is likely to reach his goals. Writing out one's goals and then periodically evaluating one's progress, and then adjusting goals, has great advantages. Writing out one's goals gives clarity to one's feelings and concepts, and gives determination in striving for worthwhile pursuits.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR CHRISTIANIZING LEISURE HOURS

Most of us have at least 35 hours free time a week.

1. Regulate the biggest thief of free time: Television. The average home watches TV 20 hours a week. The average graduating senior has spent 10,800 hours in classes and 15,000 hours with TV.
2. The most important free time activity is worship. March 1956 Jewish Theological Seminary sponsored a conference on leisure. The least adequate use of free time is mass entertainment, they concluded: movies, television, spectator sports, etc. The most preferable is for recreation.

At the center of recreation, they placed prayer and worship, because "In performing these acts we are engaged in the very formation and recreation of ourselves." Prayer and worship are the most re-creating activities to man. Re-creation of self-daily - by listening to the standard note of Christ as found in the Scriptures. "The United States Government strikes a standard note in Washington every day to let people tune their off-tune instruments again." Every morning we should listen to the standard note - Jesus. We should meet with Jesus, before we meet with men.

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3. Schedule free time for ministry. By visitation of the aged, widowed, father-less, divorced, unemployed, sick, and wayward. Call on Sunday school class members. Write to those away from home. Plan to do three things every week: Study the Bible with friends, pray with friends, and reach out to those who need you.

This is the ripest field for Christian ministry in America today – (Service dispensing the medication of caring. But it won't get done unless it is scheduled. Caring for others brings delight to you. It refreshes you, and re-creates you. It is great recreation, in the true sense of the word. Everyone should have projects of caring.

4. Set time aside for play. Bear cubs and tiger kittens play. Children play. Healthy adults play too – whether touch football or table games. Play should be to the Christian life what dessert is to a good meal. Every family should play together – for this draws the whole family together. It is true that the family that prays together and the family, which plays together, stays together. Don't get too involved in spectator sports; get involved in play together.

Laughter in the home is so important and therapeutic. The Bible says, *“A Cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.”* (Proverbs 17:22)

Says E. Stanley Jones, “There are three levels of laughter: the lowest level, the one who laughs only at his own jokes; a little higher, the one who laughs at the jokes of others; third, the one who can laugh at himself. I would add as the highest, the one who laughs at the rhythm of things – a constitutionally happy laugh.” (341)

Someone asked Rufus Moseley, “Did Jesus ever laugh?” And Rufus replied, “Well, I don't know, but he certainly fixed me up so I could laugh.” (Ibid)

Wholesome laughter has a cleansing affect and relaxing affect upon the nervous system. It is healing, and imparts joy to others.

Take time to laugh and play. How can one be Christian even in the types of amusements, entertainment, and play that he pursues? Here are three principles to apply. (1) “Does my love for this amusement surpass my love of God and does the time spent upon it rob me of time or energy I should spend in His service? (2) Does this amusement contribute directly or indirectly to the development of my Christian character? (3) Does this amusement have in it any element that will harm either another or me? (Blueprint for a Christian World; pg. 159)

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CONCLUSION:

The Bible has a lot to say about 'Time'. Most important of all is taking time to live for eternity. The Christian is a man who is living so much in eternity's perspective that he is living fully in time. A man of two worlds.

How can you be a man who is living for two worlds - the world of time and the world of eternity? Taking time to, accept Jesus as Saviour. Paul spoke before King Agrippa urging him to accept God and Christ. After listening carefully, Agrippa answered: *"Almost thou persuades me to be a Christian!"* Paul replied, *"I would that you were not only almost, but completely persuaded."* Are you fully persuaded to give your life to Jesus Christ? On the other hand, are you waiting for a "more convenient time"? That more convenient time may never come! Someone shockingly said: *"The road to hell is paved with good intentions!"* The Bible says, *"Now is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation."* The Bible further says, *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"* Come to Jesus now! While there is still time!

SLOW ME DOWN, LORD

Give me, amidst the confusion of my day,
the calmness of the everlasting hills.
Break the tension of my nerves and muscles
with the soothing music of the singing streams
that live in my memory.
Help me to know
the magical restorative power of sleep.
Teach me the art of taking minute vacations...
of slowing down to look at a flower,
to chat with a friend, to pat a dog,
to read a few lines from a good book,
Slow me down, Lord,
and inspire me to send my roots deep
Into the soil of life's enduring values,
that I may grow
toward the stars of my greater destiny.
Amen.
(Daily Readings from Sangster)

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

CHAPTER 23
"THE FULFILLER OF MAN'S LONGINGS!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 23

SCRIPTURE: *"The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.""* (John 1:43-51)

TEXT: *"Come and See!"* (v. 46)

INTRODUCTION:

Christianity invites intelligent, open, and honest investigation. It can stand the test of sincere inquiry. None need to commit intellectual suicide in coming to Christ. Commitment to Christ is the result of a reasoned faith, not a blind faith. Commitment is based on facts, not fantasy.

PROPOSITION:

Happy is the man who is willing to investigate into the claims of Christianity, and who is willing to experience for himself that Christ is real. John 1:45-46: *"Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.*

God is nearer than you think, but you must still be willing to 'go and see' - investigate. John 1:46-48: *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."*

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"Christ can do more with simple unaffected men without guile than with men who are merely clever." (George Allen Turner) Nathaniel was a man without quite, a sincere seeker for God. John 1:47: *"When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."*

Jesus noted that Nathaniel was an honest and sincere man in all his dealings, a person without cunning or treachery. Jesus gave Nathaniel a very great compliment! John 1:48: *"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."*

Nathaniel saw in Jesus the fulfillment to his deep longings. He desired the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, and found in Jesus an ability to fulfill those promises.

CONCLUSION:

You were born for fulfillment, productivity, and a life of existing discovery! As you follow the Master, Jesus will show you great and wonderful things, which you do not yet see.

CHAPTER 23

"THE FULFILLER OF MAN'S LONGINGS!"

INTRODUCTION:

In the first chapter of John, we see personal evangelism in action. Andrew becomes convinced that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

"The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus." (John 1:35-40)

Andrew tells his brother, Peter, of this discovery and brings Peter to Jesus.

"The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter." (John 1:41-42)

Peter comes to know the Master through Andrew who is a good contact man. Jesus then goes to the town of Bethsaida where Jesus finds Philip.

"The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. (John 43-44)

Philip excitedly goes to find Nathanael with whom he shares his discovery of the Messiah.

"Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you

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under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that."He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 45-51)

Philip does not argue with Nathanael when Nathanael questions the validity of Philip's witness. Philip simply says; *"Come and see."* (Invitation to investigate; No debate or arguing)

Argumentative seldom wins anyone to Christ; it is confrontation with Christ and presentation of the Story of the Cross. (Barclay; Story of Huxley; pg. 92)

"Come and see!" These words invite inquiry. They proclaim a religion, which is to have its own clear tests, which it invites everyone to use. It is an open faith. It will do nothing in a corner. It will be recognizable in its workings by men's ordinary perceptions. I need not remind you, if you know your Bible, how common such appeals are everywhere. *'Try the spirits whether they be of God.'* *'Prove all things.'* *'Let us reason together.'* *'Go and tell what things ye see and hear.'* *'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'* There are institutions that shut their doors and windows, and say to the world of ordinary men, 'Ye can know nothing of what goes on in here. If you come in you must come in blindfold, and let yourself be led, and examine nothing. There are not tests within your power - you must just be blind and obey.' Christianity, however, she may have been misrepresented sometime, has no such tone as that; but everywhere she throws the doors of her secret places, of her most sacred doctrine and her holiest character, wide open, and cries to all men as to beings who in the healthy use of their human faculties are capable of judging, 'Come and see'. In that call she strikes the keynote of intelligent, and so of truly devout religion." (Phillips Brooks; vol. 6; pgs. 129, 130)

Christianity invites intelligent open and honest investigation. It can stand the test of sincere inquiry. No one needs to commit intellectual suicide in coming to Christ. Commitment to Christ is the result of a reasoned faith, not a blind faith. Commitment is based on fact not fantasy. Christianity is objective - thus testable for its claims to authenticity. "A religion which must make men's lives different, must change characters, or be a failure, has to be always open to men's judgment. It has to work its miracles in the light." (Ibid; pg. 131)

There is such a thing as secondhand knowledge of Truth through personal experience. "What I see for myself is so much more real and vital than what I hear from another." (Ibid; pg. 132)

"Taste and see for yourself that the Lord is good". That is first-hand experience. *'Come and see.'* The Samaritans had first-hand experience.

"They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world. (John 4:42)

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PROPOSITION:

John 1:45-46: *"Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked. 'Come and see,' said Philip."*

One thing can be said from the very beginning about Nathanael – he was willing to investigate the claims of Philip, although those claims seemed at first to be rather unfounded. Happy is the man who is willing to investigate into the claims of Christianity, and who is willing to experience for himself that Christ is real.

Says J. B. Phillips, "It is one of the curious phenomena of modern times that it is considered perfectly respectable to be busily ignorant of the Christian faith. Men and women who would be deeply ashamed to have their ignorance exposed in matters of poetry, music, or painting, for example, are not in the least perturbed to be ignorant of the New Testament.

The Messiah was closer to Nathanael than he at first realized, but it was to Nathanael's eternal profit and credit that he was willing to go and see for himself if Jesus were the Christ, the Messiah.

God is nearer than you think, but you must still be willing to 'go and see' – investigate. Some are not willing to investigate Christ's claims, but God honors the searching heart. *"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."* (Jeremiah 29:13)

Intellectual doubt is allowed, and can even be the instrument of a sound and satisfying faith, as it was in the case of Nathanael. However, dishonest and satisfying faith, as it was in the case of Nathanael. However, dishonest doubt results in an unwillingness to investigate the claims of Christ, and leaves one unfulfilled. The message of the Cross is offensive to the unbeliever, but it is the power of God to the believer. When the evidence for Jesus' Messiahship was clearly presented to Nathanael, he openly expressed his new commitment to Jesus: *"Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel"* (v. 49). Nathanael we open to new light. There was evidence presented and Nathanael received and acted on it. Jesus' personhood was self-authenticating. He says Himself was His own evidence." (Brooks)

There was no trickery or bribery involved in getting Nathanael to follow Jesus. Said Paul, concerning his presentation of the evidence for Christianity. *"We do not try to trick people into believing – we are not interested in fooling anyone. We never try to get anyone to believe that the Bible teaches what it doesn't. All such shameful methods we forego. We stand in the presence of God as we speak and so we tell the truth, as all who know us will agree."* (II Corinthians 4:2, Living Bible)

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Nathanael's honest doubts met the honest character of Christ, and as a result, doubt gave way to firm commitment to Christ as Messiah. Nathanael was convinced when he honestly confronted Jesus, and so will every other man.

"In religion, bigotry and superstition are the result of men's theorizing and speculating about what God ought to be. 'Come and see; come and see what God is', cries the reassuring voice of Him who would not hid Himself from but show Himself to, His children, and out of a devout and humble study of His words and works, out of a readiness to take whatever He shall show it, there comes the large, earnest, true religion which really elevates and saves the soul." (Ibid: 138)

John 1:46-48: "*Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?*" Nathanael asked. "*Come and see,*" said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "*Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.*" "*How do you know me?*" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "*I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.*"

What kind of man was Nathanael? Nathanael's question in verse, 46 ("*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?*"), indicates that Nathanael was well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures. He was knowledgeable in religion. "He knew the expectations of his people. It is safe to surmise that he had been faithful in attendance at the synagogue school and had come up in a religious home. An religious groundwork had apparently been laid in his life. On this basis, he could speak confidently about Nazareth. To his knowledge, it had no place of eminence in the words of the prophets." (Bastian)

There are doubtless some who know religion and theology rather well - who teach Sunday School Classes, who talk about God and belief, who know about God - but who have no personal acquaintance with the Living God.

"Guile" is related to the idea of cunning, treachery, and enticement, a quality exemplified in the patriarch Jacob. The opposite quality of sincerity or blamelessness Jesus saw in Nathanael.

Christ can do more with simple unaffected men without guile than with men who are merely clever." (Turner, pg. 77)

"When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.'" (v. 47)

Jesus' high compliment of Nathanael (v. 47) - ("*Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile*") indicates a person who was honest and sincere in all his dealings, a person without cunning or treachery. He was not deceptive, but he was rather trustworthy and open-faced about life. Perhaps Nathaniel had been studying about Jacob in the Old Testament, and how a ladder was revealed to him. One, which reached to heaven with angels on the ladder. Jacob was deceptive (in deceiving his

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father and in betraying his brother) but God was going to change his heart (and thus his name from Jacob, the deceiver to Israel the Prince of God). Nathaniel, in contrast to Jacob, was guileless – without deception or duplicity. (Jacob's guile exposed, *"That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.* (Genesis 32:22) and his ladder vision: *" Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran."* (Genesis 28:10 ff)

There are open and honest persons who, like Nathanael, are not known for the practice of odious sins. They are respectable, trustworthy, honest, and moral individuals, but people whose own goodness is not enough.

John 1:48: *"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."*

Notes Bastian: "The brief account further seems to imply that he was a devout man. It does not say so in words. But without question, Jesus was paying Nathanael a compliment when He said, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.' The rabbis recommended the fig tree as a good place to study the law. It was regarded as, a place for meditation. We can surmise that a short time before Nathanael's meeting with Jesus; he had been under a fig tree meditating upon his people's hope for a coming Messiah. If so, Jesus' word of insight was intended as a special communication between them."

Nathaniel saw in Jesus the fulfillment to his deep longings. He desired the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, and found in Jesus an ability to fulfill those promises. His basis religiousness and piety was previously known to many. Now his commitment to the Christ would be declared.

Doubtless, as an Israelite, he knew that his own goodness was not enough, but it was not a sense of sin that mainly attracted Nathanael to Jesus. Rather, "it was his desire for the fulfillment of God's promises. It was a spiritual yearning, not satisfied by all his religious practices." (Bastian)

As one lay preacher once said, "No one is doing very well without Jesus." And this goes for even respectable and religiously-inclined people. Believing in a supreme Being, or practicing morality, or carrying out humanitarian acts of compassion, or reciting the Church creeds, or living a clean and respectable life – these are all good, but none by itself or in combination is good enough. Why? Because only a personal fellowship with Jesus as the living God can satisfy the deepest longings of the human soul. Man is restless until he finds his rest in God. "The thing that is deeply wrong with human nature is not that some people commit adultery, and some steal, but that ALL of us are self-centered – the decent and the indecent, the nice and the nasty. Manners, culture only cover that disease.

The following poem was written by a young woman right after she was converted, three days after she had attempted to commit suicide.

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DISCOVERING - CHRIST IN ME

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

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

But Christ came not for the derelict sinner only; He came for the moral and respectable sinner also. It is obviously true that the drug -driven, suicidal-prone, and other burned-out cases in society need Christ, but there are 'good' men (using the word carefully) whose own goodness has not been enough to satisfy their inner longings. It is still true that "No one is going very well without Jesus."

Jesus accepts Nathaniel's confession of faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the King of Israel, but Jesus wants to take Nathaniel further into truth and show him that Jesus is not only the King of Israel but also the very Ladder to Heaven. Referring back to the story of Jacob's vision of the ladder to heaven (*Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran.*" Genesis 28:10ff), Jesus points out that heaven now is open to the honest man of faith and that Jesus is the very ladder that takes men to heaven. Through Jesus, Nathaniel will see great and wonderful spiritual realities - will see Jesus as the ladder to heaven and will see the heavenly angels coming back and faith from faith and ministering to Jesus. He is the means by which the reality of heaven is brought down to earth." (Morris, pg. 171)

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When, God reveals more and more 'light' of truth to him. Nathaniel's searching heart took him to the gate of heaven, and he was shown that Jesus was not only the Jewish Messiah and King of Israel, but that He was none less than the very ladder to heaven. Jesus is no less than the very Son of God. ("The reward for faith is a better basis for faith"). More evidence and more privileges!

The Gate of Heaven is open to the man who surrenders to the Light of God as it is revealed to him! The best is yet to be for the sincere believer, whose heart is guiltless and whose mind is open to new truth. The future is bright with the promise of Jesus - *"You will see greater things than these; you will see heaven opened!"* "The wide open heaven and the ascending and descending angels symbolize the whole power and love of God, now available for men, in the Son of man." (Quoted by Morris; pg. 171) Jesus uses 'Son of Man' (Relationship to Humanity as Redeemer) Intend of Son of God (Relationship to God) or King of Israel (Relationship with Chosen People)

"Some people set their mind on a coveted position and believe that complete satisfaction for them would come by its achievement; they work and scheme and plan to obtain that high post, but the satisfaction of arriving soon fades. When Benjamin Disraeli, twice Prime Minister of England, reviewed his life, he said 'Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret'...Fame is the will - I'-the-o-wisp which beckons others on. Sir Walter Scott achieved it - great, worthy, and deserved fame - but there was that in him, which not all the praise of men could satisfy. When he was dying, he said, 'Bring me the book'. 'The book?' they said. 'What book' 'There is only one book,' he answered, a little warily. 'Bring me the Bible.'" (Sangster; Daily Readings; pg. 90)

CONCLUSION:

Christ alone can fill the God-shaped vacuum in your life and mine. You are made for God. His mark is on you. You are made for fulfillment, productivity, and a life of existing discovery! As you follow the Master, Jesus will show you great and wonderful things, which you do not yet see. *Said Jesus to the now-committed Nathanael: "You will even see heaven open and the angels of God coming back and forth to me, the Messiah: (v. 51)*

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CHAPTER 24
"BECOMING LIKE A CHILD!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 24

SCRIPTURE: *"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:1-4)*

TEXT: *"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom." (Matthew 18:3)*

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus made it very clear that there is only one way to enter the Kingdom of God, and that way is the way of childlike simplicity. Those qualities, which are found in a child, are the same qualities that must be found in every person who enters the kingdom.

PROPOSITION:

Jesus was not demanding retreat to childhood with childish ways, but rather He was demanding child-like qualities, which are the same qualities that mark every child of The Kingdom.

- I. HUMILITY OF CHILDHOOD
- II. DEPENDENCE AND TRUST OF CHILDHOOD

CONCLUSION:

Childlikeness means humility and simple trust. This is the way into the Kingdom.

CHAPTER 24

"BECOMING LIKE A CHILD!"

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus made it very clear that there is only one way to enter the Kingdom of God, and that way is the way of childlike simplicity. Those qualities, which are found in a child, are the same qualities that must be found in every person who enters the kingdom. Jesus is not commending childishness but childlikeness. There is a difference. No man is asked to revert to childish actions. *Paul said, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."* (I Corinthians 13:11) What then did Jesus mean when he said, *"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven"?*

PROPOSITION:

It is this question we seek to answer. Jesus was not demanding retreat to childhood with childish ways, but rather He was demanding child-like qualities, which are the same qualities that mark every child of The Kingdom. What are those essential qualities or attitudes of life? That is what we seek to answer.

I. HUMILITY OF CHILDHOOD

Jesus said that just as a small child is humble, so a person must be humble if he is to enter the kingdom. This was an important lesson to the disciples of Jesus, for they were anything but humble. Their concern was not humility but greatness. *"Who then is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"* (Matthew 18:1; Barclay) In this question can be seen the true motives and desires of the disciples. They were not concerned who could serve the most, but who, could be served the most. They were not concerned in honoring each other, but in being honored. Their desire was prestige, honor, and power; not humble and self-forgetful service. In their question can be seen the ugly materialism, vain striving, tough competitiveness, bitter jealousy, and gross selfishness - all of which Jesus so dramatically condemned.

"Jesus called a little child and made him stand in the middle of them, and said, 'This is the truth I tell you - unless you turn and become as children, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.'" These were hard words for the disciples to hear, but healing words if heeded. Jesus warned them of the dangerous attitudes, which they were expressing. He told them that they were on the wrong road, walking away from the kingdom instead of toward it.

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Their aim was wrong and therefore their destiny would be wrong, unless they made a definite about face – unless they were converted. Their attitude was competition instead of compassion. If they wanted to become members of the Kingdom, they must make a drastic change.

What attitude found in a child must we also practice in our lives? *"Whoever humbles himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."* Humility is found in a small child. A small child doesn't seek prominence but is satisfied to play in obscurity. A member of the Kingdom must not seek for prominence but rather be satisfied to serve in obscurity. *"Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble'."* (I Peter 5:5) Wrote Paul, *"As your spiritual teacher, I give this piece of advice to each one of you. Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all."* (Romans 12:3, Phillips) Wrote the writer of the Proverbs, *"Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."* (Proverbs 27:2)

The disciples who were so dramatically condemned by Jesus were failing to clothe themselves in humility. They were cherishing exaggerated ideas of their importance, failing to have a sane estimate of themselves in the light of God's grace. They were seeking to praise and exalt themselves rather than finding their glory in service to one another.

Jesus demanded from them the childlike quality of humility and He requires the same of us, if we would be members of the Kingdom.

II. DEPENDENCE AND TRUST OF CHILDHOOD

Jesus told His disciples that they must become as children. What is a child like? A child has total dependence upon his parents. He thinks nothing of relying completely upon his mother and father.

So it is with a person who would become a member of the Kingdom. He must rely completely upon God. This quality of inherent trust, which is found in a child, must also be found in the person who seeks entrance into the Kingdom. Blessed is the man who trusts in God for he will surely enter the Kingdom. *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."* (Proverbs 3:5)

Trust in God for salvation. Man dare not trust in his own righteousness to gain God's approval. *"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness's are as filthy rags."* (Isaiah 64:6) *"There is none righteous, no, not one."* (Romans 3:23) In the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, Jesus severely condemned the Pharisee because he was one who trusted in himself that he

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was righteous: *“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: (Luke 18:9). Paul made it very clear that we cannot trust in our own works or deeds to save us. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8. 9)*

Trust in God for provisions – material and spiritual. A child assumes that his parents are going to take care of him, so he doesn't worry and fret. It was Jesus' knowledge of this common and inherent trust of a child that caused Jesus to liken the relationship between a believer and God to the relationship between a child and a father. *“So don't worry and don't keep saying, ‘what shall we eat, what shall we drink, or what shall we wear?’ That is what pagans are always looking for; your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your heart on His Kingdom and His goodness, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course. Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble is enough for one day.” (Matthew 6:31-40)*

If God is concerned about our physical needs, how much more is he concerned about our spiritual needs, needs such as assurance, cleansing, peace, joy, power, and keeping. *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)* That includes everything. God has promised assurance for the future: *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (I John 5:13)* God promises constant cleansing in our lives: *“But if we (really) are living and walking in the Light as He (Himself) is in the Light, we have (true, unbroken) fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses (removes) us from all sin and guilt – keeps us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations. (I John 1:7, Amplified Bible)* God promises peace to the trusting heart: *“Peace I leave with you; My (own) peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid – stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful, intimidated, cowardly, and unsettled.” (John 14:27, Amplified Bible)* God promises fullness of joy to the trusting heart: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:11)* God promises power to live effectively, even in critical times: *“Men will arrest you and persecute you, handing you over to synagogue or prison, or bringing you before kings and governors, and for my names sake. This will be your chance to witness for me. So make up your minds not to think out your defense beforehand. I will give you such eloquence and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict it.” (Luke 21:12-15, Phillips Bible)* God promises to keep the believer from falling into sin and apostasy. *“Now to him, who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without*

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blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 24, 25)

CONCLUSION:

Childlikeness means humility and simple trust. This is the way into the Kingdom. What Jesus said to His disciples, He says to all of us today, *"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven."* (Matthew 18:3)

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CHAPTER 25
"THE HUMILITY OF THE SERVANT OF
GOD!"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 25

SCRIPTURE: *“John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ “From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known. John the Baptist Denies Being the Christ Now, this was John’s testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ²⁰He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Christ. They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” Finally, they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’ “Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” “I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:15-34)”*

TEXT: *“He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” (John 1:27)*

INTRODUCTION:

Looking at ourselves and then looking at Jesus Christ – we are found to be humbled. It is when we compare ourselves to others, that conceit is born.

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PROPOSITION:

From John's life, every Christian can learn how he should look at Christ, and thus how he should look at himself.

- I. JOHN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SAVIOUR
 - A. John saw Jesus as the Eternal Son of God.
 - B. John saw Jesus as the Messiah, whose role was that of a Suffering Servant.

- II. JOHN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SELF
 - A. John considered himself unworthy to unloose the straps of Jesus' sandals.
 - B. John referred to himself as the friend of the bridegroom.

CONCLUSION:

- I. ATTITUDE TOWARD Christ
 - A. Every Christian must proclaim to men that Jesus is the unique, pre-existent Son of God, who is superior to all men and things.
 - B. Every Christian must proclaim to men that Jesus is God's Messiah, whose role is that of the Suffering Servant.

- II. ATTITUDE TOWARD SELF
 - A. A Christian must look at himself as being not even worthy to assume the role of a slave of Jesus.
 - B. A Christian is one who brings Christ and the sinner together.

CHAPTER 25

"THE HUMILITY OF THE SERVANT OF GOD!"

INTRODUCTION:

Throughout John the Baptist's ministry, he always uplifted Christ and belittled himself. He always took a subordinate role and spoke of the greatness of Christ. He never pointed men to himself, but rather pointed them to Christ. John sought to obliterate himself and to glorify Christ, for he realized who Christ was.

That is really the secret of Humility - seeing ourselves in the light of Jesus Christ. Looking at ourselves and then looking at Jesus Christ - we are bound to be humbled. It is when we compare ourselves to others that conceit is born.

A Carthusian Monk of the Catholic Church was describing some of the characteristics of some of the great Catholic Church was describing some of the characteristics of some of the great Catholic Orders: The Dominicans were famous for their intellect; and the Franciscans for their simplicity, but he said: "When it comes to humility, we Carthusians are TOPS!" (Secret of Effective Prayer by Shoemaker, pg. 150)

A great Christian was asked to list the three greatest virtues of the Christian life. He replied First Humility, Second Humility, and Third Humility.

It is true that the humble person least recognizes that he is humble. It is important however to have some standard by which to measure humility. Humility is always present to some degree when the following characteristics are present: (1) Love of God; (2) Love of God's Book, (3) Love of Prayer, (4) Love of God's House, (5) Love of God's people, (6) Love of service, (7) Love of simple things, (8) Love of common people, and (9) Love of periodic solitude

PROPOSITION:

Let us investigate into what John's attitude was towards Christ, and thus better understand what his attitude was toward himself. From John's life, every Christian can learn how he should look at Christ, and thus how he should look at himself.

I. JOHN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SAVIOUR

When John saw Jesus, he proclaimed Jesus as being altogether unique. He said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" What was there about Jesus that was unique?

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A. JOHN SAW JESUS AS THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD.

John declared that Jesus was sent from heaven. When John's disciples questioned the authority of Jesus, John replied, *"A man can only receive what is given to him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Anointed One of God', but 'I have been sent before Him.'" (John 3:27, 28)* John declared that Jesus alone could speak authoritatively about heaven. John declared to his disciples, *"He who comes from above is above all. He who is from the earth is from earth and speaks from earth. He who comes from heaven is above all."* (John 3:31)

"We smile at the boy who when asked by his mother what he was doing replied, "I'm drawing a picture of God." "But no one knows what God is like," said the mother. Said the boy; "They will when I get finished." All attempts to tell or draw what God is like are childish, except for one - Jesus." (E.S. Jones; Word Became Flesh; pg. 34)

Jesus is unique because He is the very Son of God, who came from the eternal realm; to invade time and live among men; and to reveal the nature of God. John 1:14 says, *Jesus 'dwelt among us'*. Long enough for Him to reveal God's character in operation amid the surroundings where your character and mine are wrought out. He called on no power not at our disposal for His own moral battle. He used power to meet human needs." (Ibid; 34)

Because John was a popular prophet of God and spoke with forcefulness and authority, he had a large following. Many thought that he might be the promised Messiah. Because many deeply admired him and almost worshipped him, it was necessary for John the Baptist to make it clear to the people that he was not the Messiah, but only the forerunner and announcer of the Messiah. All attention, and glory, must be given to the Messiah, not to John.

