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The Quiet Time

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUIET TIME

Each Christian should make it the habit of his life to spend a quiet time with God at the beginning and the conclusion of each day. Before he steps out upon the untrodden path of a new day, he should take time to listen to the voice of His heavenly Father from the Bible and commune with Him by prayer. The same should be true at the close of the day, ere he retires for the night.

Through this reading of the Scriptures and prayer the believer evidences his complete dependence upon God for wisdom, guidance, blessing and the supply of his temporal needs. From this interview with God, the Christian emerges spiritually strengthened and prepared to meet the problems, temptations and testings of the pilgrim pathway (Isa. 40:29-31).

No one can begin the day well, go on well, or end up well, who fails to make provision for this “quiet time” with God.

This period must be deliberately reserved and conscientiously kept for God. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with it, for nothing can compensate the Christian for its loss. The Devil, the world and the flesh will combine in their attempts to crowd it out of the day’s program, on the plea that “there is no time”; but time must be made and maintained for it, if one’s character and testimony are to count for Christ. Just as Shammah, one of David’s mightiest men, gained victory and renown by defending a piece of ground from the attack of the Philistines; so let us defend this “quiet

time” from all attempts on the part of the enemy to take it from us (2 Sam. 23:11,12).

The tragedy of thousands of wrecked lives and ruined testimonies, which we see around, would never have taken place had these Christians put God first in their lives by honestly observing this “quiet time.” Their neglect of this resulted in carelessness of life, slackness in the discharge of their responsibilities, and inability to resist temptation and sinful desire. Then came the consequent disaster which robbed them of their joy in the Lord and their usefulness in His service.

We are all naturally weak and need strength; fearful, and need courage; ignorant, and need wisdom; wayward, and need guidance; sinful, and need restoration. The “quiet time” is where this strength, courage, wisdom, guidance and restoration is supplied.

Let us, like the prophet Habakkuk, say: “I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the fenced place, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov’d” (Hab. 2:1). May we, too, put a fence around this “quiet time” and reserve it, at all costs, for God.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE QUIET TIME

Though we shall speak particularly of the morning quiet time, the same principles will apply to that of the evening.

1. Select the best time for it. This will vary with the circumstances. Be sure to allow time for dressing, for being prompt at the breakfast table, and for leaving in time to be punctual at school or business. Remember, in

selecting this period, that you are reserving the most important part of the day for God.

2. Get up in time to observe this period. This getting up is not so easy as it sounds, for it calls for considerable determination and self-discipline. It is much easier to lie in bed and contemplate getting up, than to throw off the bedclothes and get up! A devoted Christian was once asked if he made it a matter of prayer about getting up for his quiet time. He replied, "I don't pray about getting up - I get up!" Rising on time is largely dependent on getting to bed on time the night before. The Bible put it thus: "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late" (Ps. 127:2)! Cultivate the proper hours for retiring. The custom of rising at a particular time each morning will soon become habitual and will yield rich returns in spiritual blessing to the believer. An alarm clock is useful if there is a tendency to oversleep.

3. Get washed and dressed promptly. This will thoroughly awaken you, so that you will not be half-asleep during the quiet time. This is most important, for one should be his best physically and mentally, lest he rob God and himself of this period by lack of concentration due to drowsiness.

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE QUIET TIME

Each Christian must determine for himself the amount of time he is to devote to this "quiet time." Let us suppose that he chooses fifteen minutes. It could very well be more, but certainly should not be less than this. We will therefore take the irreducible minimum of fifteen minutes as the basis of our suggestions as the best use of this time for both morning and evening.

This fifteen-minute period should serve a threefold purpose: first, for the reading of the Scriptures; second, for meditation on what has been read; and, third, for worship, praise and prayer. It would be well to devote five minutes to each of these purposes.

Reading of God's Word

The first five minutes should be taken up with the reading of God's Word. The average chapter of the Bible can easily be read within this time. It is best to follow a definite course of reading that will carry you consecutively through the Bible. A good plan would be to take a chapter from the New Testament each morning and a chapter from the Old Testament each evening.

This chapter should be read reverently and deliberately, and not raced through. Remember, it is the Divinely inspired Word of God, which is "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). It is best to read it audibly but quietly, so as not to disturb anyone else. This will prove to be a great aid in concentration and will prevent the mind from wandering during the reading.

Seeing that by the reading of the Bible God's voice is heard in the soul, it would be good to ask God for spiritual enlightenment as you take the sacred book into your hands. David's prayer is a good one:

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law"

(Ps. 119:18). Thus, in simple dependence upon the Holy Spirit's guidance and teaching, the Word of God is carefully read (John

16:13-15).

Meditation on What Has Been Read

The second five minutes should be spent in meditation, or in thinking about what you have read. This meditation is not easy, but it can be developed by practice.

Meditation is to reading what digestion is to eating. Just as digestion turns what we have eaten into blood, muscle and bone, to be expressed in energy and growth; so meditation translates what we have read into spiritual blood, muscle and bone, that expresses itself in a life lived to the glory of God and enables us to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Surely we shall not deny to God’s Word the thoughtful consideration we give to other books.

As an aid to this meditation, here are a few suggestive questions each may well ask himself after he has read the portion from the Bible. The answers to these questions will serve to impress upon our hearts and memories what we have read so that the Scriptures will thus become an indispensable part of our lives:

- What persons and places have I read about, and what have I learned about them?
- What, in my own words, is the principal subject of this chapter?
- What, to my mind, is the best verse? Can I repeat it from memory? (This verse should be underlined with a pencil.)
- What example did I see in this chapter that I should follow? What command or precept did I read that I should obey? Let us never forget that obedience to the

known will of God is essential to true discipleship (John 7:17; 8:31; 13:17; Luke 6:46; James 1:22-24).

- What warnings were there for me to heed?
- What prayer was there for me to echo?
- What guidance did I receive for my path today?

The answering of these questions will call for real concentration of thought, but the effort is well worth while, for it will make the Word of God a living reality to one's life and result in the formation and development of a sterling Christian character – truly an invaluable possession!