Jesus like the Sun; John like the Moon. The Sun was inherent light; the moon was borrowed, reflected light. Without the Sun, the moon would be cold, lifeless, and useless. The Moon is totally dependent upon the Sun for usefulness.

John therefore proclaimed, *"There is a man who is coming after me, who has been advanced before me, because He was before me."* Although John was chronologically older than Jesus and had begun his public ministry before Jesus, John knew that Jesus was altogether before him in prestige and power, because Jesus was eternal, therefore existing even before the creation of time.

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Because Jesus came from God, He was infinitely greater than John. John, who was elevated in the sight of men, could realize in a clearer way, than the people, how much greater Jesus was than himself. Marcus Dod says that John was on the mountain top in the estimation of the people. “See, from the low ground the star may seem close to the top of the mountain; seen from the mountain –top it is recognized as infinitely above it. John was on the mountain – top.” (Expositor’s Bible; pg. 37; on John)

B. JOHN SAW JESUS AS THE MESSIAH, WHOSE ROLE WAS THAT OF A SUFFERING SERVANT.

For centuries, the Jews had eagerly awaited the coming of the promised Messiah, who would conquer the enemies of Israel and establish a reign of righteousness. This Messiah would be the national champion who would destroy Israel’s enemies at the point of the sword and bring in the era of peace and power in which all nations would be subjected under the feet of the Jews. There was a group of men who were known as the Zealots. They were fiery-tempered nationalists who were ready to make up the ranks in the Messiah’s army to overthrow the oppressing Romans. The Jews of Jesus’ day were watchfully anticipating the coming of this Conquering King.

John’s mission was to prepare for the coming of the King. He proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, but it was not the kind of Messiah that the people expected. They expected a Conquering King, but John proclaimed a Suffering Servant as the Messiah. What a contrast to the popular expectations! Even today, it is my understanding that the Jews never read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, for there the suffering, self-giving Messiah is shown – a kind of Messiah the Jews did not expect or want.

John said, *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”* The picture of the lamb refers to sacrifice. A lamb was sacrificed for sin in the Old Testament as atonement for the sinner. Jesus is the perfect Lamb of God, who was sacrificed for the people’s sins. Through Jesus, man can be forgiven of all sins. “All that the ancient sacrifices foreshadowed was perfectly fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ.” (Mooris) Jesus is our Substitution. Sin (singular) refers to the totality of the world’s sin – total atonement (all comprehensive).

Jesus’ entire life was characterized by sacrifice. Jesus sacrificed the comfort and glory of heaven to become a man. “Out of the Ivory Palaces into a world of care”; the Saviour came to dwell among men. He came to be an intimate part of humanity, bearing all of the same afflictions and sorrows that man bears. Jesus was a ‘man of sorrows, and

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acquainted with grief.’ “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.” (E. S. Jones, pg. 34)

II. JOHN’S ATTITUDE TOWARD SELF

A. JOHN CONSIDERED HIMSELF UNWORTHY TO UNLOOSE THE STRAPS OF JESUS’ SANDALS.

He proclaimed, “There is one standing among you, whom you do not know, I mean the one who is coming after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose.” (John 1:27) Barclay shows the significance of this humble self-renunciation. “There is a rabbinic saying which said that a disciple might do for his master anything that a servant did, except only to untie his sandals. That was too menial a service for even a disciple to render.” (John, pg. 62) John did not even feel worthy to be a slave of Jesus. Humility could hardly take a lower place.

John knew that his life was earth-bound, time-bound, and transitory. He saw Christ as eternal, heavenly, and unchangeable. Compared to Christ, John realized that he was nothing. John realized that he was nothing at all, in comparison to whom he sought to magnify by pointing men to Christ. His ultimate goal in life was to see Christ glorified. It was John’s mission to pull back the curtains and leave Christ alone on the stage of history for men to behold, glorify, and follow. John’s only joy was to bring men to Christ. He was a Pointer in the way to lead men to Christ. His was the voice of a herald telling of God’s Good News. Just a voice – not The ‘Word’ that referred only to Christ.

Verse 20: *“He is not the Christ or the Messiah* (the pronoun is emphatic); *a denial the force of which lies not so much in the negation as in the implication that someone else IS the Christ. He is not Elijah, whose personal return would, according to current expectation, herald the appearance of the Messiah. “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.* (Malachi 4:5) In contrast to our Gospel, the Synoptic persistently identify John with Elijah, and that upon the authority of Jesus himself. But it was in a spiritual sense that Jesus accepted John as Elijah’, (*“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*) Luke 1:17. (*‘He will go in front of him with the spirit and power of Elijah’*), *whereas the Jews looked for a personal return of Elijah in the flesh. Neither is John the Prophet; that is, ‘the prophet like unto Moses’ of Deuteronomy*

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18:15. (*“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.”*), another of the leaders who, according to current expectation, would usher in the Messianic age.” (Macgregor; pgs. 23, 24)

The use of piled up expressions in verse 20 ('confessed,' 'denied not,' 'confessed') indicates that John vigorously repudiated any suggestion that he might be the Messiah. The emphatic 'I' (used in verses 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34), is used to make clear that John claimed a subordinate role, in contrast to the greatness of Jesus.

John is saying, *“It is not who I am, but what I am saying that makes the difference, and that is important.”* As Paul later said, *“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves our servants for Jesus' sake.”* (II Corinthians 4:5) John referred only to himself as a means of pointing men to Christ. Christ was all-important to John. John's curtness in his replies shows his dislike of talking about himself.

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Verse 23: *‘Make straight the Way’ - Be Ready.* Make roadway by clearing away the obstacles in the way - what are the obstacles in our lives that should be cleared away as preparation for the Second Coming? That question can best be answered in each of our lives, in the presence of God in prayer.

Verse 24: Baptism was the regular rite in the admission of converts from other religions, and John was proposing that all Jews needed Baptism, symbolizing their need (along with the polluted Gentiles) for cleansing. This horrified the Jews who supposed that they were God’s children already, because they were descendants of Abraham.

B. John referred to himself as the friend of the bridegroom.

John said, “He who has the bride is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and listens for him, rejoices at the sound of the voice of the bridegroom. So, then, my joy is complete. He must increase, but I must decrease.” (3:29-30) Through this picture, John showed that his relationship was to Jesus. Let us first see what role the friend of the bridegroom assumed, and then see how John fulfilled the role of the bridegroom’s friend in his relationship to Jesus.

Barclay tells us the role that the friend of the bridegroom played. “The friend of the bridegroom, the sheshben, had a unique place at a Jewish wedding. He acted as the liaison between the bride and the bridegroom...He brought the bride and the bridegroom together. He had one special duty. It was his duty to guard the bridal chamber and to let no false lover in. He would only open the door when in the dark he heard the bridegroom’s voice and recognized it. When he heard the bridegroom’s voice, he was glad and he let him in, and he went away rejoicing for his task was completed and the lovers were together. He did not grudge the bridegroom the bride. He knew that his only task had been to bring bride and bridegroom together. And when that task was done he willingly and gladly faded out of the centre of the picture.” (John, pg. 135)

John faded out of the centre of the picture - when his task of introducing Christ was completed. With joy and thanksgiving, John decreased in importance while Christ increased in importance and popularity.

CONCLUSION:

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What special lessons can every Christian learn from the life of John the Baptist? What attitude should the servant have toward Christ? The mission that John the Baptist carried out is the same type of mission that every Christian must carry out.

I. ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRIST

- A. Every Christian must proclaim to men that Jesus is the unique, pre-existent Son of God, who is superior to all men and things, and who alone can speak authoritatively concerning life, heaven and God. Jesus is the center and focus of the Christian message.

- B. Every Christian must proclaim to men that Jesus is God's Messiah, whose role is that of the Suffering Servant. Through the substitutionary death and sacrifice of Jesus, all men may have their sins forgiven. Christ stands at the crossroads of every man's life. The type of response that a man gives to Christ will determine his eternal destiny - either life or death. The revealed God of the Old Testament also presented this choice to Israel through His servant Moses. *“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil...I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”* (Deuteronomy 30:15-20) Jesus is the Second Moses - offering Life to All!

II. ATTITUDE TOWARD SELF

From the life of John, each Christian can learn what attitude he should have in regards to himself.

- A. A Christian must look at himself as being not even worthy to assume the role of a slave of Jesus. A Christian must always seek to renounce self and to glorify the Saviour.

- B. A Christian is one who brings Christ and the sinner together. His role is like that of the bridegroom's friend. He seeks not to attract men to himself, but to Jesus Christ. He is a signpost in the way to lead men to Christ. With humility and joy, he heralds the message of God's Good News.

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CHAPTER 26
"JESUS' CALL TO UNITY!"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 26

SCRIPTURE: *“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.”* (John 17:11)

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:20-23)

“I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” (John 17:26)

TEXT: *“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me that they may be one, as we are.”* (John 17:11)

INTRODUCTION:

Among the most important requests, which Jesus ever made to His Father, in behalf of His disciples, is that they might be united in a common love for one another. Jesus’ deep and loving relationship with His Father was the model of unity, which His disciples must follow. (v. 21)

PROPOSITION:

- I. THE CHALLENGES TO UNITY
 - A. PERSONAL CHALLENGES TO UNITY
 - B. SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES TO UNITY
 - C. DEMONIC CHALLENGES TO UNITY
- II. THE MODEL FOR UNITY
- III. THE MOTIVATION FOR UNITY
- IV. THE POWER OF UNITY

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CONCLUSION:

When sinners see God's children loving each other so practically, they conclude that Jesus is "for real" – that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, that Christianity is true!

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"JESUS' CALL TO UNITY!"

SCRIPTURE: *"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. (John 17:11)*

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:20-23)

"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." (John 17:26)

INTRODUCTION:

There are many ways by which a person can be identified, his height, his weight, his color, his nationality, his age, his place of employment, or his geographical location. There are various ways by which true Christians can be identified, but one of the most important identifications is love and unity.

Among the most important requests, which Jesus ever made to His Father, in behalf of His disciples, is that they might be united in a common love for one another.

Jesus prayed that His followers would be united, not divided. Jesus knew well that, following His departure from them, His disciples would face some serious challenges to their unity. (v. 11)

Jesus' deep and loving relationship with His Father was the model of unity, which His disciples must follow. (v. 21) However, Jesus realized that such deep and lasting unity would not be accomplished in the lives of His disciples simply through their imitation of that divine unity which was obviously manifested between Jesus and His Heavenly Father. A model to follow is important, but there must be an inward empowerment – a deep motivation – for unity. That empowerment or motivation for unity is the divine –like love, which the indwelling Christ imparts to the hearts of true believers. (v. 26)

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The power of such God-imparted unity is manifested in the word of unregenerate men who must acknowledge, because of the unity, which is observable among sincere believers, that Jesus is God’s true and heavenly Son. (v. 21b, 23)

PROPOSITION:

True Christians are identified by their love for unity. They recognize :(1) the personal, spiritual, and demonic challenges to unity. (2) They look to Jesus, in His intimate relationship with His Heavenly Father, as the model for unity. (3) They open their inner lives to the indwelling Christ, whose imparted love alone provides the motivation (empowerment) for this deep unity. (4) They gladly declare the impact (power) which this spiritual and observable unity has upon the unregenerate world.

In considering unity, let us observe four realities: The CHALLENGE to unity, the MODEL for unity, the MOTIVATION for unity, the POWER of unity.

I. THE CHALLENGES TO UNITY

Prayed Jesus to His Father, in behalf of His disciples *“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name - the name you gave me - so that they may be one as we are one.”* (v. 11)

Against what threat did the disciples need to be protected? The threat of disunity. As the leader and master of the disciples, Jesus was the great Uniter. The disciples, because of great diversity | their temperaments; tended to “get on each other nerves” and, because of their strong convictions and less-than-totally-sanctified personalities, tended to be carnally competitive rather than lovingly cooperative. They had much to learn yet about the humble qualities of mutual servant hood! Added to the above-mentioned challenges to unity, there was Satan’s opposition against the apostolic band. It was Satan’s desire to distract and to divide and ultimately to destroy these followers of Jesus.

Let us look more closely at each of these three challenges to unity.

A. PERSONAL CHALLENGES TO UNITY

Even among sincere Christians within a group, the maintenance of “unity in the bond of peace” is not an easy or an automatic accomplishment. Even among fellow believers, there is a need to forgive and to be forgiven. Believers need to ask forgiveness because, even though their motives may be pure, their actions can at the same time, be faulty and misunderstood. Because we Christians cannot always see ‘below the surface’ to the motives but instead become

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preoccupied with the imperfect actions and words, we need to confess to each other when actions and words are misunderstood by our fellow Christians.

Because of the presence of strong-willed opinions among sincere Christians, there is sometimes misunderstandings and consequently a need for seeking forgiveness. The contention between Paul and Barnabas was so great that they parted company. *“Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (Acts 15:36-41)* Christians oftentimes differ in outlook, tastes, and opinions, and from this alone, misunderstandings arise. It is easy to be so convinced that one is right in his views, that he becomes close-minded even to the suggestions or opinions of other Christians.

Because of the fact of God –given differences in temperaments, there is a need for understanding, forbearance, and even forgiveness. The Christian, whose temperament is passive, may misunderstand the Christian, with an impulsive temperament. The cheerful temperament, may have problems understanding, the artistic temperament which is given more to moodiness. The atavistic – temperament may have problems with the meditative temperament. The temperament may have problems with the meditative temperament. The extroversive temperament may grow impatient with the introversive temperament. When different temperaments conflict and patience grows thin, there is need for the ‘oil’ of forgiveness.

If unity is to be, maintained Christian must learn to bear and to forbear with each other. They must overlook the personality flaws in each other and focus on the strengths in their fellow Christians. They must always be slow to judge and quick to forgive. They must disagree agreeably, and seek always to maintain the “unity of the faith in the bond of peace.”

B. SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES TO UNITY

Personality flaws and temperamental differences provide a great enough challenge to Christian unity, but the challenge to unity is even more serious if there are carnal and competitive factors involved in

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interpersonal relationships. At times, Jesus' disciples jostled for power and competed for positions of special honor. They even argued about which of them was the greatest! On one occasion, James and John made a special request. They wanted to sit on the thrones next to Christ's throne, in His coming Kingdom! *“Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”* (Mark 10:35-37)

Unity in the Christian fellowship is fractured when persons seek to put their own personal interests above the needs of the group. It has been noted that the chief causes of disunity within a local Church are selfish ambition, personal prestige, and concentration of self. (Barclay's Philipians, pgs. 39, 40)

Carnal Christians, who are controlled by their own desires, become jealous of one another and they tend to divide into quarreling groups. Unity in the Church at Corinth was disrupted when prideful Christians were divided into cliques, each group seeking to advance its own interest and its own favored preachers. Wrote Paul to this disunited congregation, “You are quarreling about whether I am greater than Apollo's, and dividing the Church. Doesn't this show how little you have grown in the honors and popularity, jealousy, and hard feelings are the results.

Pride and self-centeredness always lead to disunity and fractured relationships. Humility opens the door to understanding and harmony and mutual regard for each other within the Christian fellowship. When Christians put t others before themselves, consider others better than themselves, and seek wholeheartedly to agree with each other with one mind, heart, and purpose, then the result is glorious harmony! “How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live in harmony!” For harmony is as precious as the fragrant anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, and ran down onto his beard, and onto the border of his robe. Harmony is as refreshing as the dew on Mount Hermon, on the mountains of Israel.”

*“How wonderful and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in harmony!
For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil
that was poured over Aaron's head,
that ran down his beard
and onto the border of his robe.
Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon
that falls on the mountains of Zion.*

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*And there the LORD has pronounced his blessing,
even life everlasting. (Psalms 133:1-3, Living Bible)*

C. DEMONIC CHALLENGES TO UNITY

When Jesus talked about the ‘world’, he was talking about the evil forces of sin that are plotting the overthrow of good. God is the God of order and beauty. Satan is the “prince of the power of the air” who seeks to scatter, to disrupt, and to destroy. He is the father of all lies and the father of all murders. He is the chief deceiver, and his deception is doubly dangerous because of his vicious power. He is like a “roaring lion” seeking whom he may devour. He seeks to plant seeds of discontent and disharmony. He is delighted when Christians get up against each other, polarizing over secondary issues, majoring on minor differences, entertaining negative and judgmental attitudes towards each other.

The seven things, which God hates, the Devil loves: (1) Haughtiness, (2) Lying, (3) Murdering, (4) Plotting evil, (5) Eagerness to do wrong, (6) A false witness, (7) Sowing discord among brothers.

*“There are six things the LORD hates—
no, seven things he detests:
haughty eyes,
a lying tongue,
hands that kill the innocent,
a heart that plots evil,
feet that race to do wrong,
a false witness who pours out lies,
a person who sows discord in a family.”
(Proverbs 6:16-19, Living Bible)*

II. THE MODEL FOR UNITY

The challenges to unity are great enough, but the power to obtain and to maintain unity is even greater.

It was Jesus’ high priestly prayer for His disciples that *“they may be one as we are one.”* (v. 11b) *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.”* (vs. 20-23)

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Jesus and His Father were not divided; they were united at the deepest level. Without losing their identity of personhood, they nevertheless were most intimately united in purpose and in nature.

This unity between the Father and the Son is not a mere organizational unity, but instead it is in an organic unity – unity of mind, emotions, and will. The Father and the Son think the same thoughts, feel the same compassion, and make the same redemptive decisions.

Christians too are to be; one in the Spirit, one in the Lord walking with each other, and walking hand in hand. Christians are to work with each other working side by side. Christians are together to spread the news that God is in their land. They are to protect each other, to guard each other's dignity, to heal each other's wounds, to be of one heart and of one mind and of one purpose. They are to bear each other's burdens and to share each other's joys. They are to lift up the fallen, and to cheer up the discouraged and to strengthen the weak ones.

The model of unity, which Jesus gives to us, namely His intimate relationship with His Heavenly Father, goes beyond a mere organization unity. This believer's personal union with Christ will manifest itself in true unity among the brethren. He, who loves God deeply, will love his fellow Christians genuinely. Jesus described this kind of unity when He referred to the intimate organic relationship between the Vine and the branches in John 15. *“Yes, I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit. For apart from me you can't do a thing.”* (John 15:5)

III. THE MOTIVATION FOR UNITY

Prayed Jesus to His Father, *“I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”* (v. 26)

Jesus is the Head of the Body, and each of us is a member of the Body – interdependent. The life of Christ is the life of each body part, each all to love each other lives.

Jesus prayed that the love, which He personally experienced from the Father, would be the same love that the disciples would also experience, as a result of His own indwelling presence in their lives.

The characteristic which best describes the true nature of the Church is unity. Unity, however, is merely the active exercise of love. Christianity is the religion of love which expresses itself within the corporate setting of the church and which expresses itself through the many fruits of Christian unity.

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It is God's love, shed abroad in the believer's heart by the indwelling Christ, which enables a believer to reach out compassionately towards others.

God is love, and therefore those who would be God-like must also be loving.

IV. THE POWER OF UNITY

The impact which observable Christian unity has upon the world of unregenerate men, is pinpointed in Jesus' prayer: *"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* (v. 21)

Notes Francis Schaeffer, "This is the final apologetic...We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians." (The Church at the End of the 20th Century; pgs. 138, 139)

The pagans looked at the Christian congregations of the early Christian Church and exclaimed, *"Behold, how they love one another."* One astonished pagan proclaimed. "They love each other without knowing each other."

CONCLUSION:

Even though the personal, spiritual, and demonic challenges to Christian unity are great, we must never lose sight of God's expectations for His Church. God has called us to unity, based on the mode of Christ's relationship with His Father - a deep and intimate organic relationship where the Father and His Son are one in mind, one in emotions, and one in will. Therefore, based on this model, believers too are to be united at deep levels of thoughts at deep levels of compass redemptive decisions. It is God's love, shed abroad in the hearts of God's people through the indwelling Christ, which enables believers to enter into such deep and lasting unity. The impact, which such observable unity has on the world, is truly great, for when sinners as God's children loving each other so practically, they conclude that Jesus is "for real" - that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, that Christianity is true! Observable love, which manifests itself, in deep unity among all true Christians, is the best apologetic that we can have, as we seek to witness to the world!

We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

When sinners see God's children loving each other so practically, they conclude that Jesus is "for real" - that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, that Christianity is true!

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CHAPTER 27

"HAVING PROBLEMS – YES!
BEING THE PROBLEM – NO!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 27

SCRIPTURE: *"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you."* (Philippians 3:1)

INTRODUCTION:

Paul doesn't seem to mean, "Rejoice that you have problems", but "Rejoice when problems come along."

PROPOSITION:

It is important that believers learn how to face and to cope with problems.

- I. PROBLEMS ARE INEVITABLE
- II. WHEN PROBLEMS COME, DON'T BLAME GOD
- III. WHEN PROBLEMS COME, LOOK FOR THE LESSONS GOD CAN TEACH DURING PROBLEMS
- IV. WHEN PROBLEMS COME, LEARN TO REJOICE
- V. FACE EVERY PROBLEM WITH THE REALIZATION THAT GOD WILL ULTIMATELY SOLVE THEM ALL.

CONCLUSION:

God will make every problem into a project of Grace, and God's projects are always successful! Turn your problems then to the Master. Let him perform a divine project!

CHAPTER 27

"HAVING PROBLEMS - YES; BEING THE PROBLEM - NO!"

INTRODUCTION:

Problems and Rejoicing. We don't think of them together, do we? Paul's exhortation is repeated often: Rejoice in problems. He doesn't seem to mean, "Rejoice that you have problems", but "Rejoice when problems come along." (Let God Love You; Ogilvie; pg. 94)

PROPOSITION:

It is important that believes learn how to face and to cope with problems.

I. PROBLEMS ARE INEVITABLE

Says a minister, "I have often entertained the distorted thought that someday I would be free of problems. Not so!"

Problems - this is life! In fact, never say that when one becomes a Christian his problems will be over! False! In fact, in the early church when one became a Christian, problems came! Separation of family! Persecution! Even death! Paul had problems. Read II Corinthians 11:23-28 if you think otherwise.

"Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times, I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times, I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches." II Corinthians 11:23-28

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The Book of Philippians was written against a background of Paul’s Roman imprisonment because of serving Jesus.

Some think that problems evidence that one is not a Christian. Not so! Of course, many problems do come because one is not a Christian. There is suffering caused by sin and to get rid of sin is to get rid of the biggest problems of all. BUT, Christians will have problems. It rains on the just and the unjust.

II. WHEN PROBLEMS COME, DON’T BLAME God

Sin causes many problems, and God is not the author of sin. Wrong moral choice causes problems, and God is not the one who causes anyone to make the wrong moral choices. He tried to get people to make the right choices.

The innocent in the human race many times have to suffer problems caused by the wrong choices of the godless. Think of the suffering caused to the innocent in W.W. II.

Disease can strike both the body of the godly and the ungodly.

Temptation causes suffering; Jesus suffered ‘being tempted.’

- a. God is not the author of suffering and problems.
- b. God is not aloof during suffering; in fact, He identifies with human suffering, and is even called a ‘Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.’
- c. God is with us and in us during suffering. “There is not a pit that is too deep, but what God is deeper yet.”
- d. God has just an answer to all questions, but humans often are not able to understand the answers.

III. WHEN PROBLEMS COME, LOOK FOR THE LESSONS GOD CAN TEACH DURING PROBLEMS

There are several advantages in having problems and suffering.

- a. See God more clearly – ‘The vision of God can be seen more clearly through a tear’. (Comforter passages in John 14-17 was favorite of my grandmother, because of great suffering in her life.)
- b. Causes one to depend more on God’s Power – ‘God’s strength is made perfect through human weaknesses. Paul learned to *glory*

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in his weaknesses’. (A Theology of Infirmities) God’s power is only available to the weak and humble.)

- c. Produces Growth and Maturity – *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4)* Problems can produce beauty.

- d. Enables one to develop ministry through suffering – Those who are most effective in ministry are those who minister in an area where they have suffered most.

“We see how rich a service the sufferers render to our poor tormented race. Sympathy is a shallow stream in the souls of those who have not suffered. There is something unheeding and harsh in a man who has known nothing of pain. Moreover, sympathy is far too precious in this needy world to begrudge the price at which, it must be purchased. When Richard Baxter lost his wife, he declared, in his grief “I will not be judged by any that never felt the like.’ I was only another way of saying that he could not be comforted except by those who had. Suffering, in a disciple, can often be wrested to service. It is Christlike work to soothe and sympathize, and only those who have drunk the cup of sorrow are fully equipped to do it.” (Sangster; Ibid; pg. 48)

- e. Can Develop the Tender Heart – *“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The God of All Comfort Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.” (II Corinthians 1:2-6)*

Someone said that when certain sorrowing people needed a comforter, they would go to a certain woman who was, known for her gentle eyes. Those gentle eyes came from a gentle heart, make tender through much sorrow.

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- f. Can result in making you strongest where you have been weakest - It is said that there a tape is spliced, it is stronger at the point of the splice than anywhere else.

It is said that the place where the broken bone heals is much stronger than any other part of the bone. Extra strength because of extra calcium build-up?

I cannot believe the saying about the eagle, as it applies to the restored Christian who had backslidden. 'An eagle with a broken wing which has been healed can never fly as high again!' Who can limit the power and possibilities of grace, which heals the broken, and backslidden Christian who had succumbed to problems but who learned his lesson well from the spiritual reversal.

Once a man who told the passenger in the back seat of the car to 'Kick him forward'. (Of course, he meant, help kick the seat to bring it forward) Will life's problems kick us forward or backward? They can help kick us forward!

"Problems are the evidence of the Spirit of God continuing His creative purposes." (Ogilvie; pg. 94; Let God Love You)

Remember, "God sometimes answers in the nick of time," "but he always answers the prayer of the sincere believer.

Man's extremities are God's opportunities."

It is during the crisis moments of life, that God is present. God is surely the God of the routine, but He is also the God of the crisis. God specializes in things that seem impossible. God loves the word 'Impossible'.

IV. WHEN PROBLEMS COME, LEARN TO REJOICE

This is one of the great lessons of the Book of Philippians. Paul, who was writing from a Roman jail, could have found reason to complain - but no complaints in Philippians - only rejoicing - and repeated many times. The book is called the Book of Joy.

Think of James 1:2-4 again. "*Rejoice when you are facing problems,*" because they produce endurance. It comes from the Greek word 'Hupomena' that means - "God can use all things in life - the good, the bad, the indifferent - and produce something good out of them." God is the great redeemer. He can take the raw materials of life and do something good with them.

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For instance, one late Friday night watching my wife prepare a cake, which was to be consumed quickly on Saturday – You would not have eaten that café if the Heat of the oven would not have been applied intensively to the cold liquid ingredients which were poured into that cake pan) Heat is important to produce flavour in food. Is heat important in the product of tasteful Christians?

“We are to rejoice, and the Lord will give us joy. When a problem hits, our duty is to rejoice; the Lord’s gift is joy. Remember that joy is a fruit of the Spirit – a gift that cannot be experienced apart from the Giver.

“Another way to say this is: when you get whacked with a problem open yourself to a deeper relationship to the Lord. Don’t focus on the problem but on the Lord’s presence and power.”

“I am convinced that rejoicing comes simply from the realization that the Lord is present and will find a way to USE every problem for our growth, and his purpose.

God helps us to take a problem and make out of it a project of Grace.

V. FACE EVERY PROBLEM WITH THE REALIZATION THAT GOD WILL ULTIMATELY SOLVE THEM ALL.

In the Book of Revelation, it speaks of ALL TEARS BEING WIPED AWAY. *“The former things will pass away.” No more, sorrow, heartache, loneliness, or death!*

When E. Stanley Jones was asked how he could remain so calm amidst the calamities of the world, he replied, “I know how it will all turn out.”

David Wilkerson’s dream and vision was terrifying, but God revealed 5 words in the end to him, to comfort him: “God Has Everything Under Control.”

Corrie Ten Boom said she couldn’t understand all the problem and tragedies, but she knew she was looking on the wrong side of the weaved rug just on – the side with the knots – not the beautiful side which eternity would real perfect.

When you know the contents of the last chapter of the Book, which is chapter of victory, you are not shocked when you read chapters that filled with seeming defeat and sorrow.

CONCLUSION:

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God will make every problem into a project of Grace, and God's projects are always successful! Turn your problems then to the Master. Let him perform a divine project!

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CHAPTER 28
"JOY AMIDST SUFFERINGS!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 28

SCRIPTURE: *"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times, I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. "* (II Corinthians 12:7-10)

TEXT: *"Most gladly therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."* (II Corinthians 12:9)

INTRODUCTION:

"Why do people suffer? There are no pat answers or complete answers to this difficult question. However, some Biblical answers must be given in seeking to solve some of the mysteries surrounding the profound question.

PROPOSITION:

There are some sufferings, which are unique to Christians. These are productive-type sufferings filled with potential and surrounded by glory.

- I. SUFFERINGS OF INFIRMITIES (Peril or Stumbling Block – Despair)
- II. SUFFERING OF CHASTISEMENT (Peril or Stumbling Block – Hardening of Heart, Rebellion)
- III. SUFFERING OF PERSECUTION (Peril or Stumbling Block - Hatred of Enemy, Vengeance)
- IV. SUFFERING OF TEMPTATION (Peril or Stumbling Block – Yielding To Temptation, Falling Away)
- V. SUFFERING FROM LIFE'S LOSSES (Peril or Stumbling Block – Blaming God, Bitterness)

CONCLUSION:

*"Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain
Leave to thy God to order and provide
In every change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Thro thorny ways leads to a joyful end."*

CHAPTER 28

"JOY AMIDST SUFFERINGS!"

INTRODUCTION:

"Why do people suffer? There are no pat answers or complete answers to this difficult question. However, some Biblical answers must be given, in seeking to solve some of the mysteries surrounding the profound question.

What are the reasons for suffering? (1) Man's Fall into Sin brought the entrance of pain into the world. (2) Man's Inhumanity to Man - individually or corporately - probably accounts for four-fifths of the total suffering in the world. (3) God allows some suffering to come to rebel sinners (as in the case of Pharaoh) to convince them of their own moral rebellion and spiritual insufficiencies and to turn them to repentance. (4) Much suffering in the world comes because of wrong moral choice. This kind of suffering is destructive. (5) There is a kind of productive suffering - the pain of repentance and self-denial, which is a necessary stage for the healing of salvation. (6) There is another kind of productive suffering in the form of painful life experiences, which can result in drawing the Christian's attention away from time and matter to eternity. The Bible declares, "Set your affections, not on things of the earth, but on things in heaven." A Christian's suffering can help accomplish this resetting of goals. (7) Suffering to the Christian is productive if it results in helping the Christian to depend more upon God for his happiness rather than upon the things of this world for happiness. (8) As in the case of Abraham suffering, sometimes provides the test to demonstrate the loyalty for the believer to God. Since Jesus was made "perfect through Suffering," so the character of Christians can be perfected through suffering. Every temptation overcome adds strength to Christian character.

PROPOSITION:

There are some sufferings, which are unique to Christians. These are productive-type sufferings filled with potential and surrounded by glory. Let us look at some of those sufferings each of which can be endured with joy. *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God."* (Hebrews 12:2)

I. SUFFERINGS OF INFIRMITIES (Peril or Stumbling Block - Despair)

Paul had some type of physical infirmity, which he sought God to deliver him from, but God revised to deliver him. Instead, God answered Paul: *"My grace*

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is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul then responded to God “Post gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, which the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake! For when I am weak, then am I strong.” (II Corinthians 12)

E. Stanley Jones, at age 88 had a paralytic stroke, but while he lay almost helpless for months, he dictated to his daughter the words and ideas, which eventually resulted in the publishing of his last book, entitled THE DIVINE YES. In the chapter entitled, “Using Our Suffering,” he writes, “It is amazing that God can do with a broken heart, or life, when you give him all the pieces. So I am collecting the pieces of the wreckage that came with the stroke am trying to put them together into a living whole. I have been called upon to; illustrate my own teaching, and I find it is easier to preach on how to use defeat and calamity than to illustrate it, which I am now called upon, to do! This is exciting also for not many people have a second chance to tie up the meaning of their writing by illustrating it in their own lives. However, I have that chance. I look on it as an opportunity and not as a catastrophe. I am trying to put the pieces of my life together or turn them over to God to make something out of them. Therefore, instead of coasting into a landing at eighty-eight, I have an opportunity to illustrate the meaning of what I have been talking about for more than seventy years. It is difficult, but very important and necessary.” (THE DIVINE YES; E. Stanley Jones, pgs. 117-118)

There can be joy amidst even physical suffering. The Christian need not bear the suffering, but can use the suffering.

II. SUFFERING OF CHASTISEMENT (Peril or Stumbling Block – Hardening of Heart, Rebellion)

Hebrews 12:5-9: *“And have you quite forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, his child? He said, “My son, don’t be angry when the Lord punishes you. Don’t be discouraged when he has to show you where you are wrong. For when He punishes you, it proves that he loves you. When he whips you it proves you are really his child.” Let God train, you, for he is doing what any loving father does for his children. Whoever heard of a son who never was corrected? If God doesn’t punish you when you need it, as other fathers punish their sons, then it means that you aren’t really God’s son at all—that you don’t really belong in his family. Since we respect our fathers here on earth, through they punish us, should we not all the more cheerfully submit to God’s training so that we can begin really to live?” (Living Bible)*

As every child knows, punishment hurts at the time, but the discipline of child raising is important for the welfare of the child. *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, after ward it*

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yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Hebrews 12:11)

The athlete of God must undergo rigorous training, and necessary correction. The coach has a right to expect submission from the trainees, *“An athlete who runs in a race cannot win the prize unless he obeys the rules.”* (II Timothy 2:5) *“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”* (Hebrews 12:1) Training and laying aside unnecessary weight may appear painful, but there is great joy in winning the crown at the end of the race!

The soldier of God must be disciplined, and some of that discipline involves suffering. *“Take your part in suffering, as a loyal soldier of Christ Jesus.”* (II Timothy 2:3) But there is joy amidst the suffering because of the anticipation of victory!

“The branches on the vine must be pruned if there is to be a fruitful harvest.” (John 15) The pruning process may seem painful, but there is joy because of the anticipation of a fruitful harvest!

The potter must mold the clay, if beautiful pottery is to be the finished product. Believers must be made moldable and soft in the hands of the Great Divine Potter.

There is a poem, which says, “Batter my heart, thou three-personed God!”

Tender-heartedness is important for a vital and effective Christian life. One of our leaders, Bishop Parsons, said, “God has given me enough success to keep me encouraged, and enough failure to keep me humble.”

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (Hebrews 12:8)

As believers, we can rejoice, even while God wields the chastening rod, for God always deals with his children in love.

III. SUFFERING OF PERSECUTION (Peril or Stumbling Block - Hatred of Enemy, Vengeance)

One of the unique sufferings of the believer is the suffering of persecution. Paul was cast in jail for his faith, whipped times without number, and faced death repeatedly. Five different times the Jews gave Paul their terrible Thirty-nine lashes. Three times, he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned. Three times, he was shipwrecked. Once he was in the open sea all night and the whole next day. Paul further testified: *“I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone*

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without food; often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm." (II Corinthians 11:27)

Even though Paul suffered much for his faith in the living Christ, Paul spoke often of Christian Joy. *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice."* (Philippians 4) *"In Everything give thanks."* (I Thessalonians 5)

"The New Testament does not teach us that if you are righteous, you will be exempt from suffering. Sometimes the righteous are in trouble because they are righteous. Society demands conformity. If you fall below its standards, it will punish you. If you rise above its standards, it will persecute you. Jesus, said, 'Beware when all men think well of you.'" (DIVINE YES; pg. 100)

Wrote Paul, *"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* (II Timothy 3:12) Why is this? Because, the true believer's life is the conscience of society, and the evil in society will attempt to quiet that conscience.

Jesus taught Christians to rejoice amidst the suffering of persecution: *"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you..."* (Matthew 5:11-12)

Christians may rejoice amidst persecution, for whatever man may do to the believer, the believer remains free in Christ and free in his spirit. The external circumstances of life cannot remove the peace and joy in the believers' heart. As Corrie Ten Boom said, "There is no pit that is so deep but what he is deeper still!"

Madame Guy on, in the midst of one of her periods of imprisonment for her faith, wrote:

A little bird I am
Shut from the field of air;
Yet in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who place me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleases Thee.

Naught have I else to do;
I sing the whole day long;
And He whom most I love to please,
Doth listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing
But still He bends to hear me sing.

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My cage confines me round;
Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
the flight, the freedom of the soul.

Oh! It is good to soar
These bolts and bars above,
To Him whose purpose I adore,
Whose Providence I love;
And in thy mighty will to find
the joy, the freedom of the mind.

(PRAYER AND LIFE'S HIGHEST, Paul Rees, pgs. 65-66)

The Christian may rejoice during times of persecution for the persecution provides an opportunity to demonstrate one's loyalty to Christ, and an opportunity to share a witness to Christ's power.

"A doctor in china had built up an efficient hospital through years of toil and self-sacrifice. When the Communist wing of the Nationalist army swept northward, they looted his hospital and left it the shell of what it had been. All the work of years went down in a crash. Not an easy thing to forgive! But, undaunted, he followed the army and attended to its sick and wounded. When General Chang Kai Shek, who was in charge of the army, saw this, he asked his wife, 'what makes this foreign doctor tend to the sick and wounded when these very men destroyed his hospital?' His wife, who was a Christian, replied, 'It is Christianity.' Said General Chang, very thoughtfully, 'Then I must be a Christian.' This was one of the three influences that made the General, then President of China, decide to become a Christian." (CHRIST AND HUMAN SUFFERING, E. Stanley Jones, pg. 99)

IV. SUFFERING OF TEMPTATION (Peril or Stumbling Block - Yielding To Temptation, Falling Away)

Another unique suffering of a Christian is the suffering of temptation. Says Hebrews 2: 18, *"Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."* The Bible promises that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability to resist, but will make a way of escape. *"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."* (I Corinthians 10:13) "Even temptations must; be under God's watchful eye and with His permission." (Donald Bastian)

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A certain Greek word occurs twelve times in chapter one of James. Ten times it is translated 'temptation' and twice 'trial.' For an instance of the latter, *'Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.'* (James 1:2, 3; RSV) Obviously, the devil is not out to produce steadfastness in believers. This then, must be God's concern, which He achieves in us through the testing experiences of life. But, since the word used for temptation is the same as that used for trial, why not say that the devil's temptations may also be called God's trails." (Don Bastian)

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation! For when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." (James 1:12)

Bastian reminds us: "God is getting you ready for a great day of triumph - 'the day of Christ's appearing.' Everything He permits to come into your life has this day in view."

Said one, "I used to say the devil is tempting me; now I say the Lord is testing me." This is looking at temptation from God's point of view. "What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin it is meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad it is meant to make us good. It is not meant to weaken us it is meant to make us emerge stronger, finer, and purer from the ordeal. Temptation is not the penalty of being a man, temptation is the glory of being a man. It is the test which comes to a man whom God wishes us to use." (Barclay's Matthew; pgs. 225)

So, it is possible for the believer to experience joy amidst the suffering of temptations and trials. *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance."* (James 1:2; NIV)

V. SUFFERING FROM LIFE'S LOSSES (Peril or Stumbling Block - Blaming God, Bitterness)

Perhaps the hardest experience in the life of a Christian comes when he is called to experience a sorrow or a disappointment, the explanation to which defies reason. Jesus experienced such deep sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane when he cried out, *"let this cup pass from me, Nevertheless not my will but thine be done."* Later on the cross, Jesus cried out, *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me."*

"There are times when a Christian has to learn the hardest lesson of all, the very lesson which Jesus Himself had to learn in Gethsemane; he has to learn how to accept what he cannot understand. There are times when things happen that he cannot understand but he can still say, "God, Thou art love; I build my faith on that." (Barclay's I Corinthians; pgs. 222, 223)

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A London minister tells of a father whose son was fighting with the forces in France. "At our prayer meetings," said the pastor, "he would earnestly pray that God would hide that soldier son beneath His wings, He once added with deep tenderness, 'The bullet was never made that can pierce Thy wings.'" But the boy was killed all the same.'" (Prayer & Life's Highest; pg. 95)

Said George Tyrell once: "To believe that this terrible machine world is really from God, in God and unto God, and that through it and in spite of its blind fatality all works for good – that is faith in long trousers." (Ibid, pg. 95)

Writes Eugenia Price, "The only direct statement of Jesus which is simple enough for me to comprehend when my heart is breaking or when I'm discouraged or scared is: 'Follow Me.' I cannot understand life because life is not understandable. But I can grasp 'Follow Me.'" (NO PAT ANSWERD; pg. 14)

But while we may never fully understand life's tragedies, we may receive power from Christ to rejoice in spite of them. The tears, which dim the physical vision, may be the cleansing agent to clarify the vision of the soul. Christ can many times be seen better through a tear!

The believer may rejoice even during sorrow, for God is able to use even our sorrows to accomplish His purposes. David declared that God "bottled up his tears." The tears of God's children are never wasted! God never allows or causes His children needless tears! *"All things work together for good to those who love the Lord."* (Romans 8:28)

An empty, bored American woman was told about Christ and the Spirit-filled life and she became a radiant person. An accident robbed her of her husband. Writing about a spiritually needy, friend, she said, "I do wish I could share all the joy in my heart with her. She deserves it, and I have enough for ten people!" (PRAYER AND LIFE'S HIGHEST; pg. 79)

Writes Jones, "The universe is not 'a vale of tears;' rather, it is 'a vale of character-making;' and character cannot be made except in the strain and stress and struggle. We cannot cry out and say, "Why hast thou made me thus?" for he hasn't 'made' us yet, he is only in the process. If that process seems without purpose, let us remember that if the cross reveals God, there must be a glorious purpose behind it all, for he is willing to pay the supreme price to bring it to pass. "I once saw some rug weaves of North India. They patiently sat week after week and month after month making one rug. As I stood and gazed at the rug, I felt the futility of sitting there so long, for the rug seemed to be full of blotches, blurs, and knots. However, I was looking at the wrong side of the rug. When I came around to the weaver's side, I saw the pattern that was unfolding, and how beautiful it was! It was worth the patience. We now see the wrong side of God's purposes, and they seem without pattern as he weaves through the ages.

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Nevertheless, one day we shall stand and see things as he sees them, and then we will gasp at the wonder of the plan that unfolds. Now we see the blotches, the blurs, and the knots, but we see the cross. That holds us steady. God means well and He means to make us well." (CHRIST AND HUMAN SUFFERING; pgs. 197-198)

CONCLUSION:

“Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide
In every change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Thro thorny ways leads to a joyful end.”

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CHAPTER 29
"TROUBLE, YET TRIUMPH!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 29

SCRIPTURE: *"For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." (II Corinthians 12:7-10)*

TEXT: *"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."*
(Romans 8:37))

INTRODUCTION:

"A Christian may be pressed, persecuted, and perplexed, but he need never be defeated. It is the paradox of the Christian life that while a Christian is engulfed in trouble, his spirit may be enraptured by triumph!

PROPOSITION:

Let us look at the problems and troubles that Christians may face and see how he gains triumph over these troubles.

- I. WE ARE SORE PRESSED AT EVERY POINT BUT NOT HEMMED IN
- II. WE ARE PERSECUTED BY MEN BUT NEVER ABANDONED BY GOD
- III. WE ARE AT OUR WIT'S END BUT NEVER AT OUR HOPE'S END

CONCLUSION:

Trouble, yet Triumph in Christ! That is the message of the Christian, born out of the life of experience.

CHAPTER 29

"TROUBLE, YET TRIUMPH!"

INTRODUCTION:

"A Christian may be pressed, persecuted, and perplexed, but he need never be defeated. It is the paradox of the Christian life that while a Christian is engulfed in trouble, his spirit may be enraptured, by triumph! Why is this! It is because a Christian is living in two worlds. A Christian is not an escapist. He is very conscious of the troubles in this life, but he is more aware of the glories of the heavenly realm. While his feet are firmly, planted on this earth, his head is in the heavens. A Christian whole-heartedly involves himself in the problems of this life and receives all he can from this life, but he is mainly living for his eternal home, "whose maker and builder is God." The spiritual perspective of the Christian keeps him from, being overwhelmed by the problems of this earth. It is not that the Christian doesn't face the problems realistically; rather it is that the Christian knows how to cope with his problems and knows how to transmute them into "bridges to glory".

PROPOSITION:

Let us look at the problems and troubles that Christians may face and see how he gains triumph over these troubles.

I. WE ARE SORE PRESSED AT EVERY POINT BUT NOT HEMMED IN!

Say's one man, "There are all kinds of pressure on us, but we are never in so tight a corner that there is no way out. It is the characteristic of the Christian life that there is always an element of spaciousness in it. However, narrow a man's circumstances may be he need never feel cabined, cribbed and confined." (Barclay's II Corinthians; pg. 221)

Our environment may cause us to be pressed but we need never to let our circumstances corral our spirits. We may always feel the freedom and spaciousness that the Christian life affords. Men may confine the body, but they need not corral the spirit. The spirit may reach into the heavenly heights of splendor, although the body may be in the squalor of a prison. Bunyan was such a man. He was imprisoned because his conscience compelled him to preach the Gospel, but although he was confined in a prison, his spirit reached into the spaciousness of heavenly thoughts and visions. The product of his free mind and spirit was Pilgrim's Progress, one of the greatest descriptions of the Christian life that has ever been written.

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One may not be pressed or pressured because of bodily imprisonment, and yet be pressured because of unusual demands. These pressures may make one feel like he is physically confined. A person taking care of an invalid may feel that she is unduly burdened and fraught with care. The attention that an invalid requires is demanding, but the one who cares for another under depressing circumstances and in a confined room, need not become depressed in spirit. The one who renders service to others, it the one who is realizing the noblest ideals of life and this very fact alone should lend joy and freedom to the humble servant. Said one great missionary teacher, "An ideal is not yours until it comes out of your finger-tips." How privileged is the one who can use his hands to render service to another. Such a person is not hemmed in but enjoys the freedom and spaciousness of God's communion.

The story is told of an old Scottish Highland woman "who had to leave the clean air, the blue waters, and the purple hills and live in the slum of a great city. She did all that she could with her surroundings and still she lived close to God, and one day she said, 'God will make it up to me and I will see the flowers again'." (Barclay's II Corinthians, pg. 225) In the depressing environment of a slum, her hope and trust in God did not allow her spirit to be corralled or hemmed in.

I have a very dear friend who means so much to me, and who has taught me the secret of living the spacious, free, and radiant life, despite her circumstances and trials. She is about eighty years old. For more than thirty years, she had a perfect attendance at Sunday School and Church. She always has words of kindness and cheer on her lips. Her smile is sweet and understanding. She writes warm-hearted and interesting letters. She had a weekly column in the local newspaper for some time. She financially supports herself by renting two or three rooms in the upstairs of her home. These are all outstanding accomplishments for anyone her age. However, one thing that makes her so outstanding is that she is almost totally deaf for years she has heard no sermon, although you can always count on her being at the Sunday morning and evening services. It seems at times that she is sore pressed at every point, but she has not developed any self-pity. Instead, she has a glow of joy on her face as she sings and testifies for her Lord. How easy it would be for her to despair as she sits week after week in a public service, not able to hear a word of the message. Instead of despairing, she rejoices. Why? Because her spirit is not hemmed in, she is enjoying the freedom and spaciousness of heavenly communion. She can't hear with her physical ears, but her spiritual ears are attuned to the music of heaven. Mrs. Blackburn is able to say with Paul, "We are sore pressed at every point, but not hemmed in."

II. WE ARE PERSECUTED BY MEN BUT NEVER ABANDONED BY GOD!

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Persecution is not easy to bear, whether it is in the form of verbal contempt, or in the form of physical injury. The Christian is not oblivious to feeling but keenly feels the arrows of contemptuous words, or the lashes of physical beatings. Although many have suffered unimaginable persecution, many have also testified that God was very near to them in His sustaining grace. The Christian rests assured in the promise that if “God is for us, who can be against us.” If ten thousand foes arise against the Christian, he is still in the majority if he is on God’s side.

The Christian is one who can stand, as it were, alone and yet be assured that he is not alone, for God does not abandon His own. God did not abandon Daniel when he was thrown into the lion’s den. God did not abandon the three Israelite children when they were thrown into the fiery furnace.

In the midst of trouble, Luther was able to testify. “A mighty fortress is our God. A bulwark never failing; our helper he amid the flood, of mortal ills prevailing”.

In a sore time of trouble when Joan of Arc’s friends abandoned her, she still enjoyed sweet fellowship with God. Said Joan of Arc, “It is better to be alone with God. His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love. In His strength, I will dare and dare and dare until I die.” Joan of Arc learned the lesson that although we are persecuted by man, we are never abandoned by God.

Rev. Wurmbrand who was imprisoned and tortured by the Communists for years because of his faith in Christ testifies of the comfort and closeness of God even during extreme torture. Says Rev. Wurmbrand, “In solitary confinement, we could not pray any more as before. We were as weak as skeletons. The Lord’s Prayer was much too long for us. We could not concentrate enough to say it. My only prayer repeated repeatedly, was ‘Jesus, I love Thee.’” Then one glorious day I felt a flame in my heart, which burned like the coronal streamers of the sun. The disciples on the way from Emmaus said that their hearts burned when Jesus spoke with them. So it was with me. I knew the love of the One who has given his life on the cross for us all. Such love cannot exclude the communists, however grave their sins...I was in the embraces of the heavenly Bridegroom. I prayed for those who tormented us and could love them with all my heart.” (Tortured for Christ, by Rev. Wurmbrand; pages 35, 45)

Many thousands, just like Rev. Wurmbrand are suffering for their faith. One such heroic sufferer was a young girl who was soon to be married. When the Communist secret police found out that she had secretly spread Gospels and taught children about Christ, they decided to arrest her. To make her arrest more dreadful, they decided to wait until the day of her wedding. When this young girl was dressed, in her wedding gown on the wedding day, ready to be

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married, the secret police pushed open the door and rushed in. What was her response to this cruel, abrupt intrusion? Let Rev. Wurmbrand recount the remainder of the story:

“When the bride saw the secret police, she held out her arms toward them to be handcuffed. They roughly put the manacles on her wrists. She looked toward her beloved, then kissed the chains and said, ‘I thank my heavenly Bridegroom for this the jewel He has presented to me on my marriage day. I thank Him that I am worthy to suffer for Him.’ She was dragged off with weeping Christians and a weeping bridegroom left behind. They knew what happens to young Christian girls in the hands of communist guards. After five years she, was released – a destroyed, broken woman, looking thirty years older. Her bridegroom had waited for her. She said it was the least she could do for her Christ. Such beautiful Christians are in the Underground Church.” (Tortured For Christ, pg. 22)

Luther speaks for all such heroic Christians in his hymn ‘A Mighty Fortress is Our God’.

“That word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through him who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may Kill;
God’s truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.”

III. WE ARE AT OUR WIT’S END BUT NEVER AT OUR HOPE’S END!

There are times in life when we do not know which path to take. Decisions are often hard to make, and doubts and fears assail. The more we try to understand, the more confused we become. The future is an unknown maze, which doesn’t seem to have any rhyme or reason to it. We are at our wit’s end; we don’t know which way to turn.

All of us have had such experiences. Allow me please to share one such experience that my wife and I had. Allow me please to share one such experience that my wife and I had. My wife needed a teaching job during the first year after we were married. She applied for a teaching position in art at about ten different surrounding schools. Weeks went by and no word of a job opportunity. What would we do? I had one year of college to complete, we would be just beginning our married life together, and, of course, we would

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need money. We had done everything we thought we could do. We were at our wit's end. What to do? Just wait, pray and trust. After waiting several weeks, the answer wonderfully came. One day my wife read a notice on a bulletin board, not of one job opening in the field of art, but two job openings! In a matter of a few days, she had a job. One school, which she had heard did not need any art teachers and therefore one, which she had not written to, was the very school, which needed two art teachers. The superintendent gladly hired her, and we were glad and thankful. She became a travelling art teacher and taught art in several different schools.

One man describes a Christian as "a man who, when he gets to the end of his rope, ties a knot and hangs on." (Jones' *Abundant Living*, pg. 282) One of the hardest things for us to do is to wait patiently for God's answer. The first Bible I remember receiving, as a gift, was given to me by my great aunt. In the opening cover of that Bible, she had written Psalm 62:5: *"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."*

As one man said, *"There are times when a Christian has to learn the hardest lesson of all, the very lesson which Jesus Himself had to learn in Gethsemane; he has to learn how to accept what he can't understand."* (Barclay's *II Corinthians*, pg. 222) There are disappointments, adversities, or sorrows that come to us, which cause us to question and wonder. God may hide from us the immediate answer and tell us simply to wait and trust. It is at such times that we need to listen carefully to the Psalmist's instructions: *"Why are you bowed down, O my soul; why so restless within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet thank Him for the help of His countenance."* (v. 42)

Habakkuk, in the Old Testament, a prophet of God, had to learn the lesson of waiting on God and living by faith. Habakkuk lived during the latter part of the 7th century B.C. He saw the Decline of the Assyrian Empire and witnessed the fall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, in 612 B.C. The Assyrian Empire was cruel and had oppressed many nations, Israel included. Israel rejoiced over the fall of Nineveh *as witnessed by the book Nahum). However, shortly after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonians gained power and became a threat to the Israel, as well as many other nations. Israel could not understand how that God could destroy one wicked, heathen kingdom (the Assyrians) and then let another wicked people gain world power and again subdue Israel (the cruel Babylonians)!

To Habakkuk this was a baffling question. How could God permit an evil nation to reign and to suppress the righteous? Habakkuk asked God the following question: *"Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil and to countenance wrong, why dost Thou look upon those unfaithful goes and dost keep silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?"* (1:13) Christians ask this same question today. "Why do the wicked prosper at the expense of the righteous?"

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God not only answered Habakkuk's question but he gives the same answer to us: *“Write the vision! However, the vision waits for its appointed time; it hastens toward the end’ it will not lie. If it lingers, wait for it; for it will certainly come; it will not lag...but the righteous shall live by his faith.”* (Habakkuk 2:2, 3, 5) God's answer, to the nagging questions of evil, is to wait patiently, pray persistently, and trust perpetually. When Habakkuk learned the lesson of trust, he rejoiced in God, although he could not immediately understand God's actions. Says Habakkuk, *“Although the fig tree may not blossom, not fruit be on the vines, the producer of the olive fail and the field yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He makes my feet like hinds' feet, He makes me tread upon my high places. To the chief musician, with stringed instruments.”* (Habakkuk 3:17-19) The question of unrelenting evil (Chapter 1) is answered by unflinching faith (Chapter 2), which leads to the joy of unquestioning reliance (Chapter 3). God answered Habakkuk's question of unrelenting evil – in His own time and way. About sixty years after the writing of Habakkuk, in 539 B.C., Cyrus the Persian destroyed the wicked Babylonian Empire with the capture of Babylon. God's answer will come if we will be patient. Therefore, hope in God, even when you come to your wit's end.

A storm is raging and a small child, looking out of a window at the storm, is crying in fear of the tempest. Which is most helpful to the child? For the father to tell the child not to fear because the storm will soon be over, or for the father to take the child into his arms, love, and comfort the child. The child may not understand how the tempest will soon be over, but the child will understand the actions of love and comfort in the father's arms. When a Christian is, baffled by the storms of life, the best thing to do is to rest in his Father's care. The life of faith is the life of hope and rest. Paul knew Christ and therefore could say, *“We are at our wit's end but never at our hope's end.”* Someone said, *“There are no hopeless situations, only people who have grown hopeless because of them.”*

CONCLUSION:

Paul says, *“We are sore pressed at every point but not hemmed in.”* The spirit of the Christian triumphs over all pressing circumstances. The body may be confined, but the spirit cannot be corralled. The spirit can constantly enjoy the spaciousness and freedom of the heavenly communion.