Worship, Praise, and Prayer

The third five minutes should be devoted to worship, praise and prayer. Let us think of them in order:

1. Worship. This is literally “worth-ship,” or the ascription of worth to One Who is worthy. It is the heart's occupation with God Himself, to the exclusion of all else. It is the overflow of a grateful heart under the sense of Divine grace and favor. God desires and seeks the worship of His blood-bought people (John 4:23,24). It is the highest occupation of the child of God in this life and shall be his service for eternity (Rev. 4:11; 5:12). We praise God for His blessings; we pray to God for our needs; but we worship God for all He has revealed Himself to be in His beloved Son. Thus, with reverence, awe, amazement and gratitude, the believer is occupied with God.

2. Praise. God wants a praising and thankful people. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God” (Ps. 50:23). We are enjoined to “enter into His gates with thanksgiving

and into His courts with praise" (Ps. 100:4). We should praise God for the gift of His Son, Who gave Himself for us; for the Holy Spirit, Who indwells, teaches and guides us; for the holy Scriptures, God's full revelation to us; for all the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ; for the many temporal mercies He has bestowed on us in the way of health, food and clothing; and for answered prayer. Every Christian should cultivate the habit of thanksgiving and praise. Surely it is a poor thing to be always asking favors from God and never giving Him a word of praise for all He has done, is doing and will yet do for those He has saved by His grace (Phil. 4:6,7; Eph. 5:20; Ps. 69:30,31; 92:1).

3. Prayer. By prayer the believer expresses his absolute dependence on God for the supply of all his needs, and, at the same time, his supreme confidence that God will hear and answer his requests, if asked in faith and in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14,15). God commands, inspires, hears and answers prayer (Heb. 4:14-16; Luke 18:1; Matt. 6:6-12; Ps. 65:2).

- Prayer for oneself. This involves the frank confessing and forsaking of all known sin, "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18; compare 1 John 1:9). Make known to your Father in heaven all your needs with the simplicity, directness and confidence of a child coming to its earthly father. The Lord Jesus said, "Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of" (Matt. 6:32). Spread your problems before Him and seek Divine wisdom to solve them (James 1:5-7). Cast all your care on Him, for it matters to Him about you (1 Pet. 5:7). Remember, nothing is too small to mention to Him, for God delights to hear the simple fervent and believing prayers of His children.

- Supplication for others. We should not be selfish in our prayers and think only of ourselves, but also remember the needs of others. God wants us to be intercessors on behalf of others (Eph. 1:15,16; Col. 1:9; 1 Sam. 12:23). We should pray for those in authority over us, that God will grant them humility of heart and Divine wisdom that shall enable them to rule us wisely and well (1 Tim. 2:1-4). We should pray for our family, relatives and friends, particularly for the unsaved ones, that they may be convicted of sin and led to put their faith in Christ. We should pray for all who are seeking to preach the gospel, either in the homeland or the foreign field.

Remember, it is still true that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). Prayer is a mighty force because it moves the hand of Him Who moves the world. Prayer changes things; therefore, pray!

As an aid to memory, many Christians keep a prayer list and record the names of those they desire to remember at the throne of grace.

Summary

Surely the Christian reader will agree that this “quiet time” is an absolute necessity to the child of God, and that fifteen minutes, as a minimum, is not too long to spend in the presence of God, reading and meditating in His Word, and communing with Him by prayer.

May it be yours and mine to make and maintain, at all costs, this essential preparation for each day of our Christian life.

Thoughts on the Preachers Call

Let us consider some things regarding the Divine "call" to preach the Word.

I. It is individual, or personal.

It is purely a matter between each Christian and his Lord and Master. The authority of the call is the prerogative of Christ alone, for He calls whomsoever He wills. He said to His disciples: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). We read that Christ called "unto Him whom He would" (Mark 3:13-14). Of Paul, the Lord said: "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Both secular and theological education are utterly useless, apart from this call of the Lord.

The fact that a person possesses a natural fluency of speech and facility of expression does not, in itself, qualify that person to preach. It is good, but not sufficient, to have natural gifts and possess physical, mental and educational fitness. Alexander MacLaren spoke of a certain preacher who was "fatally fluent in speech." Though these natural gifts are necessary, they are not enough. The fact of their possession does not constitute a call to preach.

1. It involves personal heart-dealing alone with God. God is the God of the individual. There is no such thing as "mass production" in this matter. Preachers are not turned out by the dozen. The Lord burdens the heart of

an individual, impresses him personally with the necessity of preaching the gospel, and gives him that holy urge to be a mouthpiece for Deity. It is not without significance that Isaiah, called of God to preach His word, speaks repeatedly of his message as "a burden" which must be delivered (Isa. 13:1, 14:28, 15:1, 17:1, etc.). Paul spoke of it as a "necessity" laid upon him and exclaimed: "Yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16). Joshua, as he fell upon his face before the Captain of the host of the Lord, asked: "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" There, all alone with his Lord, his shoes removed, for it was holy ground, Joshua bowed his head, received his call and commission and then went forth to do exploits for God. (Josh. 5:13-15).

2. It is born in the atmosphere of spirituality. It comes when the soul is enjoying fellowship with God through the reading and meditation of His word and prayer. The carnal believer, or the worldly Christian, will know nothing of "the still small voice" which falls upon the soul under such circumstances. Samuel's word to Saul has a message for each believer: "Stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God" (I Sam. 9:27). This atmosphere of spirituality is made possible as the believer deliberately presents his body as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1-2). It comes through fervent supplication at the throne of grace to know the will of God for one's life. It is maintained by prompt obedience to the known will of God, as found in the holy Scriptures. This, then, is the spiritual atmosphere of the call.

3. It comes usually in the midst of Christian activity, not in monastic isolation. It does not come to lazy Christians. It was while Barnabas and Saul ministered to the Lord that the divine call came: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). It was while Moses tended his flock, that he was commissioned to be a leader of Israel (Exod. 3:1-2). It was while Gideon threshed the wheat, that he was selected to deliver Israel from the oppressors (Judg. 6:11). It was while Elisha was busy plowing, that the mantle of Elijah was thrown on his shoulders and God claimed his life (I Kings 19:19). It was while Peter was busy with his fishing, and Matthew with his business, that the voice came and called each to service for Christ (Matt. 4: 18,19; Luke 5:27). It is as the believer is doing what already lies to his hand, that the call comes for further service. "If any man will do His will, he shall know," said Christ (John 7:17). Prompt, unquestioning obedience to what we know, will lead to further revelations of His will. Hosea's message should have a voice to each believer: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord" (Hos. 6:3).