Paul next says, *“We are persecuted by men but never abandoned by God.”* *God is found in the dark dungeon as well as the elaborate cathedral. He is found with the lone sufferer as well as with the thronging crowd. His glory is reflected in the face of the shriveled and hungry-ridden, as well as the strong and stalwart. God does not abandon the persecuted minority. Christ promised his followers: “I am with you even unto the end of the world.” “If God be for us, who can be against us.”*

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Paul then says, *"We are at our wit's end, but never at our hope's end."* Hope in God is not in vain, for God is in control of the circumstances. Although the present bids us to be despondent and the future looks unpromising, (hope in God gives rest for the present, and inspiration for the future. Hope in God gives us confidence in God that the wrong will be punished and the right will be rewarded. Hope in God bids us to wait patiently and to pray persistently. Hope in God bids us to "cast our care upon him, for he cares for us." Trouble, yet Triumph in Christ! That is the message of the Christian, born out of the life of experience.

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CHAPTER 30
"CHRISTIANITY – UNREASONABLE OR
BEYOND REASON!"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 30

TEXT: *“But without faith it is impossible to please him.”* (Hebrews 11:6a)

INTRODUCTION:

Christianity claims at the same time to be both a religion with a solid rational basis and a religion that requires the exercise of a strong faith. Thus, Christianity is not unreasonable. Christianity goes beyond reason.

PROPOSITION:

The faith of Christianity is not, based on an illusion, but, is based on fact. However, while Christianity is not unreasonable, Christianity does go far beyond reason.

- I. CHRISTIANITY IS NOT UNREASONABLE
- II. CHRISTIANITY GOES BEYOND REASON
 - A. GOD’S ACTIONS DEMAND THAT MAN GO BEYOND THE REALM OF REASON.
 1. God’s visitation of the planet earth goes beyond the realm of reason.
 2. God’s initiating action to redeem humanity goes beyond the realm of human understanding.
 3. Christ’s resurrection from the dead goes beyond the scope of human understanding.
- III. BECOMING A CHRISTIAN AND LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE DEMANDS THAT MAN GO BEYOND THE REALM OF REASON

CONCLUSION:

Only as one loses himself in the immeasurable expanse of faith, can he really understand the essence of Christianity.

CHAPTER 30

"CHRISTIANITY - UNREASONABLE OR BEYOND REASON!"

INTRODUCTION:

Christianity claims uniqueness among all the religions of the world. Christianity claims at the same time to be both a religion with a solid rational basis and a religion that requires the exercise of a strong faith. Thus, Christianity is not unreasonable. Christianity goes beyond reason. The validating tests of reason can be applied to Christianity without destroying Christianity. However, to properly understand Christianity, one must realize that this religion goes beyond the upper limits of reason, into the unlimited realm of faith.

The faith of Christianity is not built on an illusion, but rather on the concrete foundation of historical fact. One does not have to sacrifice intellectual integrity to be a Christian. However, Christianity is bigger than the human intellect. Christianity calls for the total commitment of the total man. Therefore, while Christianity is intellectually coherent, it goes far beyond the confines of human understanding.

The faith of Christianity is a reasonable faith. That is, the faith of Christianity is based on objective historical fact. This realization becomes increasingly important during a time when numerous cults are bidding for the allegiance of men, and making their bid on the basis of, so-called 'faith'. The faith of which the cultists speak is a radically different faith than the faith of Christianity. One such cultist approached me and claimed that his Church and his holy book and his religious leaders were of God and that I must accept these assertions, on the basis, of 'faith'. When I investigated his claims, which he sought to have me accept by 'faith', I realized the fallacy of these claims. His Holy Book (Book of Mormon) is historically inaccurate and archeologically unfounded. His doctrines are theologically unsound and unbiblical. His religious founder (Joseph Smith) was morally corrupt and his claim to holy inspiration is invalidated. Even after I pointed out some of these facts to this cultist, he insisted that if I would pray and fast long enough, and seek for the truth ore earnestly that I would eventually be led to the 'light' of his religion, Church, and way of thinking. Obviously, his 'faith' was an unfounded, illusionary, blind faith. To accept his false system of religion on the so-called basis of faith would be about like accepting the assertion that the moon is a square based on 'faith'. However, much 'faith' I exercise in such an assertion, the moon will continue to be a sphere.

PROPOSITION:

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

The faith of Christianity is not based on an illusion. It is based on fact. However, while Christianity is not unreasonable, Christianity does go far beyond reason.

I. CHRISTIANITY IS NOT UNREASONABLE

What is unique about Christianity? Christianity has a “historical ‘once-for-all-ness’ which distinguishes it from those religions and philosophical systems which are not specially related to any particular time.” (The New Testament Document; F.F. Bruce; pg. 8) Other religions emerge out of the misty myths of the unknown past. Christianity is a historical religion, which can be tested for authenticity.

Consider the relevant words of J. B. Phillips who spent years in critical study of the New Testament documents: “Suppose that you have spent many hundred hours in putting these four widely differing accounts of some of the sayings and doings of the man Jesus into today’s English. Do you find yourself so confused that you conclude that there was no such person at all? I take leave to doubt it. In my experience, the people who have never troubled seriously to study the four Gospels are loudest in their protests that there was no such person. I felt, and feel, without any shadow of doubt that close contact with the text of the Gospels builds up in the heart and mind a character of awe-inspiring stature and quality. I have reach, in Greek and Latin scores of myths, but I did not find the slightest flavour of myth here. There is no hysteria, no careful working for effect, and no attempt at collusion. These are not embroidered tales: the material is out to the bone...There is an almost childlike candor and simplicity, and the total effect is tremendous. No man could ever have invented such a character as Jesus. No man could have set down such artless and vulnerable accounts as these unless some real Event lay behind them.” (Ring of Truth; pg. 77)

Consider the New Testament claim of the Resurrection. Said Sir Edward Clarke about the Resurrection; “As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the (resurrection of Jesus Christ. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling...The Gospel evidence for the resurrection...I accept unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate.” (New Life In Christ; Nav. Bk. No.1) The Resurrection, upon which the whole of the Christian religion rests, is based on solid historical fact.

For one thing, witnesses of the very event reported witnesses of the very event reported the resurrection story. A compilation of first-hand evidences was made not later than A.D. 50 and probably as early as A.D.35. (Sloan’s, He Is Risen; pg. 90) If the circulated reports were mere myth, the reports could not have lasted long. A report which is based on myth soon comes to be known for what it is – fantasy and myth. Not even the enemies of Christ could

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refute the circulated reports regarding the resurrection. They sought to destroy those who proclaimed the fact of the resurrection, but they could not deny the reality of the resurrection. They sought to destroy, but they could not deny.

The Pseudo Gospels – that is, those imaginary treatments of the life of Jesus – are fantastically unreal and certainly do not ring with an authentic, historical note. The pseudo gospels describe Jesus as healing His brother James from the poison of a scorpion, as lengthening a piece of wood for Joseph so that it would fit after Joseph had cut it too short, et. (Sloan; pg. 113) “But the Canonical Gospels of our familiar New Testament are for some reason totally free from all such extravagances. In these amazing writings, there is not one vindictive miracle, not one useless display of supernatural power. The Canonical Gospels manifest reserve, restraint, and sobriety. Evidently, some tremendous force had kept Christian imagination in check...What was this force? I answer; it was an awe-inspiring sense of the majesty of that history with which they had come in contact, and with which they had been entrusted. They were men charged with the consummate self-manifestation of the living God, and they dared not change it. They were men who had lived with Jesus through three years, and then at the last had experienced both His cross and His resurrection. Men cannot experience such things without being lasting affected by them.” (Sloan; 113, 116)

When one considers the theories of men that are advanced to explain away the Resurrection, one finds it much harder to believe these fantastic theories than to believe the simple New Testament account of the Resurrection. Beyond doubt, the Resurrection is a historical fact.

Further, to establish the fact that Christianity is; not unreasonable, one can say that the Scriptures are historically and archeologically sound. They pass the critical scrutiny of man’s judgment and investigation. For instance, the time elapse between the New Testament events and the writing down of those events is, historically speaking, short. “For in assessing the trustworthiness of ancient historical writings, one of the most important questions is: How soon after the events took place were they recorded?” (The New Testament Documents; F. F. Bruce; p g. 14) What evidence is there that the New Testament claim for Jesus’ miracles is not simply a myth? Let us ask that question of the early non-Christian writers and even early opponents of Christianity. “If we do proceed to ask, “What the independent non-Christian evidence for the Gospel miracles is?” We shall find that early non-Christian writers, who do refer to Jesus at any length do not dispute that He performed miracles...The early apostles referred to His miracles as facts which their audiences were as well acquainted with as they themselves were; similarly the early apologists refer to them as events beyond dispute by their opponents of Christianity.” (Ibid; 68)

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“Luke sets his story in the context of imperial history. A writer who thus relates his story to the wider context of world history is courting trouble if he is not careful; he affords his critical readers so many opportunities for testing his accuracy. Luke takes this risk and stands the test admirably.” (New Testament Documents; Bruce; pg. 82)

One may safely conclude that Christianity is not unreasonable, but rather based on the concrete and undisputable facts of history. However, while acknowledging this, one must realize that Christianity goes beyond the compass of mere reason. Without faith, it is impossible to be a Christian or to please God. (Hebrews 11:6a)

II. CHRISTIANITY GOES BEYOND REASON

A. GOD’S ACTIONS DEMAND THAT MAN GO BEYOND THE REALM OF REASON.

1. God’s visitation of the planet earth goes beyond the realm of reason.

When one realizes that the earth, is one out of millions of planets in the Milky Way Galaxy, and that the Milky Way Galaxy, is one of the smaller galaxies out of trillions of galaxies in the universe, one is made to ask the question, *“What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?”* (Psalm 8:4) It is hard to fathom on the basis of reason that our planet earth has actually been visited by the God of the Universe. The Incarnation – God becoming a man – Is Christianity’s unique claim and is rationally validated. However, the Incarnation taxes the human understand.

The claim of Jesus to be the Divine Son in human flesh is rationally backed based on Christ’s incomparable and consistent character and on the basis of Christ’s literal Resurrection, showing conclusive proof of His divinity, and His claim to be from God. Thus, Christ’s claim of deity is supportable, but such a reality goes far beyond the upper limits of human understanding. The Incarnation must be accepted ultimately by faith, not by mere reason.

2. God’s initiating action to redeem humanity goes beyond the realm of human understanding.

God’s Initiating action to redeem humanity goes beyond the realm of human understanding. More than once when leading a long-time sinner to a point of repentance, the sinner is heard to

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say something like this: “But how could God love a wicked bum like me?” That is the wonder of God’s love, and it cannot be rationally explained. “The one unique new fact that Christianity brought into this world is the fact that God is the seeker of men. No other religion has the vision of a seeking God...Montefiore, the great Jewish scholar, said that the one thing which no Jewish prophet and no Jewish Rabbi ever conceived of is the ‘conception of God actually going out in quest of sinful men, who were not seeking Him, but who were turned away from Him’. It would be great enough to think of a God who accepted men when they came back; it was beyond belief to think of a God who actually went out and searched.” (Barclay’s Revelation; pg. 186)

3. Christ’s resurrection from the dead goes beyond the scope of human understanding.

Christ’s resurrection from the dead goes beyond the scope of human understanding. The evidence that Christ actually rose from the dead is overwhelming and very convincing. However, the very idea that a dead man could suddenly come back to life seems impossible. Even when one becomes; intellectually persuaded that the evidence for the resurrection is sufficient for validation, still one has to accept the fact of the resurrection by faith.

God’s actions transcend human understanding; therefore, man must accept them by faith.

III. BECOMING A CHRISTIAN AND LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE DEMANDS THAT MAN GO BEYOND THE REALM OF REASON

As we have pointed out in the first part of this message, there must be a solid, rational, historical basis for an honest faith. However, one is not to conclude from this that faith is merely an outgrowth or a product of an intellectual understanding of the foundations of Christianity. Faith in God may be inspired by knowledge of such fundamental facts, but faith is not essentially a Product of knowledge, but rather the Door to knowledge. In addition, the knowledge of which Faith is the Door is the experiential and true knowledge of the heart (not the head alone), that best defines what Christianity is all about. Christ made it clear that to be a follower of His, and to possess true spiritual knowledge, one must be willing to commit himself to Jesus Christ. *“If any man will to do his will (God’s will), he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself.”* (John 7:17)

The requirement of spiritual surrender before intellectual illumination was no more arbitrary than the attitude of any good physician. Suppose a person was

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to approach a doctor in the eclectic spirit with which Nicodemus or the Sadducees came to question Jesus. The caller speaks somewhat as follows: 'Doctor, I realize there is something wrong with my condition, and I am consulting various physicians around the city in the hope that out of their combined diagnoses and prescriptions I can find the cure for my ailment.' Would a respectable medical man take a patient on such a basis? Decidedly not. He would tell his caller to go to some other doctor's office - or perhaps some place less comfortable. A good physician requires his patient to submit himself to his regimen, and give it a wholehearted, undivided trial. A competent doctor does not try to explain his cure to the 'wise' spectator; he demonstrates it to the willing patient." (The Paradoxes of Jesus; pg. 40; Sockman) "Initiation into the spirit of his company must precede interpretation of the secrets of his teaching." (Ibid; 40) In other words, "Believing is seeing."

One cannot become a Christian on the basis of mere reason, and neither can one live the Christian life on the basis of mere reason. "The just shall live by faith." The Christian walks by faith, not by sight. *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."* (Hebrews 11:8)

"There are times when a Christian has to learn the hardest lesson of all, the very lesson which Jesus Himself had to learn in Gethsemane; he has to learn how to accept what he cannot understand. There are times when things happen that he cannot understand, but he can still say, 'God, Thou art love; I build my faith on that.'" (Barclay's Corinthians, pgs. 222, 223) The Christian life is such that it cannot always be figured out or understood by the means of human reason. To attempt to understand God's will on the basis of mere human reason is like an ant trying to understand the actions of a human being. God's way are higher than man's ways, as high as the heavens are above the earth. Faith - faith in God - is the pathway that brings one out of the darkest night on earth, eventually into the brightest light of heaven's day.

CONCLUSION:

In this message, we have answered two main questions: (1) Is Christianity unreasonable? No, for Christianity never makes a man surrender his intellectual integrity. (2) Is Christianity beyond Reason? Yes, for God's ways and purposes, while including human reason, go far beyond the confines of human understanding. Only as one loses himself in the immeasurable expanse of faith, can he really understand the essence of Christianity. *"For without faith it is impossible to please Him."* (Hebrews 11:6a)

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CHAPTER 31

"GOD – TRANSCENDENT AND IMMANENT!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 31

SCRIPTURE: "For this is what the high and lofty One says—
he who lives forever, whose name is holy:
"I live in a high and holy place,
but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly
and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

INTRODUCTION:

God is pictured, as the High, Lofty, and Majestic One. God is also personal and Intimate God.

PROPOSITION:

Let us look briefly at these two pictures of God – God the Transcendent One and God the Immanent One.

- I. GOD THE TRANSCENDENT
- II. GOD THE IMMANENT

CONCLUSION:

God's transcendence will keep us from becoming too intimate or 'buddy' with God. God's immanence will guarantee faith and courage and give comfort in the face of life's conflicts.

CHAPTER 31

"CHRISTIANITY - UNREASONABLE OR BEYOND REASON!"

INTRODUCTION:

Throughout the Holy Scriptures, there are two pictures of God. God is pictured; as the High and Lofty and Majestic One. God is also Personal and Intimate God. Both are valid pictures of God and each picture is required to balance the other. To think of God in His transcendence is to "be filled with awe, reverence, and fear." To think of God in His immanence is to, be filled with courage, joy, and purpose.

PROPOSITION:

Let us look briefly at these two pictures of God - God the Transcendent One and God the Immanent One.

I. GOD THE TRANSCENDENT

'Transcendence' means that which surpasses physical reality; that which is beyond man's comprehension. It is a common fact, that there are many things in the physical realm, that are, beyond man's understanding. We can't fully comprehend the vastness of the universe. We can't fully understand the human mind or soul. We can't fully comprehend the happenings around us. If we can't understand these things, it is sure that we cannot fully comprehend God. Simply because we can't understand God, does not make God any less real. Because an ant cannot understand Einstein's Law of Relativity (and most men cannot), does that fact make the Law any less a reality? God is in a realm beyond man's capacity to understand. "God is Creator and we are but the created. Shall the created one complain if he does not understand all the mind of the Creator?" (Stand Up In Praise to God; Rees; pg. 19)

Said God through His prophet, *"For my thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:8, 9)

God is different than man, so different that it is difficult to compare man with God. God is the Creator and as such was before all time; while man, is confined by the limitations of time. *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou are God."* (Psalm 90:2) God is not confined by time.

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"Thou art a sea without a shore
A sun without a sphere;
Thy time is now and evermore,
Thy place is everywhere."

(Christian Doctrine; Whale; pg. 58)

"God is the High and Lofty One." (Isaiah 57:15) Repeatedly, the Psalmist brings out this truth. *"The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty."* (Psalm 29:4) *"The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself."* (Psalm 93:1)

God is above all things. He is a debtor to no man. All things belong to Him. *"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all."* (I Chronicles 29:11)

God is all-powerful. *"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?,,, Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing."* (Isaiah 40:12, 15)

God's name is Holy:

*"For this is what the high and lofty One says—
He who lives forever, whose name is holy:
"I live in a high and holy place,
but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly
and to revive the heart of the contrite."* (Isaiah 57:15)

Holiness as applied to God means two things: (1) Separation, and (2) Brightness.

God, through His prophet, asks the rhetorical question: *"To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One."* (Isaiah 40:25) The Holy One is the One who is separate from man. None can be likened unto God or be His equal. *"Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"* Exodus 15:11)

Man's encounter with the High and Holy One naturally creates reverential fear. After Jacob had a dream in which he saw angels ascending and descending on a ladder, he *"awakened out of his sleep and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this*

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place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Genesis 28:16, 17)

Moses' experience of encountering God at the burning bush resulted in a similar response in Moses. *“And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.; and when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where on thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.” (Exodus 3:2-6)*

When Isaiah encountered God's holiness, in a vision he became sensitive to his uncleanness in contrast to God's purity. *“Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips...for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”*

When John the Beloved saw God in a vision on the island of Patmos, he declared to God, *“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.” (Revelations 15:4)* Notice the action verbs that describe man's response to God's holiness: Fear, Glorify, Come, Worship.

Considering the holiness of God, “no real believer can be what Dr. Farmer has stigmatized as ‘pally with the Deity.’ God is: infinite, eternal, transcendent, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen or can see.” (Christian Doctrine; pgs. 57, 58)

A Christian is one who believes in God's transcendence, and therefore a Christian refutes Pantheism. Pantheism “either resolves the whole universe into God or equates God with the universe...The result is that God is depersonalized and lost.” (Ibid; pgs. 32, 33) The Christian believes that God is objectively real and distinct from the universe. The created presupposes the Creator who is over and above the creation.

II. GOD THE IMMANENT

While the Christian acknowledges God's holiness, loftiness, and majesty, the Christian's knowledge of God, is found in other ways than through the transcendent qualities of God. “The Hebraic-Christian knowledge of God is not knowledge of God in his transcendent ‘otherness’ (which is plainly impossible to man's finite spirit), but in his active nearness, as it is experienced in nature and history and in the inmost shrine of the individual

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soul. The most high God, though transcending his and abiding in his holy heaven, is nevertheless nigh unto men." (Ibid: 113)

The Deist declares that God is totally detached and isolated "from his universe and knows nothing about him except that he is the First Cause of all that is. The deist conceives of creation as a past act, the universe being like a wound-up clock working unaided by God, who exists in transcendent loneliness and inaccessibility." (Ibid; pg. 32)

The Christian acknowledges God's transcendence but the Christian never entertain an idea of God as cold, disinterested, or detached from human activity. The Christian acknowledges the difficulty of comprehending how God can be personally interested in every man's problem, and how God can simultaneously hear every man's prayers. However, it is because the Christian does not mold God into some type of superhuman man, but instead acknowledges God as supra-human (beyond human categories), that the Christian is able to accept the concept of God's total and personal involvement in the human situation.

It is true that the lofty One dwells *"in the high and holy place."* (Isaiah 57:15) However, it is also true that the lofty One *dwells "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."* (Isaiah 57:15) God is pleased to dwell with men. God is intimately involved in his world; categorically speaking and individually speaking.

God is everywhere present in His world. *"Wither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whiter shall I flee from thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost, parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."* (Psalms 139:7-10) "Tell me where is God", said an atheist to a child. "I will", said the child, "if you will tell me where he is not." (Binney's Theological Compend; pg. 81)

God is dependent upon no man. He is self-contained in His knowledge. *"Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge and shewed to him the way of understanding?"* (Isaiah 40:13, 14)

Far from God being detached and disinterested in man, God is always taking the initiative in seeking man. There is a story of a woman who was trying to find God. "She had a certain dream which she dreamed more than once, namely, that she was standing in front of a thick, plate glass window. As she looked at it, she seemed to see God on the other side. She hammered on the window, trying to attract His attention, but without success. She grew more and more desperate, and began to call Him and found herself shrieking at the

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top of her voice. And then a quiet, calm voice at her side said: 'Why are you making so much noise? There is nothing between us.' Perhaps that illustrates our difficulty, does it not? We have been thinking all along that God was somewhere far away, unapproachable...some place that was difficult of access...and we have been groping around for a long time, and all the while He is standing beside us." (Mr. Jones, Meet the Master; Marshall; pg. 131)

The God who is the Lofty One is also the God who is the Immanent One - the One who is pleased to dwell with *"the man that is contrite and humble."* (Isaiah 57:15) The Majestic God is the Merciful God - the God who *"revives the spirit of the humble."* (Isaiah 57:15) The Majestic God is the Merciful God the God who *"revives the spirit of the humble"*. (Isaiah 57:15b) God gives strength to the weak. *"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."* (Isaiah 40:29-31)

The greatest of all revelations is the revelation that God is personally concerned in man, and that God wants to be a 'personal friend' of man. God looks at humanity not only corporately but also individually. "A community canvass was being made. At a certain door, the questioner asked the woman who answered his knock what children she had. She began, 'Well, there's Willie, and Horace'. But the canvasser interrupted, 'Never mind names, I just want numbers.' Then she grew impatient and a bit indignant. 'They haven't got numbers', she protested. 'Every one of them's got a name.' Quite so! They were her children. She was their mother. They had personalities that spoke with all the eloquence of their individual characteristics. She knew them not by number but by name. So God looks upon His human creatures. Why, according to Isaiah He calls even the stars by names." (Stand Up In Praise to God; pgs. 23, 24)

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:26)

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Mathew 10:29-31)

God knows all things that are going on in His world. *"For his eyes are upon the ways of man and he seeth all his goings."* (Job 34:21) Jesus said that God took note of every sparrow that fell to the ground and that God has perfect count of the number of hairs on a man's head. God knows the "John Doe" on the street

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corner, with all his problems and frustrations. God has an infinite concern for him.

CONCLUSION:

A healthy concept of God takes into account, both God's transcendence and God's immanence. God's transcendence will keep us from becoming too intimate or 'buddy' with God. God's immanence will guarantee faith and courage and give comfort in the face of life's conflicts. True worship of God will always combine these two aspects of God - transcendence and immanence. The following incident illustrates this healthy combination, the combination of God's Majesty and God's Mercy. "Joseph Twitchell tells how he went to visit Horace Bushnell when Bushnell was an old man. At night, Bushnell took him out for a walk on the hillside. As they walked in the dark, suddenly Bushnell said, 'Let us kneel and pray', and so he prayed. Twitchell, telling of it afterwards, said, 'I was afraid to stretch out my hand in the darkness in case I should touch God. (Barclay's Corinthians, pg. 148) Here there was both the intimate nearness of God as well as the awesome transcendence of God.

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CHAPTER 32

"THE DUTY OF MAN – 'FEAR GOD!'"

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 32

SCRIPTURE: *“Now all has been heard;
here is the CONCLUSION: of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.”
“For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14)*

TEXT: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Proverbs 9:10)*

INTRODUCTION:

It is true that God is a God of love, but as mercy is one manifestation of God's love towards those who respond in repentance to God, so it is also true that judgment is another manifestation of God's love towards those who spurn God's mercy !

PROPOSITION:

TO FEAR THE Lord is the duty of man, and the beginning of all true wisdom.

- I. 'FEAR God' - IN SPITE OF:
 - A. LIFE'S INJUSTICES, INEQUITIES, AND MYSTERIES
 - B. GOD'S INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

- II. 'FEAR God' - BECAUSE OF:
 - A. MAN'S MORAL RESPONSIBILITY
 - B. SIN'S MORAL CONSEQUENCES (12:1)
 - C. GOD'S UNFAILING GOODNESS (2:24-25; 3:13; 5:19-20; 8:15; 9:7)
 - D. MAN'S SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES (3:11)
 - E. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY (3:14; 7:14; 9:11)
 - F. GOD'S PUNISHMENT (5:1-7)
 - G. MAN'S ULTIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY (3:17; 11:9; 12:14)

CONCLUSION:

Fear (venerate, worship, respect, adore, serve) the Lord, and begin to be a wise person!

CHAPTER 32

"THE DUTY OF MAN - 'FEAR GOD!'"

INTRODUCTION:

If you had to choose only three words to describe God, what would they be? The three words I would choose to describe God would be these three: 'GOD IS LOVE!' No greater description of God can be given.

However, in saying this, we must describe what we mean by 'love'. Some say things like this about God: "God is a God of love, therefore he understands my human weaknesses and sins and he will overlook them. After all, it is his business to forgive!"

Alternatively, "God is a God of love; therefore He will never send anyone to hell!"

It is true that God is a God of love, but as mercy is one manifestation of God's love towards those who respond in repentance to God, so it is also true that judgment is another manifestation of God's love towards those who spurn God's mercy! To reject God's mercy is to reap God's judgment, and both mercy and judgment are manifestations of God's Holy Love!

Love is not mere sentimentality! There are those who wrongly see God as a 'celestial Santa Claus', one who indiscriminately showers out gifts on all his earthly children, regardless of whether they are 'naughty or nice.' Such people know nothing of the 'fear of the Lord'.

When I repented of my sins, I was motivated not only by God's love which invited me to go to heaven, but also my God's wrath which would keep me out of heaven if I failed to repent of my sins! Love may be - and, indeed, is - the chief motivation for repentance (the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance). However, the strong secondary motivation for coming to Christ is the 'fear of the Lord' - not just the terrorizing fears of hell but the reverential respect for God who said, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The 'fear of the Lord' is not mainly referring to the terrorizing fear which results in moral paralysis; rather, the 'fear of the Lord' refers to that 'fear' which is better described as 'profound veneration, respect, worship, adoration.'

The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us that the whole duty of man is to 'fear God and keep His commandment'. (Chapters 12 and 13)

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“We are to ‘fear the Lord’; In Spite of, and Because of - certain things.”

PROPOSITION:

To fear the Lord is the duty of man, and the beginning of all true wisdom.

I. ‘FEAR God’ – IN SPITE OF:

A. LIFE’S INJUSTICES, INEQUITIES, AND MYSTERIES

1. Life’s Injustices

- a. Evil seems to triumph (3: 16; 4: 1-3)
- b. One sinner destroys much good (9: 18). A few years ago, one revolutionary drove a truckload of explosives into a hotel in Beirut and destroyed the hotel and the lives of over 200 Americans. Tylenol poisoning caused the death of several innocent persons and cost the company millions of dollars in lost sales, etc; Hitler destroyed 6 million Jews. It is said that if Joseph Stalin, a leader of the Communist Revolution, had done nothing else all his life but to write the names of his innocent victims, his life would not have been long enough to finish the job!
- c. Righteousness unrewarded and Evil unpunished (7:15; 8:14). No wonder George Tyrell once set it down boldly: “To believe that this terrible machine world is really from God, in God, and unto God, and that through it and in spite of its blind fatality all works for good – that is faith in long trousers.” (quoted in ‘Prayer and Life’s Highest; Rees; pg. 95)
- d. *“...eventually the righteous man will be vindicated and the evil man will be punished.”* (8: 12-13)

2. Life’s Inequities

- a. Good men not give opportunity by God to enjoy God-given gifts (6:1-2) (implied here may be a situation in which a good man dies prematurely, leaving his good possessions to another to enjoy)
- b. Fools elevated to power while worthy are humiliated. (10:5-7)
- c. Life’s mysteries. Life’s unanswered questions , which persist, likened unto shadows in contrasts to realities. (6:12)

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B. GOD'S INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

God's physical and spiritual works cannot be fathomed. (3:11, 8:16, 17; 11:5)

Note other cross references:

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who was known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?'" (Romans 11:33, 34)

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declareds the Lord. (Isaiah 55:9, 8)

"How great are your works, O Lord, how profound your thoughts!" (Psalms 92: 5)

"Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens - what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave - what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea." (Job 11: 7-9)

"How great is God - beyond our understanding! The number of his years is past finding out." (Job 36: 26)

"Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom." (Psalm 145:3)

1. Good men not give opportunity by God to enjoy God-given gifts. (6: 1-2)
2. Fools elevated to power while worthy are humiliated. (10: 5-7)

II. 'FEAR God' - BECAUSE OF:

A. MAN'S MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Wisdom is available to all and makes its appeal to all, but each must heed wisdom's call - and follow wisdom's ways." (Proverbs 1: 20-33)

"Time and energy investment Necessary." (Jeremiah 29: 13)

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God has given responsibility to humanity to search out and to explore wisdom. (1: 13) This responsibility may feel at times, like a 'heavy burden'. Diligence in seeking God's wisdom involves wholehearted concentration, devotion to truth, and honesty. The truth of God objectively has been revealed to humanity, but the truth subjectively enjoyed involves the teachable spirit and disciplined search for wisdom. There is no substitute for patient persistence. We ought to fear God, for God has laid upon each human being the responsibility to search out and to find the truth, and those who fail to apply themselves to that task of searching for wisdom, will be held responsible before God someday.

B. SIN'S MORAL CONSEQUENCES (12:1)

Why fear or revere the Living God? Because, if you don't, life will come "Apart at the seams!" Your days without God will become so unbearable that you will eventually declare, "I find no pleasure in them." There is "pleasure in sin for a season" - but only "for a season", for sin's pleasures turn soon into sin's miseries, like a green leaf turns into a brown and shriveled up leaf! To live against God is to live against yourself, for you were made by God and for God. To go against the grain of God's will and way is to go against the grain of reality, and you can't go against the grain of reality without going against the grain of your own being! To refuse to serve God is to deny yourself joy and pleasure, for there is no lasting or real pleasure except in the will and the plan of God. To remember your Creator is to respect yourself, for it is in the remembrance of your Creator that you find realization of your own personhood. Find the Saviour, you find your own true self. Everyone in this life gets negative consequences: either for wrong moral choices, or positive results for right moral choices!

Why fear, reverence, and obey the living God? Because we are living in a moral universe that favors those, who remember the Creator of the Universe and that resists those who reject the Creator of the Universe! And that resists those who reject the Creator of the Universe! *"God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble."* To reject the Saviour is to 'cut your own throat'! The way of the transgressor is hard - 'Hard' because no one was created to live without fellowship with the Creator. It is like a fish trying to live without water, like a stomach trying to exist without food, like a pair of lungs trying to function without oxygen"

I had an acquaintance with a young man who was raised in a godly home, but he had drifted far away from God because of wrong choices and rebellion against his godly upbringing. His father was a minister who grieved the fact that his son was not a believer in Christ. I tried to

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be friendly to this young adult, and even tried to talk some about God. On the occasion I talked to him about Spiritual matters, he said something to me that was so revealing about the futility of running from God and Spiritual values. This is his revealing (honest) statement to me: "I was made to be a Christian. I am tired of trying to live a life of deception!" (Statement by Roger Bonney) What he said is so true: Each person is made by God, and for God, and therefore life lived away from God leads to weariness and futility - "Chasing after the wind" as the writer of Ecclesiastes says.

C. GOD'S UNFAILING GOODNESS (2:24-25; 3:13; 5:19-20; 8:15; 9:7)

Why fear and revere the living God? Not only because of the negative consequences of sin which you want to avoid, but also because of the positive results you want to enjoy because you are serving the Lord!

Fear the Lord, not only to avoid the misery which sin brings into life, but also to enjoy the pleasures which serving God brings to life. Repeatedly, the writer notes that God is a God of grace and good gifts, that He is a God who gives meaning and satisfaction to man amidst life's toils.

The God-fearing man is a man of gratitude who recognizes that God is the 'giver of all good and perfect gifts,' that man is the undeserving recipient of so many gifts - food, drink, wisdom, knowledge, happiness, wealth, contentment in labor, possessions, love of family. Why fear and reverence the Lord? Because of God's goodness! In light of God's shower of blessings upon undeserving humanity, anything less than gratitude and love in man's response constitutes a gross sin!

D. MAN'S SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES (3:11)

Why fear the living God? Because *"He has set eternity in the hearts of men."* Man is built for eternity! There is within every man a 'God-shaped vacuum' which seeks to be filled with God alone! Man cannot live by bread alone, but must live by the eternal Word of the eternal God. Man is restless until he finds his rest in God. Man is overbuilt for time - he is built for eternity.

"And here at last we find
'A strict diagnosis of our malady,
Which is, in short, that man is heaven-starved -
Men are born thirsting for infinity."

That thirst for infinity is evidence that God *"has set eternity in the hearts of men."* (Ecclesiastes 3:11) Inherent in every man is a basic

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desire to live – and to live happily and permanently. 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.”

Notes William Sangster, famed Methodist preacher in England, “Earth does not satisfy us. I cannot help but feel that that is an impressive fact. I warn you against supposing that, if only you had more of this or that, you would be completely satisfied. It is an illusion. Earth cannot satisfy you. William Watson – in his poem ‘World-Strangeness’ – asked:

“In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease?”

Never! You weren’t meant to.” (Sangster’s Daily Readings; pg. 104)

The writer of Ecclesiastes was not satisfied with Earth’s Treasures. *“I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.” But that also proved to be meaningless. “Laughter,” I said, “is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?” I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives. I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man’s heart.”* (2:1-8)

Don’t be disillusioned into thinking that earth’s treasures can satisfy you. If man is basically a spiritual being, created with capacities which call for a spiritual fulfillment, it is easy to see that only those who serve the One who created those spiritual capacities can be happy and contented. The divinely-created capacities and aspirations call for a fulfillment, which God alone can give. God has *“set eternity in the hearts of men”*. (3:11) Nothing can fill the God-shaped vacuum but God Himself. The Eternal One can only fill eternal capacities. God alone can satisfy man’s deepest longings – spiritual longings!

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E. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY (3:14; 7:14; 9:11)

Why fear or revere the living God? Because God is Sovereign! By this term, we mean that God is in complete control of His world, of history with its events, and of human beings with their experiences. It is true that God has created human beings with freedom to choose and that humans can choose wrongly, that is, make choices that are against the will of God. Pharaoh, in the Old Testament, hardened his heart against God by resisting God in not allowing the children of Israel to leave Egypt. However, the Bible declares that *"God makes even the wrath of men to praise Him."* That is to say, that even though men reject God's will and try to go their own way, God in the end will have the 'final word'! God can use even the evil of men to accomplish His ultimate will! God used the evil actions of Joseph's brothers to accomplish His purpose. Said Joseph to his repentant brothers, who had treated Joseph so wrongly, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."* (Genesis 50:20)

God used the evil acts of men who crucified Jesus as the means whereby God made possible the salvation of humanity. Dark Friday was turned into Good Friday because of Bright Easter Sunday Morning! The day of humanity's most evil cruelty, - the crucifying of the Son of God - turned out to be the day of humanity's brightest hope - the salvation of the sons of men! The darkest day of tragedy turned out to be the brightest day of triumph! Why? Because God is Sovereign! God is in total control of history's events and of humanity's choices! The Sovereignty of God does not destroy the free will of humanity. But, while God is loving enough to allow humanity freely to choose among moral alternatives, God is also powerful enough to interweave humanity's wrong moral choices into the fabric of His ultimate and eternal will and purpose!

For instance, Adam fell from God's originally created state of grace. God did not will the Fall, of humanity, but, in spite of that Fall (and perhaps even though that Fall) God has brought about great good to humanity. God did not will sin, but God has used sin (as represented in the Fall) to provide good for humanity. God is the great redeemer, even producing good out of evil.

The way God worked in spite of the Fall of man shows the sovereign power of God in operation in an unsurpassed way! Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. The Fall was terrible since it represents human rebellion in opposition to divine love. However, the cross is far greater than the Fall is terrible, since the cross of Christ represents divine restoration of the chiefest of sinners. Man's lost greatness

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through sin's power is great, but man's restored greatness through grace's power is greater!

The evil resulting from the Fall is not worthy to be compared with the good resulting from the free gift of God's Grace in Christ Jesus. What good has accrued to the posterity of Adam, as a result of the Fall? Without the Fall, there would have been no cross, and without the cross, there would have been no opportunity for God to visibly demonstrate His eternal love in its greatest intensity! The Fall caused all men to be constituted as sinners (for "in Adam all die").

It is because all men are in need of salvation that a Saviour was provided. Fallen humanity is capable of experiencing God's love in a way that not even the unfallen angels can experience God's love. The race of beings, which have fallen to the lowest depths, are capable of experiencing God's love at the highest heights! God redeemed the Terrible – the Fall – into the Tremendous – experience of Calvary love! Without the Terrible, there could not be the Tremendous! God is sovereign, which means that go's eternal purpose cannot be thwarted by even the grossest sin of humanity - the crucifixion – but, quite to the contrary, the purposes of God are established through the instrumentality of evil men!

I have discussed the Sovereignty of God in some detail, for it is important to see that the Sovereignty of God is one of the chief motivations for reverence and fear of God. If God is going to have 'the final word' at the end of life (regardless of the wrong moral choices of humanity on earth), then it is wise to be 'in step' with God on earth rather than 'out of step' with God in eternity! If in eternity every knee shall bow before God and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is God, then it is wise to bow the knee now and to confess with the lips now – in other words, to revere and to reverence God now!

Ecclesiastes 3:14 notes that God is Sovereign, for He is Controller over His own works: "I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it, so men will revere him." The actions of man, good and bad, based upon man's free will choice, cannot ultimately alter God's eternal purposes! Do what you will, but God will ultimately have His way – this is a good motivation to fear and to reverence the living God! God permits humanity to choose to go against His perfect will, resulting in sin's havoc, but God will exercise His Sovereign Power when He brings all sin to judgment. Even humanity's wrong moral choices, which God permits, cannot ultimately altar God's eternal purposes – the establishment of an eternal kingdom of righteousness! *“Everything God*

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does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it, so men will revere him." (Ecclesiastes 3:14)

The Sovereignty of God is described in the Book of Ecclesiastes in terms of God being the controller, not only over His own works, but also the Controller over man's life. (7:14; 9:1) *"When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future."* (7:14)

*"My times are in Thy hands,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, sad or glad,
As best may seem to thee."* (9:1)

Man proposes, but God disposes! Without sacrificing the fact of God – allowed exercise of free will, God is still sovereign and is thus the final controller of man's life! Man can choose wrongly, but God will sovereignty determine the negative moral consequences, which that man must suffer! Man can choose rightly, but God will sovereignty determine the positive moral results, which that man will enjoy! A moral universe demands the exercise of both the free will of man and the sovereign will of God. The two may seem contradictory, but in reality the two are complementary to a proper understanding of moral realities within a moral universe. "God has both a perfect will and a permissive will. Since everything that happens is necessarily within the bounds of God's will, yet, (according to the Scriptures), much that happens is contrary to the, will of God, it is evident, that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one. Thus, it is evident that there are two aspects of the will of God, with respect to sin: His permissive will allows it; but His perfect will forbids it and will bring all sin into judgment." (Life in the Son; Shank; pgs. 348, 349)

The fact that God has a permissive will shows that God recognizes man's free will and the possibility of sin! The fact that God has a perfect will shows that God is sovereign and that He will punish willful sin and reward willful righteousness in the end! Man may choose freely because God permits the exercise of free will, but God will justly punish and reward ultimately because God, as Sovereign, exercise, final control in a moral universe! *"So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands."* (Ecclesiastes 9:1)

God is Sovereign! God is the controller over His own works (3:14) and He is the controller over man's life (7:14; 9:1). Therefore, all should fear and reverence the living God!

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F. GOD’S PUNISHMENT: (5:1-7)

“Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth; do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. A dream comes when there are many cares, and many words mark the speech of a fool. When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, “My vow was a mistake.” Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7)

Why revere and fear God? Not only because God is sovereign and thus will finally ‘balance the books’ and have the ‘final say’ at the end of life, but also because God will bring judgment and punishment for wrongdoing during this present lifetime.

God is in heaven and we are on earth, but this does not mean that God is far removed from this earth and oblivious to humanity’s moral actions. There is an ‘all-seeing Eye’ watching every move of each human being, an ‘unseen Person’ listening to every conversation, and an all-knowing Judge scrutinizing every secret motive hidden in every man’s heart.

Therefore, Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 commends you to live carefully, *to “guard your steps”, “to go near to listen” and “not be quick with your mouth.”* This Scripture implies that we are to fear the Lord, for God will bring punishment to irreverent men of hasty words.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 further exhorts us to “stand in awe (fear) of God”, because God will bring punishment to indifferent men of rash vows!

There is a strong motivation to fear and reverence God when we realize that God will punish irreverent men of hasty words and indifferent men of rash vows. (5:1-7)

Jesus warned us to guard our words: *“Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’ be ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”* (Matthew 5:37) *“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”* (Matthew 12:36, 37)

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

G. MAN'S ULTIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY (3:17; 11:9; 12:14)

Why fear and revere the living God? *Because "God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."* (Ecclesiastes 12:14) *"It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment!"* (Hebrews 9:27) *It is not all of life to live or all of death to die, but after death comes the judgment! There is a hell to shun and there is a heaven to gain. Moral choices in life determine one's moral destiny in eternity! It is a fixed destiny! "Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie."* (Ecclesiastes 11:3b)

Death is both inevitable and unpredictable! *"Death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart."* (Ecclesiastes 7:2b) *"No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death."* (Ecclesiastes 8:8a) *"Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them."* (Ecclesiastes 9:12) The writer exhorts us, in light of the inevitability of death, to remember and to revere our Creator: *"Remember him (God) - before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."* (Ecclesiastes 12:6-7)

I think it was Webster who said that the most awesome word in the English language, to him, was the word "Accountability". The worldly man who dies not believing in a hereafter will have the grimmest of all grim days to face when he dies and then faces God at the Great White Throne Judgment. *"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.* (Revelations 20:11-15)

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The Bible says, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Hebrews 10:31) in speaking about God to one of my unsaved neighbors, he said to me, "I don't believe there is such a thing as hell!" It is obvious by the indifferent life he is living that he has no fear or reverence for the living God!

It was Sir Thomas Scott, the former Lord Chancellor of England, who said on his deathbed, "Until this moment I thought there was neither God nor hell. Now I know and feel there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty!"

"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13b-14)

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One (God) who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

CONCLUSION:

The Bible says that *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"* (Proverbs 9:10). It is the wise man who fears the Lord, who profoundly venerates, worships, adores, and respects the person and work of God!

We are to fear the Lord in spite of the doubts which assail us because of life's obvious inequities, injustices, and mysteries, and in spite of the fact that God's ways are past finding out. God, by the very definition of 'God', is incomprehensible, and His ways are mysterious. However, God has revealed Himself in the person of His Son - Jesus Christ - in such a way that all men are without excuse if they do not deeply reverence and venerate Him. He cannot be fully understood with the head but this is no reason not to revere and fear Him, for His presence can be personally known and enjoyed in the heart, through the ministry of His Spirit.

Why fear and reverence the Lord? The Book of Ecclesiastes gives several reasons: Because of man's moral responsibility (1:13); Because of sin's moral consequences (12:1); Because of God's Unfailing Goodness (2:24-26, 3:13; 5:19, 20; 8:15; 9:7); Because of Man's spiritual capacities (3:11); Because of God's punishment of sinners (5:1-7); Because of Man's Ultimate Accountability (3:15, 17; 11:9; 12:14).

Fear (venerate, worship, respect, adore, serve) the Lord, and begin to be a wise person! (Proverbs 9:10) *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One understanding."*

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CHAPTER 33

"HE SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 33

TEXT: *"He did not spare His own Son but gave him up for us all."* (Romans 8:32).

INTRODUCTION:

"God is so loyal to men that he is prepared to sacrifice His only Son for them. Surely we can trust a loyalty like that for anything." (William Barclay)

PROPOSITION:

To save and to rescue fallen humanity, God did sacrifice His nearest possession - His only Son.

- I. GOD ALLOWED THE SON TO COME TO EARTH
- II. GOD ALLOWED THE SON TO IDENTIFY WITH THE LOWEST OF HUMANITY
- III. GOD ALLOWED THE SON THE AGONY OF THE GARDEN
- IV. GOD ALLOWED THE SON THE CRUEL MISTREATMENT AND INJUSTICE OF SINNERS DURING THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION
- V. GOD ALLOWED THE SON THE UNSPEAKABLE AGONY OF BEARING HUMANITY'S SIN, AND THE CONSEQUENT SEEMING REJECTION OF GOD

CONCLUSION:

Christ died that we might live. *"With his stripes, we are healed."*

CHAPTER 33

"HE SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON!"

INTRODUCTION:

Paul says in effect: *"God for us did not spare his own Son; surely that is the final guarantee that he loves us enough to supply all our needs."* The words Paul uses of God are the very words God used of Abraham when Abraham proved his utter loyalty by being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac at God's command. God said to Abraham, *"You have not withheld your son, your only son, from me"*. (Genesis 22:12) Paul seems to say, 'Think of the greatest human example in the world of a man's loyalty to God; God's loyalty to you is like that.' Just as Abraham was so loyal to God that he was prepared to sacrifice his dearest possession, God is so loyal to men that he is prepared to sacrifice His only Son for them. Surely we can trust a loyalty like that for anything." (Barclay's Romans; pg. 116)

PROPOSITION:

To save and to rescue fallen humanity, God did sacrifice His nearest possession – His only Son. God did not spare Him the inconvenience of shame, suffering and death, all of which came through the coming of Jesus to earth.

I. GOD ALLOWED THE SON TO COME TO EARTH

Heaven was impoverished of its greatest treasure when the Son came to dwell on earth for 33 years!

"Into a world of woe
Only His great Eternal Love
Could make my Saviour Go."

"Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown,
When Thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home there was found no room
For thy holy nativity."

"Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,
Proclaiming Thy royal decree,
But in lowly birth didst Thou come to earth,
And in great humility."

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Many years ago, when the Duke of Windsor was the Prince of Wales, he one day left Buckingham Palace, journeyed west into the coal mining country, put on a miner's cap, and went down into the dingy tunnels to see for himself the conditions in which men toiled in a difficult and dangerous branch of British industry. As a member of the royal family, he was as much a prince in the coalmines as he was when he lived in the palace in London. However, while his essential equality with royalty was unchanged, there was no longer an equality of experience. He had consented to enter into experiences that never came to him amid the elegances and immunities of the palace.” (Proclaiming New Testament; by Paul Rees; pg. 44)

Jesus left the glory of the Palaces of Heaven as it were and descended into the dingy, dirty cave of human existence, to identify with and to rescue fallen man from danger and death. God did not spare His Son the contamination of a sinful race of fallen creatures.

What lesson is there in this for us? We too must identify with the needs of a fallen race. We must leave the inner closet of the glory of God's presence and go out into a world that is contaminated with sin, not to partake of that sin, but to be redemptive in the midst of that sin.

Practically speaking, it means that we as followers of Christ, are not to spare ourselves of the inconvenience of involvement with the mess of sin-involved creatures. “Some would tell a new Christian to sever his fellowship with his old friends at once. ‘Forsake them’, they would say. ‘Cut them off! Finish with them!’ I say quite the contrary: ‘Don’t forsake them. Hold on to Christ first, but hold on to them too. You may be God's supreme opportunity in their life. If the fellowship is to end, let them break it.’ If your fellowship with them is a peril to your soul, God would warn you and tell you what to do, but if Christians are always going to withdraw themselves from the world, where will it get us? There is a deal of good in plain ordinary people. There is indeed, a divine spark in them, and God might use you to fan it into a flame. We shall be living little segregated lives, with less and less influence on the modern world, if we are continually ‘withdrawing’ from all these social contacts. If we believe in individual salvation, but have no interest in society, we shall be like men arriving at a great fire, willing to rescue a person here and there from the holocaust, but quite unwilling to assist the authorities in putting out the blaze.” (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 252)

II. GOD ALLOWED THE SON TO IDENTIFY WITH THE LOWEST OF HUMANITY

God did not spare His Son identification with the lowliest of humanity. The Bible says that “He (Jesus) hath visited and redeemed his people.” “The only way to redeem His people was to visit them; he couldn't sit on a cloud and utter commands or pick us up and take us to heaven with celestial tongs, not

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soiling His fingers with 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.” (Word Became Flesh; Jones; pg. 34)

Jesus identified with man’s work. Jesus had strong carpenter hands. He 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.

Jesus identified with man’s poverty. 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 was acquainted with man’s sorrows and griefs. He was a man of sorrows, feeling alone with the sorrows of the suffering. He was touched with the feelings of our infirmities.

Jesus identified with man’s sufferings. *“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;”* (Hebrews 5:7-8a)

Jesus identified with the temptations of humanity. *“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.”* (Hebrews 2:18)

God did not spare His Son the toil, suffering, poverty, and temptations – all of which were a part of Jesus being a true man, identifying with man fully.

If Jesus was not spared the labor and toils of identification with human need, can Christians as servants isolate themselves from human needs? Says the Scriptures, *“Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.”* Living Bible Paraphrase: *“Don’t try to act big. Don’t try to get into the good graces of important people, but enjoy the company of ordinary folks.”* Notes Mary Alice Tenney: “Early Methodists really loved men. They did not sign a check for Community Chest Drives; they went into dirty garrets and nursed a sick old women. Even noblemen did that sort of thing, denying themselves luxuries in order to do it. It got right down among the needy, the evil, even the criminals, and showed them what real friendship and compassion are. People still need friends more than clothing. More than money, they need the News that inner resources are theirs for the asking.” (Living in Two Worlds; pgs. 112, 113)

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III. GOD ALLOWED THE SON THE AGONY OF THE GARDEN

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus agonized in Prayer: *"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."* The cup represented sorrow, wrath, and death. "At the very bottom of the cup there was death, and that worse by far than death by hemlock; it was death as sin's due, death in all its blackest features. It was death in its most awful reality, stark and naked as the many other bitter acids, which would float in that cup: the traitor kiss, the pagan scourge, the crown of thorns, and the cross of shame. That cup was filled to its brim with the wrath of God against the sin of man. Must He drink it, dreg and all. Could it not pass from His lips?...That cup was not to pass away until the last drop had been quaffed, and He now saw that it was for Him to take the cup which the Father had willed that He should drink, He would grasp it firmly in His hands, hold it calmly to His lips, and drain it, dregs and all." (Life through the Cross; Marcus Loane; pgs. 20, 21)

As a true man, as well as true God, Jesus was subject to human agony. He wanted to be spared the terrible cup of bearing the hell of man's sins IF there was any other way to redeem man, other than the cross. There was no other way for man to be saved, so Jesus willingly submitted to the Cross. The word 'IF' showed Jesus' submission to the Father's will.

IV. GOD ALLOWED THE SON THE CRUEL MISTREATMENT AND INJUSTICE OF SINNERS DURING THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

God did not spare His beloved Son the unjust treatment of the Jewish Supreme Court - the Sanhedrin. Jesus was arrested at night, secretly and quickly condemned to die. He was his own defense. He was condemned to die in spite of the lack of agreement in the witnesses' testimonies. The High Priest who presided as judge and head of the Sanhedrin was the main one instrumental in getting a guilty verdict. A self-incriminating question was asked of Jesus: *"Are you the Messiah?"*

When Jesus was unjustly condemned to die, on trumped up charges, a frenzied display of hatred followed, as shown by the spitting on Jesus, the buffeting Him, the slapping of his face, the mockery of Him. "No attempt was made to maintain even the superficialities of impartial justice." (Barclay's Matthew pg. 392)

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorian, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a scarlet robe upon him, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand,. And kneeling before him they

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mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they spat upon him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.” (Matthew 27:27-31)

What does the Cross show us? “It shows how bad men are. Men don’t like to admit their badness. Most of them think they are quite nice fellows and in no need of a Saviour. But Christ, the noblest soul who ever walked this earth, was crucified by men - not peculiarly bad men, not ‘the criminal types’; he was done to death by some of the ‘best’ people of his day. Nothing like the Cross reveals the basic evil in men, and shows the vile depths to which our nature can sink. We are all guilty of the same sins which nailed Christ to the Cross.” (Questions People Ask About Religion; pg. 59; Sangster)

Notes Sangster: “That God should suffer men to nail him to two pieces of wood staggers the minds of Christ’s followers whenever they strip away their familiarity with it and look at it afresh.” (Ibid; 59)

Take a look at the process of Crucifixion. “When a man was condemned to this death, first of all he was scourged – tied to an X-like wooden frame in such a way that his back was bent so that he could not move, then thirty-nine lashes were laid on. The lash was a long leather thong, studded at intervals with sharpened bits of bone and pellets of lead, and it literally tore a man’s back to shreds: few retained their consciousness, many went mad and not a few died. After that, the person had to take upon his back the heavy crosspiece of his cross; Jesus staggered and fell under it. But in the centre of a square of four Roman soldiers, he was taken in that way to the place of crucifixion by every possible street, square and avenue – the longest possible way – in order that people might see and be terrified at what happens to crime. When they reached the place of crucifixion the cross was laid flat on the ground and the cross –piece fitted in. There was a little bit in the centre called the saddle, which projected between the criminal’s legs. Then the criminal was normally given a drink of drugged wine, prepared by some of the pious and kindly women of Jerusalem (Jesus would not take it; he would meet death at its ultimate worst, open-eyed, and unafraid). Then he was laid on the cross, still flat on the ground; his hands were nailed, and then – just think of this moment - the cross was raised upright and put in the slot. The man was left to die. Jesus was lucky: he died at three o’clock in the afternoon. Criminals often hung for a week, dying slowly of hunger, thirst, and going slowly mad.” (William Barclay: The Life of Jesus for Everyman; pg. 62)

What should the response of believers be when seeing the agony of the Cross?

“Where the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,

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Demands my life, my soul, my all.

J. Gossip used to tell a story of the railway journey which George Adam Smith made. "In the carriage was a Roman Catholic priest, a handsome young man. This priest was going out to a place in West Africa where at that time a white man's life was months, not years. George Adam Smith pleaded with the young man not to go; could he not find some other way of serving God – must he throw away his life like that? But the boy was adamant. He was travelling further, but George Adam Smith was getting out, and even at the carriage window, George Adam Smith was still pleading. The train began to move away...The priest took the silver crucifix from his belt and held it up, and he said, 'He loved me and gave himself for me, and I – can I hold back?' And when we are confronted with that immortal, indestructible love of the Cross, what else can we say?" (The Life of Jesus for Everyman; pg. 65)

Said the young missionary, Jim Elliott, one of the five missionaries who sacrificed his life to take the Gospel to the Auca Indians of South America: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

If a seed does not fall into the ground and die, it cannot bring forth new life. A man must die to his old self, if he is to be resurrected to the new, Christ-controlled self.

V. God ALLOWED THE SON THE UNSPEAKABLE AGONY OF BEARING HUMANITY'S SIN, AND THE CONSEQUENT SEEMING REJECTION OF GOD

Said Jesus on the cross, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.*" "Here, as Martin Luther expressed it, is God forsaken of God. "*As Jesus bore the load of our sin, His sustaining consciousness of fellowship with the Father was momentarily clouded.*" (Psalms 22:1, 2) This was a prayer out of the deepest depths that sorrow has ever sounded. Yet the Saviour knew He was not utterly forsaken. He could still pray, "*My God.*" (All the Prayers of the Bible; pgs. 205, 206 by Herbert Lockyard)

Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the cross. Because Jesus represented sin, the Holy God momentarily turned his face on the Son. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and Jesus was at this time bearing the evil of the world's sinners.