II. It is definite.

Though the call may come in various ways and under different circumstances, it is none the less distinct. It leaves the believer with the assurance that God desires him for a certain specific work. This, in turn, gives a joyous confidence and a holy boldness to the preacher, as he realizes the authority that lies behind the message and the messenger. The promise: "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest," nerves the soul to courageously face the opposition that will inevitably show itself. The cheering assurance: "The Lord is with

thee!" sustains the servant of the Lord, who now realizes that Omnipotence is on his side (Exod. 33:14; Judges 6:12).

III. It is varied in circumstances.

A study of the ways by which God called some of His servants for the work He had for them should be a profitable exercise of the soul. Let us look at just a few out of many.

1. Abraham. We are told: "the God of glory appeared unto him and a definite call was given him, with the promise of his own blessing and, through him, to all the families of the earth (Acts 7:2; Gen. 12: 1-3).

2. Moses. Exod. 3-4. This is most instructive, for God had to overcome the reluctance of the one He called. Moses had many objections to offer, but every objection was met with a definite promise, until Moses was convinced that God knew what He was doing in calling him.

3. Joshua. To this man, God first gave a commission with a promise and then granted him a vision of the One who had commissioned him (Josh. 1:1-9; 5:13-15).

4. Gideon. He was a humble man, who was hailed by God as a "mighty man of valor," and who was sent forth to deliver Israel with these words ringing in his ears: "Go, in this thy might... have not I sent thee?" Not until the Lord had wrought two miracles on his behalf was this man convinced of his call and commission (Judg. 6:11-24).

5. Elisha. Here was a prosperous and energetic young man, who was suddenly called by God, from the midst of a busy life, to leave all his rosy prospects of worldly

success for the comparative obscurity of menial service for Elijah, the prophet of the Lord. For years he was unheard of, until the time that his master was to be translated. Then his years of faithful service, in secret, was "rewarded openly" and his name became a household word in Israel (I Kings 19:19-21; II Kings 3:11).

6. Isaiah. The moving description of this great prophet's vision, call and commission has stirred the hearth of the people of God for two and a half milleniums and led many, like him, to say in response to the call of God: "Here am I, send me" (Isa. 6:1-13).

7. Peter. This man, naturally impulsive and energetic, was brought by Andrew to the Savior, thus evidencing the value of personal evangelism. The miracle of the miraculous haul of fish served to provide the circumstances under which his call and commission came (Luke 5:1-11).

While the circumstances of the call were different in each of these cases, for God is a God of infinite variety; yet the purpose and results were the same: the glory of God, the blessing of the one called and the benefit of those to whom he was sent with the message. Each of these people had an experience that was distinctly his own, and from which he emerged with the conscious assurance of God's call to him.

IV. It does not necessarily involve full time service.

The great need today is for Christian preachers or teachers who can support themselves by secular employment, and devote their spare time to the preaching and teaching of the word of God. Thank God for the noble army already thus engaged, but there is

plenty of room for more, for the field is large, the need great and the laborers few. William Carey, "the father of modern missions," was once asked what his business was. He replied: "My business is preaching the gospel, and I cobble shoes to pay expenses!"

1. There is no distinction made, in the New Testament, between so-called "clergy" and "laity." Every Christian is viewed as "a minister," which simply means "servant." The terms "clergy" and "laity," are absolutely foreign to New Testament language, which knows nothing of either! The word 'clergy' comes from the word, "cleros," translated "heritage" in I Peter 5:2, 3. It thus refers to all the people of God and not to a small section of believers. The present distinction of clergy and laity, as now seen in Christendom, is purely the invention of man, and doubtless at the Devil's instigation. It has wrought untold evil, for it has blinded Christians to the fact of their gift, and of the necessity to use it for the glory of God and the blessing of others. There are literally thousands of Christians, who ought to be teachers and preachers of the Word but, because of this false theory, remain silent. It is to be feared that, in many cases, they are sitting under the ministry of unsaved "clergymen" who are attempting the impossible task of expounding the Scriptures.

2. The evils of professionalism in the Lord's work. This cannot be too strongly condemned. The only difference between the whole-time preacher and the parttime preacher, is merely the amount of time which each spends in preparation and preaching and the matter of his financial support. The Lord deliver us from all thought of professionalism in the Lord's work, or the separation of the Lord's people into two classes! An

understanding of I Peter 4:10 should deliver every believer from this travesty of the Scriptural pattern. Mark the words carefully. It will be noted there is not even the remotest suggestion of professionalism implied in it: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

The Christian who teaches and preaches, is only discharging the stewardship which God has entrusted to him. "All believers are "ministers," or servants of the same Master, and are engaged in the same service, the work of the Lord. The New Testament clearly teaches the priesthood of all believers. It knows nothing of the priest-craft of a few believers as seen in Christendom today. See I Pet. 2:5-9; Rev. 1:5; 5-10. The story is told of a young Christian who approached an older believer with the remark: "I want to enter the Lord's service." The older brother asked: "How long have you been saved?" He replied: "Three years." At this, the old believer enquired: "Then whose service have you been in for the past three years?" The moral of the story is surely obvious!

V. The elements that combine to constitute a God-given call.

There are many things that enter in and combine to constitute this definite call of God.

1. There is the inward urge of the Holy Spirit, who indwells each believer, and who desires to "guide him into all truth" (John 16:13; Rom. 8:14). As this "holy heavenly Guest" dwells ungrieved within us, He can impress our hearts and guide our thoughts into certain definite convictions as to the will of God for the life.

(Read Rom. 8:26-27). This leading of the Spirit is difficult to define and describe. The Scotch have a proverb: "It's better felt than telt," or: "it is better experienced than described." Each believer, who is called to preach or teach, must experience it for himself and undoubtedly will, if he is walking in fellowship with Christ, in the enjoyment of God's word, in obedience to the known will of God, and in communion with Him by prayer. This urge of the Spirit must not be confused with a passing whim, or a "hunch," or an idea generated by fleshly enthusiasm, which will soon pass away. Many have been carried away by a tide of mere emotionalism and mistakenly imagined it was God's call to full time service.