As He suffered, He could have called ten thousand angels, but He called for none to rescue him. He died alone for you and me.

Jesus has become the Scapegoat for every man, to bear our sins. Hear Charles Simeon's testimony: 'In Passion Week, as I was reading Bishop Wilson on the Lord's Supper, I met with an expression to this effect: 'That the Jews

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knew what they did when they transferred their sin to the head of their offering.’ The thought came into my mind, ‘what, may I transfer all my guilt to another? Has God provided an Offering for me that I may lay my sins on His head? Then, God willing, I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer.’ Accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus: and on the Wednesday began to have a hope of mercy; on the Thursday that hope increased; on the Friday and Saturday it became more strong; and on the Sunday morning, Easter Day, April 4th, I awoke early with those words upon my heart and lips, ‘Jesus Christ is risen today! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!’ From that hour peace flowed in rich abundance into my soul; and at the Lord’s Table in our chapel I had the sweetest access to God through my blessed Saviour.” (Quoted From Life through the Cross; pg. 151; Loane)

CONCLUSION:

God did not spare His Son from coming to earth to become a true human! God did not spare his Son the identification with the lowliest of humanity! God did not spare His Son the Agony of the Garden of Gethsemane! God did not spare His Son the cruel mistreatment and injustice or sinners during the trial and crucifixion! God did not spare His Son the unspeakable agony of bearing humanity’s sin and the consequent seeming rejection of God.

All of this because He loved humanity so much! Such unspeakable love! *“Since He did not spare even his own Son for us but gave him up for us all, won’t he also surely give us everything else?”* (Romans 8:32, Living Bible)

What is included in ‘everything else’? Anything that will give quality and meaning to man’s life! That means forgiveness of sins, peace with God, joy in relationship, hope in anticipation of heaven, purpose in fulfilling God’s call in life, power to cope victoriously with life, and love for every man.

Christ died that we might live. With his stripes, we are healed. Because God did not spare His Son, God is able to spare us Hell’s punishment. Bow down and serve Him forever!

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CHAPTER 34
"WHAT DID THE CROSS ACCOMPLISH"?

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 34

SCRIPTURE: *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (I Corinthians 1:18-24).*

TEXT: *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (I Corinthians 1:18)*

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus was born to die – to die a death that would enable millions to live! At the heart of Jesus' ministry was a cross!

PROPOSITION:

Why so much attention given to the Cross? Because the death of Christ on the Cross accomplished all – important things – for God and for man.

I. THE CROSS APPEASED GOD'S WRATH

- A. Explanation for God's Wrath
- B. Relationship Between God's Wrath and God's Love
- C. Contrast between God's Wrath and Wrath of Pagan gods.
- D. Jesus Took the Heat of God's Wrath toward Sin upon Himself.

II. THE CROSS SATISFIED GOD'S JUSTICE

- A. Statement Of Meaning
- B. A Moral Universe Calls For Moral Treatment Of Sin
- C. Analogy Showing The Substitutionary Death As A Necessity For Justice
- D. Inability Humanly To Make Oneself Just And Righteous Before God

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III. THE CROSS DEMONSTRATED GOD'S LOVE

CONCLUSION:

Will you come to the Christ and give him your sins? Will you receive His forgiveness today? It cost God the sacrifice of His dearest and best - His Own Son - to make your salvation possible.

CHAPTER 34

"WHAT DID THE CROSS ACCOMPLISH"?

INTRODUCTION:

I understand there is a painter who has painted a picture of the boy Jesus in Joseph's carpenter shop. Mary is looking on as Jesus is working with Joseph. The sun is just going down over the Palestinian hills and as Jesus is building an oxen yoke, He is crossing two boards. The crossing of the boards forms a long shadow that is the shape of a cross. Upon seeing this shadow of a cross on the floor of the carpenter shop, a sudden look of fright and sadness comes over the face of Mary - as if Mary can see into Jesus' future fate.

Of course, we know that this painting is only the creation of an artist's mind. There is nothing in the Gospels which indicates that Mary knew ahead of time that Jesus would die on a cross. However, the Gospels do indicate that, figuratively speaking, the shadow of the cross was cast across the pathway of Jesus, during His entire ministry before he finally died upon the Cross.

Jesus many times talked about '*His Hour*'. Several times, he said that His hour had not yet come. When His time finally had come to die, He said, "*My hour has come. It was for this purpose that I was born.*"

Jesus was born to die - to die a death that would enable millions to live!

At the heart of Jesus' ministry was a cross! Note's William Sangster: "Those devils and weaklings who met at Calvary would have said, 'We did it.' He cries from His Cross: 'I did it! It is finished!' If they were right, the Cross would be a gibbet, a symbol of shame, something to hide and speak of only by compulsion with bated breath. In point of fact, we placard it to all the world. No steeple so high that it will not bear it, no point of earth but is honored to be the stump of His Cross: it lies in a cache on the summit of Everest. It is His message, not theirs, which it bears at the last.

"Those free and evil men sought and secured His death cannot alter the fact that He knew what they were doing - and let them do it. You cannot martyr God...Hold in mind...WHO it was who hung and suffered there, and you will not think of it as martyrdom.

"If He was man, it was murder; if He was God, it was an offering.

"If He was man, it was martyrdom; if He was God, it was sacrifice. If He was man, they took His life from Him; if He was God, He laid down His life freely.

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“If He was man, we must stand up and take our hats off; if He was God, we must fall down and give Him our hearts.” (Daily Readings; pg. 253)

There is a song, which shows the victorious symbolism of the Cross:

“In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o’er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.”

PROPOSITION:

Why so much attention given to the Cross? Because the death of Christ on the Cross accomplished all – important things – for God and for man. What did the Cross accomplish?

- (1) The Cross appeased God’s Wrath against sin.
- (2) The Cross satisfied God’s justice, for God could not allow sin to go unpunished, and at the same time remain a just God.
- (3) The Cross demonstrated God’s love for sinners.

I. THE CROSS APPEASED GOD’S WRATH

In speaking often of God’s love (which we should do) perhaps we forget the fact of God’s wrath. Both the Old and New Testaments picture God as a God of love, but the opposite side of God’s love is God’s wrath against sin, hypocrisy, and rebellion. Just as John the Baptist spoke of *‘the wrath to come’*, so Jesus too spoke and taught God’s wrath. (Matthew 3:7) *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* (John 3:36) Wrote James: *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”* (James 4:4) Wrote Paul: *“Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of humanity.”* (Ephesians 2:3) *“Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them.”* (Ephesians 5:5-6)

A. Explanation For God’s Wrath

God is a God of love, but His love demands that His own holiness be honored and that sin, which offends God’s holiness, be punished.

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B. Relationship Between God’s Wrath And God’s Love.

God’s wrath “does not compromise the conception of the love of God. We are not force to choose between a God of wrath and a God who loves; rather the wrath is the obverse side of the love. E. H. Gifford has an opposite remark, ‘Human love here offers a true analogy: the more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard, the liar, or the traitor.’ If this be quite possible in a human father with all his failings we cannot account it incredible in God from whose wrath is absent all those imperfections which mar the human emotion of righteous anger even at its purest.” (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross; Leon Morris; pgs. 224, 225)

C. Contrast Between God’s Wrath And Wrath Of Pagan Gods.

God’s wrath is not like the wrath of the pagan gods. “The Bible writers have nothing to do with pagan conceptions of a capricious and vindictive deity, inflicting arbitrary punishments on offending worshippers, who must then bribe him back to a good mood by the appropriate offering.” (Ibid; 148)) There is none of that irrational passion in God, but God’s wrath is controlled, directed, and tempered by God’s love. Wrath and love are compatible in God’s nature. He hates sin but He loves the child of sin. “There is divine wrath, but if we may put it this way, it is always exercised with a certain tenderness. Even when He is angry with man’s sin God loves man and is concerned for his well-being in the fullest sense. There is a divine love, but it is not a careless sentimentality, indifference to the moral Integrity of the loved ones. Rather it is a love which is a purifying fire, blazing against everything that hinders the loved ones from being the very best that they can be.” (Ibid; 176)

D. Jesus Took The Heat Of God’s Wrath Toward Sin Upon Himself.

Jesus became sin for us. He bore our sins in His body on the cross. On the cross, Jesus cried out, *‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’* Jesus represented all the sins of the entire world when He was on the cross. God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Because Jesus became sin, God could not look upon Jesus, for God cannot look upon sin. *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.”* (Habakkuk 1:13a)

II. THE CROSS SATISFIED GOD’S JUSTICE

So serious is sin that, in the process of punishing sin, the sinner would also be destroyed. The wages of sin is death for the sinner. The cross is not only the

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answer to appeasing God's wrath toward sin, but also the answer to saving the sinner from suffering the just penalty for sin which is death.

A. STATEMENT OF MEANING

The cross satisfied God's Justice, for God could not allow sin to go unpunished, and at the same time remain a just God. God is both just and the justifier of the ungodly, because of what Christ did on the Cross.

B. A Moral Universe Calls For Moral Treatment Of Sin

This is a moral universe, where right must be rewarded and wrong must be punished. If God could forgive the guilty one by a mere 'wink of the eye', then God would no longer be just and the universe would no longer be a moral, safe, reliable place to live. All basis for morality (right and wrong) would be destroyed.

"In Christ's atonement for sin, He stood in the guilty sinner's place. If God had forgiven sin by a divine decree without atonement, which involved the personal shame, agony, suffering, and death of Christ, then man could assume that God overlooked, winked at, or was indifferent to sin. Thus, man would go on sinning, and earth would have become a living hell. But in the surrendering of Jesus we have the participation of God in the act of atonement." (World Aflame; pg. 113)

Jesus took the penalty for man's sin so that man could be forgiven justly.

C. Analogy Showing The Substitutionary Death As A Necessity For Justice

Imagine the following: Court Room Scene, before a Judge.

- I am guilty of a great crime. I cannot pay for it except by death, for this crime holds the death penalty.
- A friend offers to take my just penalty for me – to die in my place.

THEREFORE:

1. Justice has been met, insofar as the Law is concerned.
2. Double punishment for one crime would be unjust (so if my friend dies, I do not need to die for this crime).

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3. If the truly guilty is willing to accept the substitutionary offering of the friend, then the punishment for the crime has been met and the guilty one is free, declared henceforth clear, and innocent (as far as the just requirements of the Law are concerned).

God can declare the sinner just and righteous (and remain just in His dealing Himself) because Christ took the penalty for the sinner.

D. Inability Humanly To Make Oneself Just And Righteous Before God

One cannot make himself just before God by any good thing that he can do (any more than a murderer can do anything to justify or clear himself from his crime

Writes Spurgeon: “Christ has made a complete atonement; and there is none other plan by which sinners can be made at one with God, except by Jesus’ precious blood. I may make sacrifices; I may mortify my body; I may be baptized; I may receive sacraments; I may pray until my knees grow hard with kneeling; I may read devout words until I know them by heart; I may celebrate masses; I may worship in one language or in fifty languages; but I can never be at one with God, except by blood and that blood, ‘the precious blood of Christ.’” (The Passion and Death of Christ; pg. 36)

III. THE CROSS DEMONSTRATED GOD’S LOVE

The cross reveals more about God than any other reality. The cross on Calvary is the unveiling of the Cross, which has always been on the heart of God eternally. God is love and the cross gives concrete expression to that truth. God is suffering love and therefore the cross in an absolute necessity. Only as man could see Jesus on the Cross of Calvary could man see the Christ of the Ages who has always borne a cross in His heart.

Jesus reveals the nature of God. Everything Jesus was, God has always been. When Jesus suffered on the Cross, God was suffering on the Cross.

Jesus’ suffering on the cross for sin shows that God suffers for sin. God hurts in our hurts, He bleeds when we bleed, he shares our guilt. *“Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrow.”* (Isaiah 53:4a)

The cross is the greatest of all revelations concerning God. For the revealed cross in history is the result of the hidden cross on the heart of God. The cross shows that at the heart of the Universe is self-giving, sacrificial love.

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Jesus' life was a life of love – a life of identification with man's problems and man's needs. Jesus identified with man's temptations. Jesus shared man's poverty for Jesus said, *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."* (Matthew 8:20)

Jesus knew what it was to be misunderstood, rejected, and despised, and he knew what it was 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.

Jesus' love for humanity was supremely expressed when he suffered for man's sin. *"But God commandeth His love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8)

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4, 5)

Not only did Jesus identify with sinners in life, but also Jesus identified with sinners in his very death. The Scriptures tell us *"He (God) has visited and redeemed His people."* *"He took man's sin as His own and died as a malefactor on the 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; pg.153)

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:36)

Someone has called John 3:16 'the Heart of the Bible – the Gospel in miniature.' It is so simple a child can understand it; yet it condenses the deep and marvelous truths of redemption into these few pungent words:

"God".....Greatest Lover
"So Loved".....Greatest Degree
"The World".....Greatest Number
"That He Gave".....Greatest Act
"His Only Begotten Son.....Greatest Gift
"That Whosoever".....Greatest Invitation
"Believeth".....Greatest Simplicity
"In Him.....Greatest Person

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"Should Not Perish.....Greatest Deliverance
"But"Greatest Difference
"Have"Greatest Certainty
"Everlasting Life"Greatest Possession

CONCLUSION:

Will you come to the Christ and give him your sins? Will you receive His forgiveness today? It cost God the sacrifice of His dearest and best - His Own Son - to make your salvation possible. He gave His all for you! Will You Give Him your all in love and service?

Can you sing: 'In the Cross of Christ I glory?'

Remember, 'Nothing can for sins atone, nothing but the Blood of Jesus.'

Come to Jesus today! Let him wash away your sins!

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CHAPTER 35
"RESULTS OR CONSEQUENCES?"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 35

SCRIPTURE: *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."* (Galatians 6:7-10)

TEXT: *"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* (Galatians 6:7)

INTRODUCTION:

While it is true that the Gospel clearly teaches that man can reap the benefits of Christ's atoning death, and experience the forgiveness of sins, it is also clear that not even God can wipe out the Consequences of sins.

PROPOSITION:

Every man is free to do only one thing – to make choices.

- I. SOW SIN – REAP CONSEQUENCES
 - A. SOW DISOBEDIENCE – REAP SHAME
 - B. SOW SPIRITUAL NEGLECT – REAP SPIRITUAL BACKSLIDING

- III. SOW RIGHTEOUSNESS – REAP RESULTS
 - A. SOW TEARS OF REPENTANCE – REAP JOY OF SALVATION
 - B. SOW RIGHTEOUSNESS – REAP MERCY
 - C. SOW TOTAL SURRENDER – REAP LIFE-TIME FULFILLMENT
 - D. SOW LOVE – REAP LOVE

CONCLUSION:

Remember, we are free to choose, but we are not free to choose the results or consequences of our choices!

CHAPTER 35

"RESULTS OR CONSEQUENCES?"

INTRODUCTION:

There are some people today asking if there is any truth in the doctrine of Reincarnation. The Hindu religion believes all of one's sufferings in this present life are the result of one's wrong choices in a previous birth. Therefore, the Hindu who gets into trouble blames his trouble on his deeds, which, he says, he committed in a previous birth. What one reaps in this life, he sowed in a previous life.

The Christian faith and the Bible denies any such belief in a previous existence, but the Bible does teach that "Whatsoever a man sows in this life, that shall he also reap." However, the Christian faith has its center, the Cross of Christ, which means the sacrifice of the Fit for the unfit. Sinful, unfit, weakened humanity can be redeemed and the punishment for sin can be cancelled because of the death of Christ. Christ came to heal, to bind up the wounds, to call the sinner to repentance. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came that the sinner might have life, and might have it more abundantly. Proclaimed Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* (Luke 4:18-19)

However, while it is true that the Gospel clearly teaches that man can reap the benefits of Christ's atoning death, and experience the forgiveness of sins, it is also clear that not even God can wipe out the Consequences of sin. "If a man sins against his body, sooner or later he will pay in ruined health - even if he is forgiven. If a man sins against his loved ones, soon or late hearts will be broken—even if he is forgiven. John B. Gough, the greatest temperance orator, who had lived a reckless early life, used to declare in warning, 'The scars remain.'" (Barclay's Ephesians; pg. 60)

PROPOSITION:

The gospel is good news for the sinner, for the sinner can be forgiven of his sins. Nevertheless, the forgiven sinner may not escape all the consequences of his past sins. However, the forgiven sinner can spend the rest of his life choosing right, and thus getting good results.

Every man is free to do only one thing - to make choices. "We are free to choose, but not free to choose the results or consequences of our choices. They are in hands not our own. Some go through life choosing to surrender to the right person

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and to submit to the right things, they get results; the sum total of reality is behind them, they have cosmic backing for their way of life. But some go through life surrendering to the wrong person or things – they get consequences; they are up against reality, they are frustrated, in trouble, with themselves and others.” (Victory Through Surrender; pgs. 124, 125)

I. SOW SIN – REAP CONSEQUENCES

Just as there are physical laws, which govern the physical universe, so are there spiritual laws, which govern your relationship with God. No one can really break the law of gravity; one can defy the law of gravity and break himself upon that law. No one can really break the moral law of God. One can defy that moral law and get broken in the process.

A. SOW DISOBEDIENCE – REAP SHAME

Says God, through the prophet Hosea, *“Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; he have eaten the fruit of lies.”* (Hosea 10:13) Through Isaiah, God said to sinning Israel, *“In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.”* (Isaiah 17:11)

The brilliant 19th century actor, Oscar Wilde, who won highest academic honors, fell to temptation of unnatural vice, and finally came to prison and disgrace. In spite of his brilliance and literary fame, he sowed seeds of sin and eventually reaped a harvest of shame. He wrote, “I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace.” E. Stanley Jones; Victory Through Surrender; pg. 13)

Sin brings shame and loss. A present famous Gospel singer, Doug Oldham, made many wrong moral choices until he was 32. Sin increasingly brought loneliness and shame to him. He had a staff of 22 musicians and lost all of them. He became sick, his Lincoln Continentals were repossessed, his children became afraid of him, and his wife was forced to leave him. Finally, he ended up in a little one-room apartment, with no running water. It seemed his life was ruined, and his future was hopeless. He was reaping the harvest of his sins. Then he met Christ, and Christ changed his whole life, brought his family together and launched him into a Christian career of Gospel music. Today, Doug Oldham is one of the most popular Gospel singers,

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telling tens of thousands of people about the forgiving grace of Jesus. He is now sowing seeds of love and reaping a great harvest.

Before Dallas Holms, the Gospel singer with David Wilkerson, met Christ, he was a rock singer – but a very unhappy rock singer. In one of his songs, he tells of his life before he accepted Christ:

"The branches so weak and worn
The leaves so frivel and torn
Like the tree, I've wasted years.
I've know such sorrow, such sadness and tears.
Cut me down, the Lord could say
But give me a year, starting today.
Only one year to change my life,
Only one year to rid sin and strife,
Only one year to change my way,
Starting Today."

Wrote psychologist William James, "The hell to be endured hereafter of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way." (E. Stanley Jones; Conversion; pg. 33)

B. SOW SPIRITUAL NEGLECT – REAP SPIRITUAL BACKSLIDING

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3a) "A good friend in the ministry recently told me that in all his years of being a pastor, the most pathetic question he ever heard was this: 'Preacher, how in the world did I ever get to be where I am today?' The man who was speaking sobbed as he sat across the table in the visiting room of the county jail. He had been arrested the previous night and had been charged with drunkenness; how far he had fallen! A few short years before, he had commanded a good salary, was faithful in Church attendance, and was living happily with his wife and children. Then he started to slip – not much at first, but as months went by, he sank deeper and deeper. He lost his job, his wife finally filed for divorce, and his reputation was shattered. Now he sat in that county jail, a broken man, with absolutely nothing left of his former life." (The Way Back; pg. 9)

IV. SOW RIGHTEOUSNESS – REAP RESULTS

I would repeat: Some people get consequences from life and some people get results. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. We have seen this principle operate in the life of sin. Sow disobedience – reap shame. Sow

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spiritual neglect - reap spiritual backsliding. Let us note how this principle works positively and redemptively.

A. Sow Tears Of Repentance – Reap Joy Of Salvation

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance." "They that sow I tears shall reap in joy." (Psalms 126:5)

"In the third century, Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, wrote to his friend Donatus: 'It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy, which is a thousand times better, than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians. And I am one of them.'" (B. Graham; World Aflame, pg. 161)

Testifies E. S. Jones: "Life is working and working with rhythm and joy. How did it all happen? I asked myself that question as I sat in a hotel room in Alaska writing. I looked up, and saw myself, in a looking glass and said to myself: 'Stanley Jones, you're a very happy man, aren't you?' I replied, 'Yes, I am.' And then the vital question, 'How did you get this way?' And my reply: 'I don't know. It is all a surprise to me, a growing surprise. I walked across a field one day, and I stubbed my toe against the edge of a treasure chest, jutting out of the earth. 'It's treasure,' I cried. I ran off and sold all I had, including myself, and brought that field; and I've been hugging myself ever since that I had sense enough to do it.'" (A Song of Ascents; pg. 24)

B. Sow Righteousness – Reap Mercy

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." (Hosea 10:12)

Said Jesus, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*

Wrote Solomon, *"Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days."* (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

C. Sow Total Surrender – Reap Life-Time Fulfillment

A few moments ago, I referred to the story of how E. Stanley Jones stumbled across the 'treasure' of conversion which threw him into the arms of Christ. Jones tells of a boyhood friend who did not sow seeds of repentance but who sowed seeds of rebellion. Writes Jones, "I must

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pause long enough to tell about my chum who did not see any ‘treasure’ in what I saw. He looked elsewhere. When I said, ‘Ras, I’m going to give myself to Jesus Christ, will you?’ He replied; ‘No, I’m going to see life first.’ We parted. He was to see life through his own desires; I was to see life through the desires of Christ. After thirty years, we met again: ‘Do you remember the night we parted you said you were going to see life, and I said I was going to see Life. We have had thirty years in which to test our ways. How did you come out?’ His eyes dropped, he looked confused, and then said: “You wouldn’t approve of the way I’m living.’ Then, when he told me what he was doing (following the races), I replied, ‘No, I’m sorry I can’t.’ ‘But,’ he added, ‘it looks as though you’ve found Life.’ ‘Yes, I have’ I replied. ‘And I found it the night I found Christ.’ ‘Well, I’d better come over on your way,’ he added. ‘You should have come over thirty years ago. You’ve worse than wasted years.’ He took the way of chance, and I took the will of Christ. He came out at dissatisfaction, and I came out at satisfaction, the deepest that life can know. Moreover, conversion made the difference.” (Songs of Ascents; pgs. 30-31)

Life itself renders the verdict of the quality of life’s choices by the type of harvest produced. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap – “either fulfillment through surrender to Christ or disillusionment through self-centeredness.”

Life grows richer, the longer one serves the living Christ. After sixty years of serving Christ, E. Stanley Jones testified, “I was never so excited, so exhilarated, and so full of surprise as now. Something new breaks out from Him every day, a surprise around every corner, horizons cracking, life popping with novelty and meaning – and value. The Truth is making me free – free to find more Truth and yet more Truth, and so on forever and forever.” (Word Become Flesh; pg. 51)

D. SOW LOVE – REAP LOVE

He who sows seeds of kindness will reap an abundant harvest of love, friendship, and understanding.

In talking one time to an older saint of God, I found that she often amazed at the amount of love and attention given to her. It was not hard for me to understand, for she was always sowing seeds of kindness and showed lots of affection to people.

Of Jesus it is said, “He grew in favor with God and Man.” His lovely character attracted the multitudes. Someone said, “The most likable people are those who are most like Christ.”

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Those who give themselves away in love to God and man can be sure of reaping a bountiful harvest of love, including a multitude of friends. *"Peter began to say to Jesus, 'Lo, we have left everything, and followed You.' Jesus said: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children and lands, with persecution, and in the age to come eternal life."* (Mark 10:28-30)

CONCLUSION:

Someone wisely noted:

'Sow a thought, reap an act,
Sow an act, reap a habit,
Sow a habit, reap a character,
Sow a character, reap a destiny.'

In large measure, we do determine the kind of destiny that we will reap – in time and in eternity. Remember, we are free to choose, but not free to choose the results or consequences of our choices! Choose Christ as your God, and get glorious results for time and eternity – heaven here and heaven hereafter. Choose Self as your God, and get tragic consequences – hell here and hell hereafter.

Which will you get out of life – Results or Consequences? The Choice is yours!
Choose Christ – Now!

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CHAPTER 36
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 36

SCRIPTURE: *"When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well." (Luke 7:1-10)*

TEXT: *"I tell you I have not found such great faith not even in Israel." (Luke 7:9b)*

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus marveled at the amazing faith of the Roman centurion who expressed such great faith in Jesus, although he had limited knowledge and contact with Jesus.

PROPOSITION:

The faith of the centurion is the same faith that gains God's approval and Christ's commendation in any age.

- I. FAITH IS SIMPLE TRUST
- II. FAITH IS BORN OUT OF A TRUSTWORTHY CHARACTER
- III. FAITH IS INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH HUMILITY
- IV. FAITH IS INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH ACTION

CONCLUSION:

The faith which Christ commended was a faith expressed by a man who had few opportunities.

CHAPTER 36

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH!"

INTRODUCTION:

It is recorded twice in the Gospels that Jesus marveled. Once He marveled at the unbelief of His fellow villagers in Nazareth, when they were afforded so many opportunities. The story before us today is the other time when it was said that "*Jesus marveled.*" Jesus marveled at the Roman centurion who expressed such great faith in Jesus, although he had limited knowledge and contact with Jesus.

PROPOSITION:

The faith of the centurion is the same faith that gains God's approval and Christ's commendation in any age. Let us note the characteristics of the faith which caused Christ to marvel.

I. FAITH IS SIMPLE TRUST

A centurion was a Roman soldier who commanded 100 men. Centurions were the elite officers in the Roman army. They were very courageous leaders. Polybius, the historian, says that they must not be so much "seekers after danger as men who can command, steady in action, and reliable; they ought not to be over anxious to rush into the fight; but when hard pressed they must be ready to hold their ground and die at their posts." (Barclay's Luke; pg. 82)

This centurion was most disciplined in action. He was in service to the Roman Emperor himself, and learned to submit to the rule and authority of Roman Law. The authority of the Emperor was vested, in this centurion and when he spoke to his soldiers, he spoke as the mouthpiece of the highest power of Rome. The centurion was trained in the art of simple trust. He simply and exactly obeyed the orders of Rome, and his soldiers in turn were expected to simply and unquestionably obey his orders.

Using this same logic, the centurion reasoned, that just as he was under the authority of the emperor, so Jesus was under the authority of Almighty God. Because Jesus acted under infinite authority, Jesus could speak with infinite authority. The centurion believed that Jesus could simply command, and it would be fulfilled. That is how simple and untarnished was the faith of the centurion.

II. FAITH IS BORN OUT OF A TRUSTWORTHY CHARACTER

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The faith, which Jesus commended, was not an empty faith, but a faith, which was an expression of a faithful character. The one who can best express faith is the one who best keeps faith. Faith is founded in a solid character. The trustworthy character can spot it, like in another.

This centurion had faith that worked in a time of crisis, because he daily cultivated a character that was trustworthy and faith-oriented.

This centurion was a man of compassion. His servant was ill and he loved his servant. The typical attitude of Romans towards servants is expressed in the words of Cato, an ancient Roman writer. Giving advice to a man who is taking over a farm, Cato says, "Look over the livestock, and hold a sale. Sell your oil, if the price is satisfactory, and sell the surplus of your wine and grain. Sell worn-out oxen, blemished cattle, blemished sheep, wool, hides, an old wagon, old tools, an old slave, a sickly slave, and whatever is superfluous." (Barclay's Matthew; pgs. 307, 308) This centurion was unusual because he had a personal love for his slave.

This centurion was a loving man. Those Jews who went to Jesus pleading to Jesus to have mercy on the centurion's slave, said of the centurion, "*He loves our nation.*" The Jews hated the Romans, and said the Romans were good for nothing but fuel for hell. The Romans hated the Jews and considered the Jewish religion as barbarous superstition. The Romans called the Jews a filthy race. Such was the deep hatred between the races, and such a fact makes the Jews' love of this Roman officer even more amazing. There was such a kindness about the centurion that many Jews came to deeply love and respect this centurion as a true friend. It is likely that this centurion became a convert to Judaism, and thus had knowledge of the one God. The faith that amazed Jesus was born out of a heart of devotion and love.

This centurion was a religious man. The Jews who went to Jesus on behalf of the centurion further appealed to Jesus on the basis that this centurion was worthy because he "himself built us our Synagogue." This centurion had a heart of devotion, and worship. This synagogue was not built to keep peace among the Jews, but because this centurion was a sincere worshipper himself. A crisis has within its power to call forth a dynamic faith or a bitter cynicism, depending upon the attitude that is cultivated in daily living. This centurion cultivated faith in daily worship. Therefore, he was able to call forth a strong faith in the face of a strong crisis.

Faith is born out of a trustworthy character. The prophet Amos taught this truth centuries ago: "*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love*

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mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:7, 8) A faithful character (justice, mercy, humility) begets an expression of faith that is able to cope with a crisis.

III. FAITH IS INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH HUMILITY

This centurion was a humble man. He recognized, with all of his power and authority, his essential human weakness and limitations. It is probable that he resorted to all available medical aid, and yet his servant faced impending death. It was then that he turned his eyes toward Jesus for help.

It is always the wise man who recognizes human frailties, and who resorts to the power of God. Man's extremities are God's opportunities.

This centurion would not go to Jesus himself because of his humility. As a Roman (Gentile) he did not presume to go to Jesus - a Jew. He felt unworthy; therefore, he sent some of his Jewish friends to Jesus.

When Jesus came towards the house of the centurion, the centurion sent friends to Jesus with this message: *“Sir, do not trouble yourself. I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; nor do I count myself fit to come to you; but just speak a word and my servant will be cured.”* This Gentile Centurion respected the Jewish law, which forbade a Gentile to enter into a Jewish home. Jesus was willing to come into the centurion's home, but the centurion was so humble that he would not allow Jesus to come under his roof.

Humility is always a great quality of faith. Faith never says, “I have attained,” but rather, “I press onward to the goal of maturity.” Faith never boasts in what it knows, but rather acknowledges the great amount it has to learn. Faith never asserts its power, but rather confesses its dependence upon God. Faith is humble.

IV. FAITH IS INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH ACTION

Faith does not stand still; Faith Moves. The centurion faced a crisis. His servant was at the very point of death. Merely to hope that the servant would recover would be too passive. Action must be taken. Faith always acts. The centurion had faith that Jesus could do something, so he acted on the basis of his confidence which he put into action. He sent some Jewish friends to Jesus, pleading for help. His confidence, which he put into action, paid off - Jesus came and healed.

Whenever one faces a crisis, he must exercise faith in God, but the faith he exercises in God is a faith that acts and moves. It is very possible that the centurion resorted to doctors, but found them to be of no help. The centurion

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then in faith sent to Jesus. The faith which prays is the faith which also acts. God does not answer prayer for you, but He answers prayer with you. He who prays for a certain request must be willing to help answer his own request. Faith not only asks, but faith acts.

Faith is commitment and commitment is the most courageous act known to man. Commitment to God leads to knowledge. There is the popular saying: "Seeing is believing." That is very true of life generally, and true of religion in some measure. One must see and be convinced of certain facts in religion before he can make an intelligent commitment. That is, he must be convinced that Christ is the Son of God and thus worthy of his loyalty. However, it is also largely true that "Believing is seeing." That is, commitment to Christ leads to knowledge.

The Centurion had a limited knowledge of Christ – just enough knowledge of Christ (His miracles power, etc.) to convince him that Christ would likely be able to help him in his crisis. On the basis of this knowledge, the centurion actively and courageously committed himself to Christ. That commitment led to a wonderful experiential knowledge of Christ. The centurion's commitment to Christ led to a miracle.

Faith is action – commitment and commitment to Christ always brings a miracle. One who comes to Christ for the forgiveness of sins, comes out of a need for satisfaction, and comes to Christ with a very limited knowledge of Christ. However, in committing himself to Christ (taking the leap of faith), he experiences knowledge – not simply factual knowledge, but deep, experiential and personal knowledge of Christ as Saviour. Believing (the act of commitment) leads to seeing (experiencing personal knowledge of Christ).

CONCLUSION:

The faith, which Christ commended was a faith expressed by a man who had few opportunities. "No doubt Jesus' commendation of the centurion's faith partly derived from the fact that it came from such an unexpected source." (Whom Christ Commended; by Ralph Sockman; pg. 12)

The faith of the centurion was a simple unquestioning trust in Christ's authority. He was a man trained in the art of disciplined, authoritative living, and therefore it was not difficult for him to believe that the authoritative commands of Jesus would be carried out.

A crisis will show a man's character. If a man's character is cynical and bitter, then a crisis will produce bitterness and cynicism. If a man's character is trustworthy and faithful, then a crisis will produce faith and trust. The centurion cultivated a daily life of faith; therefore, a crisis brought forth an expression of faith to meet the crisis.

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The faith of the centurion was a faith characterized by humility. He acknowledged his human frailties and limitations. As a Gentile, he would not go to Jesus himself, nor let Jesus come into his house, because of his humility. True faith is always humble.

The faith of the centurion was a faith that expressed itself in action. It was not hopeful, wishful, or even positive thinking, but rather a faith that resulted in the action of going to Jesus. True faith is not merely a state of the mind; it is an action of the will.

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CHAPTER 37
"WHAT IF THERE WERE NO
RESURRECTION?"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE

CHAPTER 37

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus is God's sacrifice which he allowed to die on Mount Calvary. But what if Jesus – the Lamb of God – had not been raised from the dead?

PROPOSITION:

- I. WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED WHEN JESUS DIED?
 - A. God's Wrath Against Sin Was Appeased.
 - B. God's Justice Was Satisfied.
 - C. God's Love Was Conclusively And Magnificently Demonstrated.

- II. WHAT IF THERE WERE NO RESURRECTION?
 - A. Your Faith In God's Love Is In Vain.
 - B. Your Faith In God's Integrity Is In Vain.
 - C. Your Faith In God's Power Is In Vain.
 - D. Your Faith In God's Justice Is In Vain.
 - E. Your Faith In God's Power To Change Human Nature Is In Vain.
 - F. Your Faith In Christ's Righteousness Is In Vain.
 - G. Your Faith In The Possibility Of Establishing A Person And Intimate Relationship With God Is Futile.
 - H. Your Belief That Your Deepest Aspirations Will Eventually Be Fulfilled Hereafter Is All In Vain.
 - I. Your Inter Desire To Have A Permanent Existence With A Recognizable Spiritual Body After Physical Death, Is All In Vain.

CONCLUSION:

God provided A Lamb – and that Lamb is Jesus Christ whose death and resurrection makes possible your complete forgiveness of sin, your total deliverance from selfishness, and your ultimate salvation in heaven.

CHAPTER 37

"WHAT IF THERE WERE NO RESURRECTION?"

INTRODUCTION:

Yes, God hath provided a Lamb! When John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus, he said, *"Behold, the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world!"*

Abraham's son, Isaac, was at the last minute, spared from dying, but God's Son, Jesus, was not spared from dying! Jesus is God's sacrifice, which he allowed to die on Mount Calvary. It says in Romans 8:32 *"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"*

PROPOSITION:

I. WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED WHEN JESUS DIED?

A. GOD'S WRATH AGAINST SIN WAS APPEASED.

The penalty of sin is death, so he who sins must die. But when Jesus died, God's wrath against sin was turned upon Jesus. Because Jesus is God, God in reality turned His wrath against sin upon Himself. Therefore, the sinner is shielded from God's wrath, and is treated as if he had never sinned.

B. GOD'S JUSTICE WAS SATISFIED

When Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb, dying upon a Cross, God's justice was satisfied. God could not allow sin to go unpunished, and at the same time remain a just God. God remains just in His character and at the same time can justify guilty sinners - releasing them from the death penalty of sin - because of what Christ did on the Cross. Because the Innocent One - Christ - died for the guilty ones - the human race - God can now release the guilty ones, for the demands of justice have been met. God will not punish twice for one crime. If the guilty one accepts what the Innocent One - Christ - has done for them, then they are released from the death penalty, are set free, and are treated as if they had never sinned.

C. God's Love Was Conclusively And Magnificently Demonstrated.

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When Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb of God, God’s Love Was Conclusively and Magnificently Demonstrated. Greater love has never been revealed than what was revealed on Mount Calvary. Calvary love proves that there has been at the very heart of God a cross forever! God is by nature love, and He can do nothing that is ‘out of character’ with holy Love! Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for His enemies. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son”,* to die as a sacrificial Lamb.

God provided the Lamb, but never forget the fact that Jesus’ coming to earth was voluntary! Jesus willingly consented to the Father’s request to come to earth to die on a Cross as a sacrificial Lamb!

Because Jesus willingly gave His life as a substitute for humanity, Jesus’ death appeased God’s wrath, satisfied God’s justice, and demonstrated God’s love.

II. WHAT IF THERE WERE NO RESURRECTION?

But what if Jesus – the Lamb of God – had not been raised from the dead? What if there was no resurrection?

Paul wrote, *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.”* (1 Corinthians 15:17, 18)

A. Your Faith In God’s Love Is In Vain.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God’s love is in vain! If Jesus was the sinless Son of God and if God would have allowed His Son to stay in the grave permanently to rot, then we would have to conclude that God was both unjust and loveless. Then we are back to where Huxley, the atheist, was when he said, “I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that God is love.” But God did raise Christ from the dead, showing to all that God loved His sinless Son so much that He would not let the hatred of men have the final word!

B. Your Faith In God’s Integrity Is In Vain.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God’s integrity is in vain! God promised to establish His long-predicted Messianic kingdom upon the foundation of the resurrection. God promised to raise His Son from the dead. If Jesus would have remained in the grave, then God’s promises would prove to be false and God’s claim to integrity would be invalidated. But, God is never slack in fulfilling His promises. *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as*

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some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9)
God is always true to His Word! God raised Christ from the dead in order to keep His promises and to maintain His integrity!

C. Your Faith In God's Power Is In Vain.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God's power is in vain! If Christ would not have been raised from the dead, then it would be true to say that death is stronger than life, evil is stronger than righteousness, Satan is stronger than God! Satan claimed victory when he saw Jesus hang His head in death on the cross. However, Satan was crushed three days later when he looked into an empty tomb and knew that Jesus was to ascend to the right hand of His Father's kingly throne! The demons' cries of triumph on Calvary's Friday suddenly turned into cries of terror on Easter morning! Christ disarmed the power of Satan!

“Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus my Saviour!
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign;
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!”

The greatest weapon of Satan has always been death. When Christ arose from the dead, Jesus captured Satan's chief weapon!

The resurrection is what makes Jesus the conquering King and Satan the defeated foe! The broken seal on Jesus' tomb on Easter Sunday becomes Satan's seal of death! God has already appointed his day of execution and has told what will be his final destiny! *“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”* (Revelations 20:10)

D. Your Faith In God's Justice Is In Vain.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God's justice is in vain! Do you believe that 'though the wrong seems often so very strong, that God is Ruler yet'? Do you believe that ultimately all evil will be punished and that all good will be rewarded? Do you believe

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that this is a Moral Universe that there is a Moral God who shall finally ‘balance the books’, redressing evil, and rewarding righteousness?

If there is no resurrection, then your desires for justice to be rendered, in the affairs of men are all in vain! If there is no resurrection, then there is no hope that evil men will be brought to justice, that evil will be destroyed, that Satan will be vanquished, that righteous men will ultimately be recognized and rewarded!

The evil forces of men went unchallenged, the lies of men went unchecked for the first day and the second day following Christ’s death, but on the third day – on Easter Sunday Morning - the evil of men and the lies of men were exposed for what they really were, and the truth of God and the justice of God were made manifest! Jesus arose from the dead, showing that the truth of God is stronger than the lies of men, and the justice of God is stronger than the injustice of men!

Oftentimes in this present life, wrong goes unpunished and right goes unrewarded. In this life, it sometimes seems that the balance is tipped in favor of the wrong. One is tempted to ask with the Psalmist, *“How long shall the wicked triumph?”* (Psalms 94:3) When Jesus was crucified, it seemed that evil was triumphant and justice was mocked, but God’s resurrection of Jesus vindicated God’s righteousness and justice. The resurrection is proof that ultimately righteousness will be rewarded and evil will be punished.

E. Your Faith In Christ’s Righteousness Is In Vain.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead then your faith in Christ’s righteousness is in vain! Jesus’ claim to be sinless would be invalidated without the resurrection. The penalty of sin is both physical and spiritual death. Therefore, if Jesus would have stayed in the tomb, one would have to conclude that Jesus was no different than any other man, that Jesus was (like everyone else) a sinner and thus subject to the penalty of sin, which is death! For God to have allowed Jesus to remain in the tomb would have been a sign that Jesus was not God, that Jesus was not the sinless Son who was not subject to sin’s final death. However, if He had not been raised from the dead we would have to conclude that He died for His own sins. In that case, His claims to sinlessness would be invalidated and we would have to conclude that He was a mere man, full of sin like the rest of humanity!

F. Your Faith In God’s Power To Change Human Nature Is In Vain.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your faith in God’s power to change human nature is in vain! Do you ever long to be

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different; to be self-controlled; serene, loving, contributive, winsome, faithful, and confident? Do you ever wish that you could start life all over again? Do you ever wish that your secret past would no longer haunt you? Have you ever wished that your guilt could be resolved and that your future could be bright with hope and cheer?

What needs most in life to be changed – self-centered human nature – takes a power greater than the greatest of human powers and abilities. No psychiatrist, priest, or scientist can permanently change human nature from greed to compassion, from hate to love, from self-centeredness to humility, from perversion to purity! What power then is available to change human nature? The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to transform human nature! The Christ, who defied the power of death and left the tomb empty tomb, is the same Christ whose power is able to accomplish the humanly impossible – to change a bad man into a good man! However, without the resurrection of Jesus, man’s moral transformation is impossible, for human transformation is dependent upon no lesser power than the power of the resurrection!

Paul makes it clear in (I Corinthians 15:14-18); *“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.”* If Christ had not been raised, then one’s faith is useless and futile, and Christians are still in their sins! If there is no resurrection, then there is no power to transform people’s lives, and without moral transformation (spiritual conversion) people who die are lost eternally!

G. Your Faith In The Possibility Of Establishing A Personal And Intimate Relationship With God Is Futile.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead then your faith in the possibility of establishing a personal and intimate relationship with God is futile. Without the shedding of Jesus’ blood, there is no remission for sins, but the shedding of Jesus’ blood is not, in itself, the basis for man’s remission of sins. Jesus’ blood (the sacrifice of his life) was only effective if His blood was sinless. We have already noted that the resurrection proved that Jesus was more than a mere man and that His claims to absolute sinlessness were based on the facts of reality rather than on the wishful imaginations of an insane egomaniac! The resurrection proved Christ’s righteousness, and it also proved that

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Jesus' sinless blood alone has the power to cleanse away sin and to reconcile sinful man to the Holy God. The High Priests of the Old Testament dared not go into the inner 'Holy of Holies' - the innermost room of the Temple - to approach God in behalf of the nation of Israel without the possession of the blood of animal sacrifices. It was the sacrificial blood that gave them right of access to the altogether Holy God.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead proved that Jesus' blood was more than the mere blood of a man. His blood was the blood of the Innocent One. Because His blood was shed once-and-for-all for the unholy race of humanity, each person, who places his personal trust in Christ, gains personal access to the Father. The believer who trusts alone in the merits of Jesus' holy blood, as the basis for his forgiveness, now may enter boldly into the 'Holy of Holies' - into God's intimate presence - without fear of being destroyed or rejected!

The moment Jesus died, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. *“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split.”* (Matthew 27:51) Because the Sinless One - Jesus - had paid the price on the cross for the guilty ones - the human race - God could destroy the dividing walls between God and man. The tearing of the temple curtain from top to bottom symbolized the tearing away of all barriers that had separated the holy God from the unholy and common lot of humanity! Each person now has the possibility of personal access to Almighty God, resulting in the establishment of an intimate and permanent love relationship with the all - holy God!

But the splitting of the Temple curtain (symbolizing personal access to the Father) would never have happened if the death of Christ had not been followed by the Resurrection of Christ! The resurrection proved that Jesus was God's sinless High Priest who alone has the right to tear down (once-and-for-all) the dividing curtain and who alone, based on His righteous character, has the sufficient merits to bring every human being into the intimate presence of the altogether Holy God! It is because of the resurrection that man has a possibility of establishing a personal and intimate relationship with God (as symbolized by the 'holies of holies' in the inner part of the Temple). Without the resurrection of Jesus, man would be alienated forever from God, lost and condemned in his sins! He would not be able to enter into the 'holy of holies' - into the inner sanctuary of God's intimate presence to enjoy sweet communion.

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H. Your Belief That Your Deepest Aspirations Will Eventually Be Fulfilled Hereafter Is All In Vain.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your belief that your deepest aspirations will eventually be fulfilled hereafter is all in vain! If man's aspirations are so real to him, and these aspirations cannot possibly be fulfilled within the short span of a lifetime, then the very presence of the growing aspirations points to a fulfillment beyond the confines of time, a fulfillment that reaches into eternity. However, if aspirations are to be fulfilled in eternity, there must be a life hereafter. Nevertheless, there can be no life hereafter if Christ did not rise from the dead. Therefore, Christ's resurrection is necessary as the foundation for the fulfillment of man's deepest aspirations.

Man spends his entire lifetime, striving to grow, working to create, and laboring to accumulate wisdom and knowledge; and then man dies with a thousand unfulfilled dreams! Does death end it all? Is there no future opportunity for man's deepest longings to be fulfilled. Without the resurrection of Jesus, there is no resurrection for man and without a resurrection for man, there is no opportunity for life's deepest aspirations to find fulfillment! The satisfaction of man's deepest aspirations in the supernatural, immortal realm is only made possible because of Christ's resurrection.

The lungs are made for air, the stomach for food, the eyes for beauty, and the ears for music. Are not the deepest aspirations of your spirit created by God to be fulfilled by God in eternity? Because Christ lives, your aspirations will never die!

I. Your Inner Desire To Have A Permanent Existence With A Recognizable Spiritual Body After Physical Death Is All In Vain.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then your intense desire to have a permanent existence with a recognizable spiritual body after physical death is all in vain! Belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus gives the foundation of hope in the subsequent resurrection of the body of true believers. Notes Paul, "Death came into the world because of what one man (Adam) did, and it is because of what this other man (Christ) has done that now there is the resurrection from the dead. Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, being members of his sinful race, and wherever there is sin, death results. However, all who are related to Christ will rise again. Each, however, in his own turn: Christ rose first; then when Christ comes back, all His people will become alive again...The bodies we have now embarrass us for they become sick and die; but they will be full of glory when we come back to life again. Yes, they are weak, dying bodies now, but when we live

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again they will be full of strength. They are just human bodies at death, but when they come back to life, they will be superhuman bodies. For just as there are natural, human bodies, there are also supernatural, spiritual bodies.” *“For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming.”* (I Corinthians 15:21, Living Bible) *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”* (I Corinthians 15:42-44, Living Bible)

CONCLUSION:

What if there was no resurrection? Then one’s faith in God’s love, God’s integrity, God’s power, and God’s justice would all be in vain – useless, empty, and meaningless! Then one’s faith in Christ’s righteousness – faith that Jesus was sinless and thus more than a mere man – would be an illusion! What if there was no resurrection? Then humanity is permanently in the grip of sin’s bondage and there is no power available to transform human nature! If there is no resurrection, then there is no sinless High Priest who can remove the veil that separates Holy God from sinful man. Moreover, if the veil cannot be removed, then man cannot enter into an intimate and lasting fellowship with God, but every person is left estranged and condemned in his sins! If there is no resurrection, then man’s deepest aspirations will all die when man dies physically! In addition, there is no life hereafter, no possibility of receiving a new and deathless spiritual body in eternity!

But God provided a Lamb – and that Lamb is Jesus Christ whose death and resurrection makes possible your complete forgiveness of sin, your total deliverance from selfishness, and your ultimate salvation in heaven!

Have you placed your faith alone in the resurrected Christ? Remember, the object of your faith determines the value of your faith! Christ is a very trustworthy object for your faith. Trust Him today for your salvation. His blood alone can cleanse you from all sin, for He is God’s Lamb – the Lamb who died and who arose again from the grave! Because He lives, you can be forgiven of your past and you can confidently face tomorrow!

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CHAPTER 38

"THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION!"

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 38

SCRIPTURE: *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."* (I Peter 1:3-5)

INTRODUCTION:

The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that God has released into the world of needy men to enable them to face and to overcome the enemies of humanity – the devil, deceit, discouragement and defeat, and death!

PROPOSITION:

The one who puts his faith in the resurrected Christ is the one who can experience great power over all of humanity's enemies.

- I. POWER OVER THE DEVIL
- II. POWER OVER DECEIT
- III. POWER OVER DEFEAT
- IV. POWER OVER DEATH

CONCLUSION:

The resurrection of Jesus teaches us that Christ is stronger than Satan, that truth is stronger than falsehoods, that God's purposes are stronger than life's perplexities, and that life is stronger than death.

CHAPTER 38

"THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION!"

INTRODUCTION:

We are living in a power-hungry age! People want power! Some want the power of authority. Thus, we have many dictators - both small and great, both political and domestic. Some want the power of wealth. Thus, we have many materialists - i.e., money-hungry people who believe that life consists in the abundance of things which a man possesses. Some want the power of knowledge. Thus, we have many intellectuals who believe that science and technology are the 'prime movers' in society and the answers to all of man's ills, socially and economically, and even religiously.

People want power and authority. However, the power that people most need (whether they realize it or not) is the power to cope with life and with death and with the unseen spiritual forces of evil.

The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that God has released into the world of needy men to enable them to face and to overcome the enemies of humanity - the devil, deceit, discouragement and defeat, and death!

PROPOSITION:

The one who puts his faith in the resurrected Christ is the one who can experience great power over all of humanity's enemies: Power over the devil, Power over deceit and falsehoods, Power over defeat, and Power over death.

I. POWER OVER THE DEVIL

"The clash you see at Calvary was not only between Jesus and His enemies: it was between God and the devil - the two great world powers grappling there, locked in wrestler's grip. And if the cross finished things, then down in the underworld that night there must have run a savage cry, 'We win! We win! God is blotted out.' Power? said Paul: 'If Christ is not raised, don't tell me God is power.'" (The Gates of New Life; Stewart; pg. 163)

What Satan thought was his greatest triumph became in reality his greatest tragedy! Satan claimed victory when he saw Jesus hang His head in death on the cross. Satan was crushed three days later, when he looked into an empty tomb and knew that Jesus was to ascend to the right hand of His Father's kingly throne! The demons' cries of triumph on Calvary's Friday suddenly

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turned into cries of terror on Easter morning! Christ disarmed the power of Satan!

“Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus, my Saviour!
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, my Lord!

Up from the grave he arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
He arose, a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign:
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the believer is assured of victory over Satan. Satan is a terrible foe, a foe that is fierce, terrible, in his subtle temptations, and strong in his attacks. Satan is very deceptive. He is able to transform himself into an 'angel of light', thus pretending to be good and to do good. He is like a 'roaring lion', prowling around, seeking to devour whom he will. On one occasion, Jesus told Peter that He (Jesus) was praying for Peter, for Satan desired to have Peter in order that he might 'sift him like wheat!' Satan is altogether evil in his intent and desires. He is a liar, a murderer, and a thief.

Christians are told to watch and to pray lest they enter into temptation, for the spirit of man is willing and ready to be faithful, but too often, the flesh (one's humanity) is weak and vulnerable. The flesh (or human weaknesses and frailties) can become the 'bridgehead' for sin. Christians are told to have on the whole armour of God in order that they may be prepared to do spiritual battle against sin and Satan. (Ephesians 6) Christians are told to resist the devil in order that the devil may flee from the Christian. (James 4:7) Christians are to follow the examples of Jesus who, when He was tempted, used the Word of God (Bible) against the Devil. (Matthew 4)

Christians are to realistically acknowledge the terrible forces of evil. Wrote Paul to the Ephesians, *"For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against people without bodies - the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world."* (Ephesians 6:12, Living Bible) Christians are never to deny the reality of Satan and of demonic forces. Indeed, there is strong evidence today that Satan and his demonic forces are on the loose, doing their deceptive and, at times, their blatantly obvious evil works.

However, while believers are never lightly to regard the reality and the power of Satan and are never to be off their guard against his terrible attacks, on the other hand, believers are confidently and calmly to claim their victory over

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Satan. Christians have a right to exercise authority over Satan, not because Christians are righteous enough or spiritually strong enough to do so, but because Christians are claiming the power that raised Christ from the dead as the power that they use to defeat Satan today. Christians are hid in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when the resurrected Christ stands against Satan and declares him a defeated foe, believers too are standing against Satan and declaring him a defeated foe!

In his famous song "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God", Martin Luther realistically portrays both the terrible trickery and power of Satan, and yet the Christian's total victory over Satan - all because of the person and the work of the resurrected Christ.

Do you, as a believer, realize that you do not fight for a victory, but that you fight from a victory? The victory, over Satan, has already been won - on Easter Morning! May God help each of us to claim that historic victory as our personal victory! Remember, when you place your faith in Jesus, you are placing your faith in One who has conquered your greatest enemy - Satan!

May I ask you 'Have you placed your faith in the Resurrected Christ?' 'Is He your personal Saviour?' 'Do you realize that without Christ, you will be defeated and destroyed by Satan?' Christ died for your forgiveness. Come to Him today!

II. POWER OVER DECEIT

The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that truth is stronger than falsehood. Jesus was crucified, based on falsehoods. Jesus was falsely accused and Jesus died because of cruel lies! If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, then falsehood would prove to be stronger than truth. But the fact of the resurrection of Jesus teaches us forever that truth triumphs over falsehoods. Satan can do great damage and he can exercise fierce power because of his use of lies, deception, and falsehoods; but the resurrection of Jesus teaches us that, though the wrong seems oft so strong because of Satan's seeming effective use of falsehood, deception, nevertheless, truth will finally and ultimately triumph over falsehood. Truth has the final word - not falsehood!

"How far can lies go? Lies can put the purest and gentlest and most truthful person on the cross today and tomorrow, but the third day, no! The universe is not built for the success of a lie...Life cannot stand upon the insecurity of a lie. A lie has nothing behind it except itself. The universe makes a lie break itself upon the universe. The universe is not broken for it is established on God's truth. So how far can lies go. A long way! They twisted his words and made them into lies. He was crucified on lies. Therefore, lies can go the first day and second day, but the third day, no! How many lies did it take to try to break the truth of the Gospel? They gave some persons money in those days

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to say that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus. Jesus raised the question on the cross and answered it in the resurrection. How much money do you think it will take to stop the Christian Gospel now?

“How far can evil go in a world of this kind? Does the moral universe bend to evil? The answer is No! Today, tomorrow, but the third day no, the third day evil breaks itself upon the facts of life. The word EVIL in English is the word LIVE spelled backward. In other words, the universe is not built to accept evil. Only truth has the moral universe behind it. There is nothing behind evil except evil. Today and tomorrow evil may be strong, but the third day evil breaks itself upon the nature of reality. For the Christian Gospel and reality are one - in fullest accord. The sum total of reality is behind the Christian Gospel. So the Christian code, which is now a character, becomes a question mark today, tomorrow, but the third day it becomes an exclamation point. Jesus is alive! HE IS RISEN!” (The Divine Yes; pgs. 105-107; E. S. Jones)

When you are tempted to think that the way of falsehood and deception and lying is the way of ease and convenience, leading to success, just remember that you are living in a moral universe - a universe created by a holy God who will ultimately destroy the wicked man and save the righteous and honest man.

III. POWER OVER DEFEAT

From a human viewpoint, it seemed that Jesus was a failure. He had no home to call his own; he depended upon his friends to sustain him financially; he was misunderstood by the very people whom he sought to help, including his own mother, brothers, and sisters. He was betrayed by one of his own disciples; he died a criminal's death and was buried in a stranger's grave. It seemed that the cause of Christ went down in defeat, as Jesus cried out in agony from the cross on that dark Friday of long ago, *“My God, why have you forsaken me?”* It seemed that Jesus was totally engulfed in defeat and in despair!