2. Some definite word from the Scriptures will serve to deepen this conviction. The word of God has been given for this very purpose. As we seek to know the will of God, He will leave us in no doubt, for He never leads contrary to the principles He has laid down in His word. God will not leave His people to flounder in confusion, but will guide them, in His own good time and way. Prompt obedience to what we know, will lead to further knowledge. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know"... "If any man will do His will, he shall know" (Hosea 6:3; John 7:17). Habbakuk learned the value of this and said: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved" (Hab. 2:1). Samuel also was taught this truth by Eli and, in response to God's fourth call replied: "Speak, for Thy servant heareth" (I Sam. 3:10).

3. The compassions of the heart. As one is brought to realize the deep need of the unsaved and views them, in

the light of Scripture, as lost and guilty, helpless and undone and thus in danger of eternal ruin; the conviction is borne home to his soul of the dire necessity for them to hear the soul-emancipating message of the gospel. This is what Christ meant when He said to His disciples: "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

Doubtless, as He said these words, the woman of Samaria was returning to the well, bringing with her many of the Samaritans who had heard her glowing words of testimony to Christ. Thus, in this sense, the very need of the sinner becomes part of the call to the saint to meet that need. Both Prov. 24: 11, 12 and Ezek. 33:1-6 should be read upon one's knees, alone in the presence of God, and the words allowed to sink deep into the heart. Properly speaking, the need does not in itself constitute the call, but simply provides the opportunity for the believer to respond to the previous call of God.

4. The advice of godly Christians. Let no one belittle this. These older believers have seen some evidence of a gift for preaching in a Christian's life. They will now seek to encourage this person by their advice, which is based on a riper knowledge of God's word, a longer experience in God's work, and a more mature realization of God's dealings both with themselves and others. This counsel, though not in itself conclusive, should be valued as a contributing factor in God's call to preach the word. Let no one despise the godly counsel of experienced Christians. Even Paul did not neglect this (Gal. 2:2). Their superior discernment in the things of God will aid them in the giving of this godly counsel.

5. The word and action of some gifted and Spirit-led servant of the Lord. Apparently this was one of the contributing elements of Timothy's call to wholetime service. (See Acts 16:1-3). God used Paul to be the deciding factor in his case, for God had gifted Paul with discernment, and he saw in Timothy one who would become "profitable to him in the ministry." How grateful we should be to those older brethren, who will take a younger man with them and allow them a little part in the meeting, and thus encourage them to develop their gift. Many a grand gospel preacher started out this way. (II Tim. 4:11).

6. The Divine ordering of God's providences, by which He makes His will clear through the circumstances of one's life. God opens up a door of utterance at the right time, or perhaps closes a door of secular employment (Rev. 3:8; I Cor. 16:9). In the case of some believers, their hands became so full with preaching that they could no longer do justice to their secular work, so had to decide which to give up.

However, we must beware of imagining that all the circumstances of one's life represent the Divine ordering of God's providence. Jonah, as he fled from God's call and commission, found a ship leaving from Joppa on which he took passage. He might have argued that the very fact of the ship being there was proof that God desired him to travel by it! It is important to remember that it is the providences of God's ordering, combined with these other factors, that gives the cumulative proof of God's leading.

The late E. J. Pace, for many years the cartoonist for the Sunday School Times, illustrated this matter of guidance

in a most striking way. He drew three beams of light which converged on a prism. The name of the first beam was, "The principles of God's word." The second was entitled, "The promptings of God's Spirit." The third was labelled, "The providences of God's ordering." As these three beams of light converged on the prism, they emerged, through it, in one blaze of light which was called, "The will of God." It was thus the sum total of these three factors that indicated it. In our study of it, we are adding four more factors, by which the child of God may come to know the will of God in regard to his path of service.

7. The commendation of one's brethren in assembly fellowship. No one should take the step of going into wholtime service for the Lord unless he has secured the warm-hearted approval, fellowship and commendation of the assembly of which he forms a part. No person is qualified to become a competent judge of the worth of his own ministry, for it is obvious that he will be manifestly predisposed in his own favor!

Spiritual pride has blinded the eye and warped the understanding of many on this question. The scriptural principle is: "Let your prophets speak... and let the other judge... The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (I Cor. 14:29, 32). If the spiritually minded elder brethren of an assembly, after due and prayerful consideration, do not feel free to commend the applicant to wholtime service, then that individual would do well to bow to their decision, reconsider the matter and revise his previous estimation as to his call. We need ever to remember that: "God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33). A willful disregard for this

scriptural "decency and order" has resulted in much that is to be greatly regretted. Scripture does not contemplate a "free lance" who, acting in selfwill and in the energy of the flesh, determines on a certain course of action and carries out his own ideas, either in opposition to, or in utter independence of the responsible brethren of his home assembly.

May each believer be led to seek humbly, sincerely, perseveringly, believingly and obediently to know the will of God for his life and then do it! This necessitates prayerful dependence on the power of God, obedience to the leading of the Spirit of God, yieldedness to the will of God, the diligent study of the word of God, and active engagement in the work of God; for, as we have previously noted, it was while Paul "ministered to the Lord," that God's call came to him (Acts 13:2).

The Christian worker, to be spiritually effective in his ministry, should be found doing the work of the Lord, in accordance with the word of the Lord, in obedience to the will of the Lord, while engaged in the warfare of the Lord, offering worship to the Lord, and walking in the way of the Lord. Dr. 3. H. Jowett, concluding his famous Yale lectures on preaching said: "Brethren, your calling is very holy. Your work is very difficult. Your Savior is very mighty, and the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Three Ways of Salvation

Turn with me, please to the Book of Job, Chapter 40, commencing with Verse 6. "Then answered the Lord unto Job out of whirlwind, and said, gird up thy loins now like a man. I will demand of thee and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous? Hast thou an arm like God or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath and behold every one that is proud, that abase him. Look on every one that is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together and bind their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee."

And now a word in Luke Chapter 10, Verse 25. "And behold a certain lawyer stood up; and tempted him, that is Christ, saying Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And He said unto him, what is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself. And He, Jesus, said unto him, Thou hast answered right. This do and thou shalt live."

And now Ephesians Chapter 2, Verse 4. "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in

heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." May God add His blessing to the reading of His Word.

Our subject this evening is three ways of being saved. Brethren, curb your rising gooseflesh. The title may sound quite unorthodox but don't be alarmed, for what we have to say is based on the sure and the certain Word of God. The first way of salvation is propounded by the Father in the Old Testament, the second by the Son in the gospels, the third by the Spirit of God in the Epistles.

You know, there are quite a number of folk who object very strenuously to be confined to one way of salvation. And they object, I have my own ideas on this subject, I don't like to have rammed down my throat there's only one way of salvation. I've got my way; you've got your way, and after all, it doesn't matter what a man believes providing he's sincere in what he believes, he'll wangle his way to heaven somehow, sometime, somewhere even if it happens to be the beautiful isle of somewhere.

There's a great need these days to clarify the salvation question, and by the process of elimination, to show plainly that though there are three ways of salvation there's only one way for folks like you and me.

Let us think if you can of three doors. Door number 1 over there, door number 2 behind me, door number 3 over there. Each door leads into salvation. Above each door is a placard containing the conditions that a person

must comply with if he would enter door number 1 or door number 2 or door number 3.

If you find you cannot fulfill the conditions attached to entering door number 1, well, don't get downhearted, try number 2. If you can't fulfill the conditions attached to doorway number 2, try number 3. But after number 3, there's no more. You're out. You've had it. Your goose is cooked and your stuffing is overdone. Now then, way of salvation number one. What are the conditions? Simply they are these, by demonstrating deity. All you have to do is to demonstrate that you're as wise and powerful as God and you don't need to be saved like an ordinary, common or garden person. You can enter the door of salvation on your own merits because of what you are in yourself. In other words, by possessing and manifesting the prerogatives of deity or being like God.

What are the circumstances of Job's case? Job is an afflicted man. He has lost all of his possessions, he's lost his family and now he's lost his health. And there he sits on an ash-heap, and famous so-called friends come along Mr. Eliphaz, Mr. Bildad and Mr. Zophar.

Eliphaz, the sensationalist. He says to Job, "Did ever a spirit pass before your face? Did ever your hair stand on end? No? Too bad. Then listen to me, I've had such an experience." He's a sensationalist and he speaks as one who has had weird experiences⁵ but he brings no comfort to Job.

Bildad, he is a traditionalist. He can quote mottos by the score. Biff bang, biff bang, poor old Job get it, but remember that for every Oliver he gives him two Rolands. Every one chapter of these friends he replies to with two chapters.

And then comes Mr. Zophar and he was well named because he just went so far and no further. He's the legalist who argues that God gives so much salvation for so much human merit. No human merit, no salvation. Miserable comforters they were.

And in the midst of this discussion, Job, in despair, cries out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, thou I might come even to his seat; I would set my cause before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words if he would answer me and understand what he would say unto me."

And finally the words of Job's friends are silent, and God takes a hand. God comes to him in a vision and speaks to him out of a whirlwind and says to him, "Gird up thy loins now like a man." You wanted to come before my seat, now is your opportunity, Job. Stand up from that ash-heap and answer these questions that I'm going to put to you.

"I will demand of thee and declare thou unto Me. Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me that thou mayest be righteous? Hast thou an arm like God? Canst thou thunder with a voice like Him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath. Behold every one that is proud and abase him. Look on every one that is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together and bind their faces in secret." Then when you've done all that, Job, I'll confess unto thee that your own right hand can save you because you don't need Me at all. You can become your own saviour. All you have to do is to demonstrate deity.

So the first condition then over doorway number 1 is this: If you demonstrate deity, you may enter here. Now what does it mean to demonstrate deity? Well, first of all, a person must be omniscient, that is he must know all things. He must know as much as God knows.

Turn to the 38th Chapter of Job and let's see the quiz that God gives to Job. He has an IQ and I doubt very much whether any of us would pass it. Job 38, Verse 4; now Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Now where were you when God laid the foundations of this earth?

Do you know? Well, you weren't even in existence. Oh. Then you're not like God for God was there when it happened.

Verse 6, "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the cornerstone thereof when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Verse 12, "Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days, and caused the dayspring to know his place?" Did you have anything to do with the rising of the sun this morning? Did you kindly give the sun permission to rise above the east in the horizon? And did you have anything to do with the sun setting in the west?

An old African chief thought he had that prerogative and every morning before sunrise he did come out of his old filthy hut, and with the rags of royalty about him, he would give a Lordly gesture and say, "Sun, you may now rise," and the sun very kindly rose. Both over the horizon and to the occasion. And then just as the sun was about to set, he would say again in that Lordly tone,

sun, you may now set, and the sun very kindly set. We laugh at the folly of that individual. Are we any better?

Verse 16, "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?"

Verse 18, "Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? Declare if thou knowest it all." Come now, you little know all; come, tell Me that.

Verse 21, "'(Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? Or because the number of thy days is great?"

Verse 22, "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?"

There is a very interesting question in physics. "By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth."

And then a lesson in astronomy, Verse 31, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?"

Some years ago, 1933 to be exact, Chicago put on a world's fair. The only world's fair, as far as I know, that ever paid its way. And every night there was a most interesting ceremony. The light from Arcturus, which by the way takes 150 years to reach the earth, every night the lights of that fair were put on by a delicate photo-electric cell which caught the rays of the star Arcturus.

"Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" Do you have anything to do with those constellations of the heavens, the moving of the planets, those great galaxies way yonder back in space?

Verse 33, "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?
Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

Verse 35, "Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go,
and say onto thee, here we are." Lightning? Yes, Lord.
Strike that tree. Bang. Do you have any control of the
lightning? I've seen people crawl under beds, put away
all the silver when a little bit of lightning flashes.

And by the way, if you really want to see lightning flash,
go to Johannesburg. They have the greatest lightning
fatality in the whole world per capita in Johannesburg. I
had the lightning crack right behind me. Scared the wits
out of me. Why believe me, when the lightning cracks
and you hear the crack of the lightning before you hear
the thunder, then you know you're jolly near that
lightning.

Verse 36, "Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?" A
little lesson in psychology. "Or who hath given
understanding to the heart?"