But, the darkness of that black Friday was turned into the brightness of indescribable glory on Easter Sunday Morning! Defeat turned into victory, darkness turned into light, tragedy turned into triumph. Dark Friday became 'Good Friday' because of Easter Sunday Morning. The self-proclaimed Messiah, who was crucified in darkness, amidst cynical mockers, arose victoriously from the dead amidst dazzled followers.

The resurrection of Jesus forever teaches us that God can turn the bitterness of defeat into the sweetness of victory. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that God has released into the world to give humans strength to turn adversities into victories, and stumbling blocks into stepping

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stones. Defeat does not have the final word! Ultimate victory will replace temporary adversities, setbacks, and defeats.

Notes Samuel Shoemaker: “Because we are hooked and geared to a Power greater than any other in the world, Christians are able to meet the trouble, sorrow and pain of this world with victory. There are those, I know, who believe that faith ought to be a kind of guarantee against trouble. If so, Jesus had very little faith, for He faced a great deal of trouble in His life, including final execution. His verdict upon it all was, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation’, that is the simple, realistic fact; ‘but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world’ – that is the extra fact of faith. Tribulation and triumph – triumph in and through tribulation. This is Christian victory. Jesus gave us no guarantee against trouble, but against defeat. Like all men, Christians face sickness, treachery, hard circumstance, old age, death. But, Christians meet these things victoriously. This is because there are, in every situation, two factors: There is what happens, and there is how I take what happens. This is why character may always be superior to circumstance. I cannot always control what happens; I can nearly always control how I take what happens. But how I take what happens goes back to what kind of person I am, and what kind of belief I have about life as a whole. If the whole scheme of life is not a scheme at all but a chaos, if there is no thread of purpose running through it all but only confusion, then my misfortune is just part of the general mess. But if God is, and if life is His creation with meaning in the middle of it, then I may hope to discover a pattern which will both give coherence to it all and help to interpret any one event in the unfoldment. Then, may happen that climax of faith, which enabled St. Paul to say, ‘All things work together for good to them that love God.’ Or as the R.S.V. puts it: *‘In everything God works for good with those who love him.’*” (pgs. 120-121 in “How to Become a Christian)

If you are presently experiencing defeat and discouragement in your life, then turn to the living Christ whose resurrection power has the ability to turn your sorrows into joys, your defeats into victories, your failures into successes. When Jesus arose from the dead, He did not give us a guarantee against trouble, but He did give us a guarantee against defeat! The resurrection of Jesus gives us power over defeat! In spite of all that life ‘threw’ at Jesus, Jesus was not defeated! Put your faith in the dauntless and undefeated Christ, and, in spite of what life deals out to you, you too can be victorious and undefeated!

IV. POWER OVER DEATH

When God raised Christ from the dead, He showed that Christ is more powerful than Satan is. Jesus’ resurrection also showed that life is stronger than death.

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The greatest weapon of Satan has always been death. When Christ arose from the dead, Jesus captured Satan's chief weapon! Wrote Paul (in I Corinthians 15:55, 56) *“Where, O Death is your victory? Where, O Death is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (NIV)

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.

By placing your faith in Jesus Christ and surrendering yourself to the lordship of Christ, you are assured of eternal life. You will not be, eternally separated from God. The one who believes in Jesus Christ *“is given eternal life...and shall never perish.”* (John 11:26, Living Bible) *“And all who trust him – God’s Son – to save them have eternal life; those who don’t believe and obey him shall never see heaven, but the wrath of God remains upon them.”* (John 3:36, Living Bible)

Not only will you be given eternal life, but also you will be given a new resurrected body. Just as Christ arose from the dead, coming back to life in His glorious resurrected body, which was no longer subject to death, so believers too will be given a new and glorious resurrected body.

“But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back, all his people will become alive again. (I Corinthians 15:20-23, Living Bible)

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 form that I loved, my brothers loved, my father

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loved, as well as many people. 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."*

CONCLUSION:

The resurrection of Jesus teaches us that Christ is stronger than Satan, that truth is stronger than falsehoods, that God's purposes are stronger than life's perplexities, and that life is stronger than death.

Do you fear the tricks and strategies of Satan? Then turn to the resurrected Christ whose power to break the strongholds of Satan was conclusively proven when the stone was rolled away on that first Easter Morning!

Are you distressed that you live in a world that seems to wink at falsehoods and which believes that corruption and lies are the seedbeds for worldly success? Then remember anew the words of the Lord to David. *"The good man - the blameless, the upright, the man of peace - he has a wonderful future ahead of him. For him there is a happy ending. But evil men shall be destroyed, and their prosperity shall be cut off."* (Psalms 37:37, 38; Living Bible) *"The universe is not built to accept evil. Only truth has the moral universe behind it...Today and tomorrow evil may be strong, but the third day evil breaks itself upon the nature of reality."* (E. S. Jones) Remember, Jesus arose on the third day. This means that, while lies and falsehoods may prevail on the first and on the second days, on the third day, lies will be exposed and evil will be vanquished! Truth is stronger than falsehood, and truth will ultimately prevail!

Are you, as a Christian, facing sickness, tribulations, financial reverses, old age and death? Just remember that, while it is true that the resurrection of Jesus does not guarantee freedom from all trouble, the power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that can turn your seeming tragedies into triumphs and your stumbling blocks into steppingstones! Your seeming defeats can be turned into glorious victories!

Are you afraid to die? Then remember that life is stronger than death, that Christ has promised to give you a new and glorious heavenly body. *"For our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever."* (I Corinthians 15:53, Living Bible)

Do you want power over the devil, over deceit, over defeat, over death? Then surrender yourself to the living Christ now and pray the following prayer!

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“Loving Creator, thank you for life’s clues to spiritual Reality. The lungs are made for air, the stomach for food, the eyes for beauty, and the ears for music. Are not the deepest aspirations of my spirit created by God to be fulfilled by God in eternity? Because Christ lives, our aspirations will not die! O Christ, you who defied the power of death and left the tomb empty, let that same power that accomplished the humanly impossible be exercised in our lives today to change us into the kind of persons you want us to be. We choose, not to become better persons, but rather new persons, through your transforming power – the power of the resurrection.

Mighty God, we see that we do not fight for a victory; we fight from a victory! The victory over Satan has already been won on Easter Morning. Help us today to claim that historic victory as our personal victory. When we place our faith in Jesus, we are placing our faith in the One who has conquered our greatest enemy – death! Victorious Christ, the judgment of the enemy guarantees the execution of the enemy! The crushing of the serpent’s head guarantees the total destruction of the serpent! Satan shall no longer be ‘on the loose’!

In place of our despair, give us your hope. In place of our poverty, give us your spiritual riches. In place of our weakness, give us your power – resurrection power. Touch each person with your love and renew and strengthen and encourage us – one and all in Jesus’ name!” Amen.

"WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!"

CHAPTER 39

"THE LOVELY PRESENCE ON THE LONELY ROAD!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 39

SCRIPTURE: *"That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along, they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. 16 But God kept them from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days." "What things?" Jesus asked. "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago. "Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said." Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. By this time, they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment, he disappeared! They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" And within the hour, they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, who said, "The Lord has really risen! Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread." (Luke 24:13-35)*

TEXT: *They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32)*

CHAPTER 39

"THE LOVELY PRESENCE ON THE LONELY ROAD!"

INTRODUCTION:

When the light of God's knowledge and confidence breaks through the darkness of doubt and sadness, transformed persons feel like standing "on tiptoe with joy"!

PROPOSITION:

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

Ultimately, there is only one solution to life’s problems – personal experience with the living Christ. It is on the lonely roads of life that one encounters the lovely presence of Christ.

I DEFINING THE PROBLEM (v. 17b)

- A. PROBLEM OF LOST JOYS (Grief) – (vs. 17-20)**
- B. PROBLEM OF LOST HOPES (Despair) – (v. 21)**
- C. PROBLEM OF LOST CONFIDENCE (Doubts) – (vs. 2:22-24)**

II. FINDING THE SOLUTION (vs. 25-32)

- A. OBJECTIVE WORD OF GOD (Scriptures – vs. 22-24)**
- B. SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF Christ - PERSONAL ACCEPTANCE – (vs. 28-32)**

III. SHARING THE ANSWER (vs. 33-35)

- A. EAGERNESS IN SHARING THE GOOD NEWS (v. 33)**
- B. JOY IN AN EXPERIENCE MUTUALLY SHARED (vs. 33, 34)**

CONCLUSION:

Run and tell others that you have found the answer – you have found the Christ! Your heart burns within you because of your encounter with the lovely Christ on the lonely paths of life! Christ has turned your grief into comfort, your despair into hope, and your doubts into confidence!

CHAPTER 39

"THE LOVELY PRESENCE ON THE LONELY ROAD!"

INTRODUCTION:

E. Stanley Jones tells of his first convert. "My first convert, as a lad of seventeen, was my grandmother, eighty-two years of age, I had just been converted and the day after Christmas I was in her room when she said, 'I suppose by next Christmas I'll not be here.' I asked, 'You're ready to go, aren't you?' She burst into tears, 'No, I'm not.' We knelt and prayed and in the midst of the praying, she clapped her hands with joy. She was in - at eighty-two."

Another man who had met the risen Christ in personal conversion, stood up in a meeting and said, "Before I was converted I wore out the heels of my shoes walking around the factory – I was run down at the heels. Now that I've been converted, I find that I am wearing out the toes of my shoes. Christianity puts me on my toes."

Notes Jones: "It does. Instead of rocking back on your heels, on the defensive and afraid of life, it tilts life forward, gives you a sense of fearless expectancy and adventure, and puts you on your toes. Instead of a Nay-saying person you become a Yea-saying person." (How to Be a Transformed Person; pg. 69)

What do these two simple illustrations reveal about a person who has a personal experience with the living Christ? Such a person who meets Christ is "On Tiptoe with Joy".

"On Tiptoe with Joy" – that is the exact title of a book about the Holy Spirit's ministry which I recently loaned to a friend. One night late, a few weeks ago, I received a phone call from that friend, and he excitedly related to me what had happened in his life, only a few minutes before he called me. Said he: "Ron, I read that book and I feel that I have found the answer that I have been looking for, for years. I have tried so hard to receive the Holy Spirit fully into my life. Through reading this book, I realized that all I needed to do was to simply ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I have made it so hard in my life and so complicated, and I find it is so simple. Just about ten minutes ago, I prayed and simply asked. I am so happy. I just had to share this experience with you." (Experience of Darrell Schweitzer)

The light of God's joy and confidence had once again broken through the darkness of doubt and sadness.

Only a few days before this man's experience, his wife knelt in my office, and with tears streaming down her cheeks, she prayed in confidence to be filled with the Holy Spirit. She left my office with a bright countenance and a joyous heart. This is what happens when people submit to the living Christ.

Today I want us to look together at two men on a lonely road, which led from Jerusalem to the small village town of Emmaus. "Wild flowers swept the countryside with their vivid coloring, and the birds were blithe and gay over the grassy meadowlands; but alas the two who went their way were too heavy of heart to take note of that glowing new life, that clear, singing rapture. How said they were, these former believers in the words of the Christ; How bowed down with grief. Their conversation that day was of nothing and of no one but their Lord – his words and his ways and all that had happened." (Proofs of His Presence, pg.221 by Grace Nell Crowell.

PROPOSITION:

These men had lost their joys. They had lost their hopes. They had lost their confidence. On the road of life, we too can be weighed down with grief, with despair, and with doubts. Ultimately,

“WE HAVE A GOD OF LOVE!”

there is only one solution to life’s problems – personal experience with the living Christ. It is on the lonely roads of life that one encounters the lovely presence of Christ.

In the story, life’s problems are defined, life’s problems are solved, and life’s answers are shared. In our lives, we too must define our problems, solve our problems, and share our answers.

I **DEFINING THE PROBLEM** (*“they stood still, their faces downcast.”* v. 17b)

The two men on the lonely, seven-mile road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, were heavy-hearted. The various translations reveal great sadness, despair and misery in the hearts of these two men. (v. 17)

“They stood still, their faces downcast.” (NIV)

“They halted their faces full of gloom.” (NEB)

“They stopped, their faces drawn with misery.” (Phillips)

“They stopped short, sadness written across their faces.” (Living Bible)

One’s countenance reveals one’s heart. A saddened countenance reveals a saddened heart.

These men had lost their joy, their hopes, and their confidence. Sadness, despair, and doubt filled their hearts. Their problems are the problems that millions have experienced - the problem of lost joys, the problem of lost hopes, and the problem of lost confidence.

“¹³That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. ¹⁵As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. ¹⁶But God kept them from recognizing him. (Luke 24: 13-16)

It is a glorious thought to realize that when a person is engrossed in life’s problems, walking the lonely roads of life, that there appears beside him the beautiful Presence. *“As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them.”* (v. 15)

Does Jesus care when life becomes hard and gloomy for you? “Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for mirth and song; as the burdens press, and the cares distress, and the way grows weary and long?”

“Does Jesus care when my way is dark with a nameless dread and fear? As the day light fades into deep night shades, does He care enough to be near?”

“Does Jesus care when I’ve said ‘good-bye’ to the dearest on earth to me, and my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks, Is it aught to Him? Does he see?”

“Oh yes, He cares; I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares.”
(Song – “Does Jesus Care?”)

On the lonely roads of life, there always appears the lovely Presence of Jesus. As you are ‘talking and discussing’ (v. 15) your life’s problems, the beautiful Jesus is suddenly found walking along beside you. Are you sad, lonely, and despairing? Is “sadness written across your face”? Then look up and reach out. You will find the lovely Presence walking beside you on your lonely roads of life. What are your problems? How would you describe them? Can they be defined? Are they the same essential problems which the two men on the Emmaus Road experienced?

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- A. **Problem Of Lost Joys (Grief) – (vs. 17-20)** ¹⁷ *He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?” They stopped short, sadness written across their faces.* ¹⁸ *Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.”* ¹⁹ *“What things?” Jesus asked. “The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people.* ²⁰ *But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and they crucified him.”*

**“Are you heavy-hearted, thinking all is lost?
Then reach out to Jesus, He’s reaching out to you.”**

Grief filled their lives. One whom they considered a great prophet, a great teacher and a loving person, had become the object of cruel hatred and crucifixion. Said the men: “Jesus was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.” (vs. 19-20) What an experience and expression of deep grief!

Grief is that agonizing, despairing feeling which one experiences when the good in life has suffered at the hands of evil. There are many kinds of grief. Grief is experienced when one feels that the good and the precious in life is being unjustly robbed out of his life. Grief comes when one feels helpless and hopeless in the tumble of cruel circumstances.

For instance, “a lady stands outside the hospital’s intensive care ward with friends. Together they peer in at her pain-racked husband. She says, ‘I’ve cried my eyes out. There is nothing left but a dull headache. He’s in a coma, and the doctor gives me no hope.’” (A Faith to Grow By; pg. 79)

What is grief? “Grief may be called life-shaking sorrow over loss.” (Robert Crandall)

There are many losses in life. Not just loss of a loved one through death. Loss of a friendship. Loss of a husband’s affection and understanding. Loss of a companion through divorce. Loss of the presence of a child who becomes a young adult and leaves home to go to college or to get married. Loss of a job or loss of an expected promotion. Grief comes in many forms, but common to all forms of grief is that life-shaking sorrow over loss. It is a dark, heavy, agonizing feeling.

One who grieves is one who experiences loneliness, a sense of deep loss, and a conscious or unconscious sense of anger.

If you are experiencing any kind of grief just now, – an intense form of grief or a mild form of grief – let me reassure you that the lovely Presence is walking beside you on that lonely road of grief.

- B. **PROBLEM OF LOST HOPES (Despair) – (v. 21)**

These men were men whose hopes had died. Said they, “We were hoping he was the one who was to come and set Israel free.” (v. 21, Phillips)

These men were men whose hopes had died. Said they, “*We were hoping he was the one who was to come and set Israel free.*” (v. 21, Phillips)

Little did these men know that indeed Jesus was the promised Messiah, but a Messiah who would rule with love, not with hate, and one who came to free all men from sin’s bondage, not to free Israel from the bondage of Roman rule.

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Why were these men disillusioned? Because their hopes for a new world were built upon a false foundation. Building their hopes upon a false concept of Messianic Power, their hopes died when their supposed military Messiah died.

Why has our age been termed the age of hopelessness? Because millions in our time have built their hopes for a new world upon a false foundation. Many have built their hopes upon the false premise that Man is all-sufficient, and all-wise, and all-powerful. The object of faith determines the value of faith. When the multitudes put their faith in the innate goodness of man and in the un failing power of science, the multitudes centered their faith in that which proved to fail. Despair and cynicism resulted. Human nature turns out to be, not innately good, but tainted and tarnished and selfish, through and through.

The ‘Golden Calf’ of Science, before which many Americans worshipped for decades, has failed to satisfy man’s longings and to fulfill man’s dreams. A new world of universal peace, accomplished by scientific technology, has turned out to be a world filled with ever-increasing problems. Pollution, crimes, family dissolution, starvation, terrorism, anarchy – these are evidences, not of man’s innate goodness and science’s un failing power, but of man’s original and overt sins and of man’s misplaced hopes.

Have you lost your hope because your hope was founded on false foundations? Are you personally basing your hope on money, property, people, possessions, power, politicians, prestige, knowledge, technology? Is your hope misplaced like that of the men on the lonely road to Emmaus?

Have you lost your hope? Hope is fragile and hope can only be kept alive by centering it upon God. Hope thou only in God, for God alone has the power to perfect and to fulfill your hopes.

C. PROBLEM OF LOST CONFIDENCE (Doubts) – (vs. 22-24)

²² “Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. ²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! ²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.”

The report of the vision of angels by the women at the tomb troubled the minds of the two men. Secondhand reports concerning the empty tomb were not sufficient proof to these men. Only the verifiable, firsthand appearance of Jesus Himself would be convincing to these men.

These men were troubled by honest doubts. They could not take someone else’s word. They must know for themselves. Their lost confidence in Jesus’ reality could only be restored by personal encounter with the living Christ.

There are doubts that come to life – honest doubts which seek for honest answers, in the light of adequate evidence. There is some doubting which comes in the very process of discovering the reality of God in our personal lives. There is an honest intellectual doubting which is the shadow-side of belief. One cannot honestly believe unless he has honestly worked through his intellectual doubts.

One must know that his beliefs are based on objective truth, for it is the object of faith that determines the value of belief. To accept anything in an unthinking way is possibly to accept error.

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The Bible exhorts us to work out our own salvation with ‘fear and trembling’ (Philippians 2:12b), and we could add ‘work out your salvation with the aid of honest doubts which will lead to honest beliefs.’

Honest intellectual doubting leads one to the adequacy of the evidence that results in the assurance of the heart.

Have you felt or do you now feel that you are on a lonely road of darkening doubts? Do questions fill your mind and doubts gnaw at your soul? Do you feel like you have lost God?

William Sangster, the great British preacher, tells of a dark and doubting time in his life. “I felt I had lost God. Spiritual things had become unreal time in his life. “I felt I had lost God. Spiritual things had become unreal to me. Doubts darkened my mind. I lost appetite for the holy vocation to which I believed God had called me. The conviction grew in my heart that the one thing an honorable man could do would be to give it up. And yet I wanted God. In those months of awful darkness, nothing was more sure to me than my hunger for Him. All the varied wants of my heart had become resolved into the one great cry of the questing soul, ‘Oh, that I knew where I might find Him.’ One night I had reached the breaking point. My mind was wearing with the effort of pondering these problems over and over again. My heart was sick with hope long deferred. I sat at midnight in the darkness of my study on the border of despair, when a friend came to me with words of unsurpassed comfort. He knew my need. He said, ‘I know those words will not seem magical to you, but I have no language to describe the effect they had then upon me. To my poor soul, they were the authentic words of the loving God. I grasped the truth of what he said. This hunger – the one consuming passion of my soul – a mark of His presence. The God I had sought for was here at home. He was IN my heart; the hunger as well as the food. He seemed to say ‘Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not know Me?’ In that moment I knew the trembling joy of having God in my heart and KNOWING He was there. And that was the real beginning of an intimate experience of God in me. If you deeply want Him, in some measure you already have Him. Turn and recognize His presence.” (Daily Readings; pg. 164)

What is your problem? What road of life are you traveling? Is it the lonely road of grief? Is it the lonely road of despair? Is it the lonely road of doubt? Remember, there is a Lovely Presence on all the Lonely Roads of Life.

How can these problems be solved? We have defined the problem of lost joys, lost hopes, lost confidence. Let us now find the solution to life’s problems. How did the two men on the Emmaus Road find the solution to their problems?

II. FINDING THE SOLUTION (Our hearts burned within us.” v. 32) (vs. 25-32)

How can we regain our lost joys, lost hopes, and lost confidence? How can we find assurance in place of our doubts? In two ways – the objective Word (Bible) and in the subjective experience (encounter with Christ personally).

A. OBJECTIVE WORD OF GOD (25-27) *“²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” ²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

The answers to many of man’s dilemmas are answered in the Scriptures. Like these two men on the Emmaus Road, why are many today “foolish and slow of heart”? Because there has been a neglect of the Scriptures. Because there has been disbelief of the prophets who prophesied in the Bible. Negligence and disbelief spell doubt and discouragement. The basic answers to life’s problems are found in the Bible. The accounts tell us that Jesus began with Moses and all the

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Prophets and explained to the two men what was said in all the Scriptures concerning the coming Messiah. Jesus opened up the Scriptures to them.

In a world filled with false prophets and heretical doctrines, it is important to read and to understand the truth of God as recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

The Bible clearly reveals the character of God and the purposes of God. The Bible contains thousands of promises.

However, as important as the Bible is, in answering man's questions and in solving man's dilemmas, the Bible is no substitute for personal invitation of Jesus into your life. The Bible is the objective truth about God, written for all to read and to comprehend. The written Word, honestly encountered, leads one to Christ, the living Word. The Objective Word of God leads one to the subjective experience of the living Christ.

B. Subjective Experience Of Christ. (Personal Acceptance) (v. 28-32) ²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, ²⁹ but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. ³⁰ As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment, he disappeared! ³² They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

(1) Personal decision to accept Jesus into personal life (vs. 28-29)

²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, ²⁹ but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them.

(a) Man's frightening gift (free will). "The one thing that makes us uniquely human is that, unlike the other creatures, we are able to say both 'yes' and 'no' to God. Man does not do the will of his Creator by necessity the stars in the sky follow their prescribed orbits, the animals of the field obey their instincts, but man has this unique and frightening ability – he can refuse to be obedient to his Creator. For God does not want slaves, but sons." (God's Unfolding Purpose; pg. 36)

Each of us is free to allow Jesus to "go on his way", or we are free to say (as the two men said), "Stay with us."

(b) Jesus' restrained Presence. (Allows free will to be exercised) Jesus is a perfect gentlemen; He never forces Himself into any man's life. He will not come into any man's life except by personal invitation.

(2) Personal fellowship in Christ's presence. (v. 30) *³⁰ As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them.*

When one first accepts Jesus into his life, he may not fully understand the fuller significance of Jesus' personhood and identity. I accepted Jesus on a Monday morning (March 12, 1956), but it was not until the following Saturday afternoon that the fuller consciousness and assurance of Jesus' presence in my life was realized. It was on that Saturday afternoon, five days after my initial invitation of Jesus into my life, that my spiritual eyes were opened, and assurance flooded my heart.

John Wesley knew Jesus intellectually for many years and even preached Him as Saviour and God to hundreds of people, before he himself had what he called his 'heart-warming' experience

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at Aldersgate. It was when he was in his 30's that he received personal assurance that his sins were forgiven and assurance that he was fully received by God. Notice that these two men did not appreciate the identity of Jesus even after He was invited into their home.

(3) Personal recognition of Jesus in His True Personhood. (vs. 31- 32) *“³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment, he disappeared! ³² They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?”*

After being in Jesus’ presence for a time, one’s understanding of the true identity of Jesus opens up to him. A person may at first see Jesus as one to be feared, but after being in His presence for a while, one sees Jesus as a person to be loved and cherished. No longer does one see Jesus as a Judge, but he sees Jesus as the Friend of friends. Knowledge about Jesus is replaced with knowledge of Jesus. It is not hearsay about the Messiah, but it is now personal, firsthand encounter with the Messiah. Such an experience caused the men’s hearts to deeply burn within them.

III. SHARING THE ANSWER (vs. 33-35)

A. Eagerness Sharing The Good News (v. 33) *“³³ And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them,”*

When one truly meets and experiences the living Christ in a personal way, he cannot keep the Good News to himself. He must share that Good News.

It is contradiction in terms to talk about a silent witness. A witness is one who verbally shares.

A businessman was saved in a Billy Graham Crusade, and the following Sunday night he went to a Church where he met the man with whom the new Christian had associated in business for twenty-three years. The new Christian asked the business associate, “Have you known Christ as Saviour all of twenty-three years?” “Yes, I have,” replied the man. The new Christian then said, “You know, I have admired you so much that I felt that if a man could be as fine a man as you and not be a Christian, then I don’t need to be a Christian either.” (The Art of Personal Witnessing; by Sanny; pg. 71)

We witness by our lives, and our actions and reactions. True. However, a verbal witness is needed in order to clarify the life witness, and to verify goodness of God’s Spirit who lives within. One’s life witness by itself may be misinterpreted or misunderstood, whereas one’s verbal witness can supplement and better interpret the intention of one’s life witness.

When one really experiences the Resurrection power of Christ in his life, his legs and his mouth will be activated. These two men hastened to share the Good News. “They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem.” (v. 33)) “It was seven miles’ tramp back to Jerusalem, but they could not keep the good news to themselves.” (Barclay’s Luke; pg. 310)

Their new experience of the Resurrected Christ set their legs in motion. This divine encounter with Christ set their tongues in motion. *“Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.”* (v. 35) “The Christian message is never fully ours until we have shared it with someone else.” (Barclay’s Luke; pg. 310)

B. Joy In An Experience Mutually Shared (vs. 33, 34)

“There (in Jerusalem) they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’”

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"When they reached Jerusalem, they found others who had already shared their experience. It is the glory of the Christian that he lives in a fellowship of people who have had the same experience as he has had. It has been said that true friendship only begins when people share a common memory and can say to each other, 'Do you remember?' Each one of us is one of a great fellowship of people who share a common experience and common memory of their Lord." (Barclay's Luke; pg. 310)

CONCLUSION:

Do you have a problem? Could it be like the problems of the two men in our story today? The Problem of Lost Joys (Grief), or the Problem of Lost Hopes (Despair) or the Problem of Lost Confidence (Doubts) regarding life and relationships; or doubts (regarding yourself and your own perceptions and abilities). What are the answers to these problems? The answer is to meet the lovely Christ on your lonely road of life! How do you meet Christ! First, you meet Him in the Scriptures. Open your Bible every day and you will meet Christ! Also, accept Jesus into your heart and home. Don't send Jesus 'on His way', but ask Him to 'Stay with you'. Fellowship in His presence, and come to know Him in His true identity! Your heart will 'burn within you' if you stay in His presence, and come to know Him in His true identity. Then, in coming to know Him, don't keep the knowledge to yourself! Share Him with others! Run and tell others that you have found the answer – you have found the Christ! Share Your Discovery.

PRAYER OF AFFIRMATION:

"O Christ, we rejoice that death has no hold over You. You broke the bars of death through your glorious resurrection! Death could not keep his prey. Up from the Grave You Arose, with a mighty triumph over your foes! Sin, death, and hell have been vanquished! You stand today as the Lord of all!

Help us to meet your lovely presence on our lonely roads of life! Help us to bring all our problems to you – our broken hearts, our broken dreams, and our broken relationships – and allow you to heal us with the same mighty power that raised you, O Christ, from the dead. Let our hearts burn within us as we fellowship with you. Then let us run with joy to tell others of the good news that Christ is Alive! Because you, O Christ, live, we too can live forever!

GLORY TO YOUR NAME! AMEN!"