Job, can you answer those questions? And I see Job
getting smaller and smaller and smaller as those
questions are put to him. He makes no attempt to
answer them because he has no answer. He realizes he
is not omniscient.

All right, Let's try something else. He must be
omnipotent. Verse 9, "Hast thou an arm like God?" Ever
try your hand at a little creating? Start with something
small, a worm. That's not hard to make. Get a little mud,
just rub it like this. There you've got a worm. Now all
you have to do is to put the life principle in that worm
and give it a digestive tract. There you are. Simple as A,
B, C. Start early in the kindergarten. Anyone ever do
that? No.

Then when you're through with making a worm, try your hand on a man. Try your hand on a man. There are eyes that can see, ears that can hear, a mouth that can talk and a mind that can reason. Hands and feet do the bidding of the mind. Don't forget to give him a complex personality.

I remember at this same world's fair in 1933 one of the most interesting exhibits was a robot known as Willy. Willy the robot. And my the folks just crowded to see Willy perform every hour on the hour, and I was amongst those present to see Willy do his stuff. Willy was a mechanical man. Sat on a chair. Maker of this man said, "Willy, stand up," and you heard the machinery. And suddenly, before your astonished eyes, Willy rose to his feet. "Willy, work the vacuum cleaner."

Away went the vacuum cleaner. Wonderful.

And as the last act, the crowning act of intelligence, Willy actually smoked a cigarette with no danger whatever of lung cancer and blew it out his nose. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. And all the mechanism necessary for standing up, running a vacuum cleaner, smoking that cigarette occupied the rest of his body.

And people were saying, my, isn't that wonderful to invent a thing like that, never realizing that every time they look into a mirror and saw the reflection therein they were looking at a marvel ten thousand, million, billion, trillion times more complex than Willy the robot.

And when you've made a man, try bringing a few worlds into existence. Speak and see it happen. Well, that's how this world came into being. God spake, it was done. He commanded, it took place. Through faith we understand

that the world was framed by the Word of God. So you're not omnipotent. Oh, that's too bad.

So you must also be omnipresent. You must be everywhere at the same time. "Behold all those that are proud and abase Him and look on every one that is proud and bring him low." Do you know where I was on October 14, 1897 at 10:45 a.m.? I don't and you don't, but God does.

Because knoweth not God of all things? For God is everywhere, everywhere present. "Though I take the winds of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, even there shall Thy right hand leave me and Thy right hand shall guide me."

But more, Job. If you're going to be able to save; yourself, you must be able to clothe yourself with majesty and excellency and glory and beauty. Did you ever do that? Did you ever deck yourself with majesty and excellency and glory and beauty so that when men saw you they fell at your feet as dead in worshipful adoration? Well, no, no one ever did that to me. No, but God does.

"I saw the Lord high and lifted up and his train filled the temple" and those holy beings before that glorious being that sat up on that throne cried continually, "Holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah said, "Woe, is me; I am undone. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Lord Jesus decked Himself with majesty and excellency and glory and beauty so that His face shone like the sun. He was transfigured before His disciples.

What was the effect on Job as he saw himself in the light of God's wisdom and power and majesty and glory and

excellency? He prostrated himself in the dust and this is what he said. "Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer thee? I spoke once, yea twice. I'll proceed no further. I'm through." He put his hand up on his mouth.

And in Chapter 42, he says, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So poor Job couldn't go in through doorway number 1. He wasn't able to demonstrate deity.

Anyone here who can demonstrate deity, who possesses all knowledge, all power, all presence? No? Then doorway number 1 is not for you or for me. Am I correct? Well, eliminate from your mind from now on all thoughts of getting in at doorway number 1. Only by fulfilling those conditions will God say to you, "There you are. I confess thine own hand can save thee."

Now let's try doorway number 2. A lawyer comes to the Lord Jesus. Puts this interesting question to him. Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Note the emphasis here is on the word do.

Do I hear someone say, "Why, Mr. Preacher, that's my question exactly? All I want to know is what I can do to make salvation. I don't want this salvation by grace. Not I. I'm prepared to go 50/50 with God but I'm not prepared to let God do a hundred percent and myself nothing at all. I want to be saved on the basis of my own doings. I want salvation or eternal life to be a reward for all my holy thoughts, my good works, my good resolves my church membership, the ordinances to which I've passed, the good laws that I've made and the attempts I've tried to do the best I can to all the people I can in all the ways I can as often as ever I can at odd intervals."

Now then, what are the conditions for entering doorway number 2? Well here's a condition. In brief, it is absolute perfection in every detail of one's life, in thought and word and deed. Doorway number 1; demonstrate deity.

Doorway number 2, the condition is produce perfection in your life. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And Jesus said, "This do and thou shalt live." Notice he didn't say, "This try to do." He said, "Just do." Do it in all perfection and you'll have eternal life. You'll be saved.

Now let's examine this statement of the law. First, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart What does that mean? It means that the center of your being, the heart, has been entirely devoted to God constantly. It means that your heart is flooded with love to God so that no thought of self in any of its forms is present at any time.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul. What does that mean? It means that all bodily appetites, all lusts, self-pleasing and worldly pleasures have been given up entirely, and God is the supreme and the satisfying portion of your life and this, of course, involves self-surrender, self-denial, self-sacrifice. That's what's involved by loving God with all your soul.

Third, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your strength. What does that mean? It means that all your time and all your energy is devoted to God alone and never for the furtherance of your own interests in any shape or form at any time.

Fourth, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind. What does that mean? It means that there will never be any wrong thoughts enter your mind because your mind is stayed upon Jehovah. All your words, all your motives, all your attitudes, all your actions will be governed entirely by God. For it is our thoughts, as you know, that shape our words and our deeds and our attitudes.

To love the Lord thy God with all thy mind means no evil thoughts will ever enter or be entertained in our mind.

Fifth, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. What does that you mean? Who is my neighbor? Anyone who needs my help is my neighbor. That's how the lawyer tried to wiggle out of this. He said, "Who is my neighbor?" And Christ gave the parable of the Good Samaritan in answer to that question. In other words, the same love and care and thought that we spend on ourselves must be given to our neighbor.

Let me try to illustrate what this means. You're on your way home in a street car or bus. As you near the place where you live, you see a great big column of smoke going up in the air and this column of smoke is coming from the neighborhood in which your house is located. My. When the bus stops, you run immediately, go onto your street, and as you come onto your street, you give a sigh of relief. "Oh, goody, goody, goody. It's only my house that's being burned up instead of my neighbor's. I thought it was my neighbor's. Well, I'm so happy it's only my house." That's what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

Now then, note what Christ said. "This do and thou shalt live." Nothing can be plainer than this. Now have you

done this? Are you doing this? Can you always do it? If so, enter doorway number 2. You're saved on the basis of your own goodness. You can pat yourself on the back and say, "Three cheers for me. I'm saved because I deserve to be saved. I love the Lord my God with all my heart and with all my soul, with all my strength and with all my mind and I love my neighbor as myself and here I am, saved because of my own goodness."

I'll tell you this. You'll never be in heaven. How come? Because they sing a song in heaven and this is the song they sing. "Thou art worthy, Lord Jesus, for thou wast slain and has redeemed us to God by thy blood and to every kindred and tribe and tongue and nation." Not a word about themselves. "Unto him that loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own blood to him be the glory and dominion forever and ever."

Now remember to fail in one point is to be immediately disqualified the least little bit of failure in this demand for absolute perfection disqualifies. For he that keepeth the whole law and offendeth in one point, the same is guilty of all. And more, past sins disqualify. If you haven't always been perfect, then you're out. You don't have a ghost of a chance of getting through that door.

Here's a murderer. He's brought to trial and the judge says, "What have you got to say before I pass the judgment of death?" "Your Honor, I'm determined from now on to live a good, honest, clean, respectable life." "Ah, says the judge, "in that case you may go free." Do they do that in this country? No indeed.

Future good conduct doesn't atone for past bad conduct. God desires that which is past. Is there anyone here who can say, "From the time I became first conscious of my

own entity I have always and at all times loved God with all my heart and soul and strength and mind and my neighbor as myself?" No.

Hath anyone ever lived on this earth who could enter doorway number 1 and doorway number 2? Yes, one person. Who is that? God's beloved Son, the Lord Jesus who-took upon Himself the form of man, was made in fashion as a man and humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That glorious being, God manifest in the flesh, could at any time during His lifetime on earth enter doorway number 1. For He loved the Lord His God with all His heart and soul and strength and mind and His neighbor as Himself.

He could at all times demonstrate deity. He was Omnipotent, He was Omniscient, Omnipresent, immutable in the possession of all His Divine attributes yet He did not enter doorway number 1 by demonstrating His deity, nor did He enter doorway number 2 to prove His perfection. If He had, there would be no salvation for you and me.

He went to the cross to provide doorway number 3. And what is doorway number 3? "By grace are ye saved through faith, not of works lest any man should boast." The blessed Lord Jesus on Calvary's cross by the sacrifice of Himself, by the shedding of His most precious blood has forever satisfied all the claims of a holy law, every man of a righteous God.

He willingly brought our sins in His own body on that tree and there all alone, on that hill lone and gray in that land far away, He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and accomplished by His death all the work

necessary for your salvation and mine. Now have you got that? Let me repeat it. Christ accomplished on that cross by His death and resurrection all the work that is necessary for your eternal salvation.

Now, since Christ has accomplished all the work needed for your salvation, what is there left for you to do? The answer is nothing, but to enter into the wide open door which He in His grace has provided. Doorway number 1, demonstrate deity. Doorway number 2, prove perfection. Doorway number 3, God's grace, and to have faith in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus.

Let us think of three things in regard to this third way of salvation which is the only way for sinners like you and me. First, its need; second, its provision; and third, its condition for entering. First its need. Man by nature is a helpless, hopeless, undone sinner, both by birth and by purpose. Man is described in the Bible as being sick, spiritually sick, needing healing. Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous. I came to call sinners in repentance. They that are well do not need a doctor, but those who are sick."

Man is described secondly as being blind, needing illumination. The god of this age has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest they should believe and the light of the gospel should shine unto them, but Christ said, "I am come a light into the world," and He gives light to those who put their trust in Him.

Thirdly, man is described in the Bible as a criminal needing pardon. Man is guilty in the sight of God, but through the Lord Jesus it is made known unto him a salvation full and free and eternal and a pardon.

Fourth, man is described as being lost, needing salvation. "If our gospel is hid, it is hid to them which are lost in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest they should believe and the light of the gospel should shine unto them."

Man is described in the Bible as being spiritually dead, needing life, and what man needs, Christ, by his death, has provided.

Man is described as being a slave, needing liberation, and Christ came into this world as a great emancipator to set the prisoner free.

And lastly, man is described as being a bankrupt, owing to God that which he cannot possibly pay. Christ came into the world to pay that debt so that man might be reinstated and forgiven. Man then by nature is utterly undeserving of the least of God's mercies.

Now second, its provision. The door to salvation for sinners has been provided and opened and kept open by the Saviour, who said, "I am the Door. By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture." Grace is the source of this salvation. And see, it is by grace; it is utterly and entirely apart from human merit.

God knew very well that we could not do one thing to save ourselves and so He sent his Son as that lovely hymn told us written by Horatius Bonar, one of the famous Bonar brothers of Scotland, a great man of God who loved the Lord Jesus and wrote so many beautiful hymns. "Grace, saved by grace alone. This is all my plea. Jesus died for all mankind and Jesus died for me." Not of works, not of works, not of works, not of works, not of works, lest any man should boast.

And you pound that into the ears of a sinner it goes in one ear and comes right out of the other ear. For after the meeting you say, well, how can you be saved? By doing the best I can. Nonsense. If you can be saved by doing the best you can, Christ would never have died on the cross.

Christ died on the cross because there's nothing we can do to merit God's favor. God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Grace is the source of this salvation. The redeeming blood of Christ is the cost of this salvation.

He gave all He had. He poured out His soul onto death. He shed His most precious blood. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

And third, salvation is the result. As a result of Christ's work on the cross, as a result of His death and His glorious resurrection, a full and free and eternal salvation has been provided for every lost and guilty son and daughter of Adam's race, provided that individual will have fulfilled the conditions written over the door of this door of salvation.

And what is the condition? Well, it's as simple as A, B, C. They give you the A, then the B and then the C. A, admit your lost and guilty state. You'll never be saved until you do that.

One of the most difficult things to bring to a man is the realization of his lost and guilty and helpless and hell-deserving condition. In fact, no man can do that. It takes the Spirit of God to strip from an individual the filthy rags of his own self righteousness or false religious profession and cut it right down to size so that he sees himself to be what God declares he is; a helpless,

hopeless sinner. Oh, God, I'm nothing but a poor, guilty lost sinner. I deserve to go to hell. Good. You're just the kind of people that God saves and no others.

Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous." Why not? There weren't any. There were a lot of people who thought they were righteous and despise others, like the Pharisees, but the Pharisees were not saved in their pride.

B. You believe on Christ, believe that He loved you, believe that He bore your sins in His own body on the cross of Calvary, believe it was for you the Saviour suffered and bled upon that cross, that all your sins were laid on Him and that He willingly assumed the liability of all your sin and guilt and by His death satisfied all the demands of divine justice in your stead. Believe; believe on the Lord Jesus.

Accept Him by faith as your own personal Saviour. Say to him, Lord Jesus, here I am, a poor guilty sinner. I heard tonight that on that cross you bore my sins and took my place and died for me, taking my place as a sinner. I now believe, Lord Jesus, for me thou didst suffer and bleed and die. I believe that all the work needed for my salvation was done by Thee, and right here and now I receive You by faith as my own personal Saviour. That's what it means to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Confess Him with your mouth as the Lord of your life. God has given you a mouth. God wants you to use that mouth now to confess to your friends that you have taken that step of faith. "If thou shall confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and shall believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,

for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made onto salvation." Confess Him as the Lord of your life. And what'll happen? You'll be saved.

Now let's think of these three doors again. Doorway number 1, the condition, demonstrate deity. Be like God and you need no divine hand to save you. You can become your own saviour. Doorway number 2, produce perfection in your life. Absolute sinlessness in thought and word and deed and you may enter in and be saved on the basis of your own good works, your own merits. Doorway number 3, come as a poor, lost and guilty sinner, put your faith and trust in God's beloved son the Lord Jesus and then you'll be saved by grace through faith, not of works lest any man should boast.

That's how I got saved. That's how every Christian here tonight got saved. That's the only way to be saved that the Word of God knows anything at all about as far as we're concerned. Three ways of salvation, but only one way for the likes of you and me.

Your Own

As one thinks back to the days of his childhood, perhaps one of the earliest recollections was the thrill, pride and joy of personal owner-ship. To be able to say of a certain thing: "This is my very own, it belongs to me; and to nobody else!" The words: "I," "me," "my," and "mine," were often upon our lips. We spoke of "my house," "my dad," "my mom," "my toys," "my bike," etc. Nor is this pride of ownership lost as we grow older for, deep down within the personality of each individual, is the desire for something he can call his own. It may be a wife, or husband, a home, a family, a car, or a business.

There are roughly two thousand nine hundred millions of human beings living on the earth today, yet each one of these persons is an individual, possessed of a personality which distinguishes him from every other person. Each possesses an intellect by which he is enabled to acquire, retain and reproduce knowledge; emotions, by which he reacts to what he sees, hears, smells, tastes and touches; and a will, by which he is enabled to determine on a course of action and carry it out. God respects this personality of man and never coerces it. God seeks to enlighten the intellect through the message He has given in His word, the Bible; to stir the emotions, as man's need and God's remedy is proclaimed, and to precipitate his will to a right decision concerning the way of salvation.

We are living in a world that is geared very largely to mechanized uniformity of design. The assembly line seems to dominate the scene, and the danger is that the individual is apt to be lost in the mass, and man

becomes a mere cog in the great industrial machine. This danger has been referred to as “the tyranny of type,” by which all humanity is reduced to a common level and governed by a centralized control. This leads to monotony and frustration, for life, under such conditions, seems to be without purpose.

In the light of this, let us think of three things which the word of God credits each person as possessing, and one that only Christians are said to possess.

I. Your Own Sins. (Deut. 24:16)

“The fathers shall not be put to death for the sins of the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” Here God plainly indicates the personal responsibility of each individual for his own particular sins. He cannot throw the blame on anyone else: they are his own personal property, for which he is directly accountable to God Himself, for all sin is against God, whether it is a sin against oneself or against one’s fellow man.

This question of one’s own sins is anything but a popular subject, but it is absolutely essential if ever salvation is to be desired or possessed. It is only as a person is brought to realize this true state in the sight of a holy God that there will be kindled within him a desire to escape from the just consequences of his guilt. The words of the Lord Jesus are in order here: “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick... For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Matt.9:12-13)

God leaves man in no doubt as to His full knowledge of all his many sins of thought, word, deed and attitude, for

He has said: "I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins." (Amos 5:12) We are told that: "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:13) Again we are informed: "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." (Pa. 90:8) Wise indeed is that person who faces the fact of his own particular sins and owns himself to be what God declares he is. It is to be feared that many refuse to face this question, and consequently live in a fool's paradise, only to awaken, too late, to the awful realization they must now face the penalty of their guilt in the blackness of darkness for ever!

Let us spend a little time discussing this question of sin, and learn what God has to say about it.

First, its definition, or what it is. Broadly speaking, sin is any thought, word, deed or attitude that is contrary to the mind and will of a holy and righteous God. These sins may be placed in various categories. There are sins of commission, that is, the utterance of words and the performance of deeds that we know are wrong. Knowing full well the true and the right, we willfully and deliberately spoke the untrue and did the wrong. In this way we incurred the guilt of sin. Then there are the sins of thought, and who can plead not guilty of this? Mark the words of none other than the Son of God:

"Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matt. 5:28) It has been well said: "You are not what you think you are, but what you think you are!" Man's complex personality is an open book to God, and nothing can be hid from His all seeing eyes. He shall one day "judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus". How

would we like to have all the secret thoughts of our minds exposed to public view?

Then there are the sins of attitude, and particularly the attitude of rebellion against the authority of God. Sin has been described as an angry face, a clenched and shaking fist and the object of that angry face and shaking fist, almighty God! This rebellion of man's heart to God is seen, in its fullest expression, at the place called Calvary, where sinners rejected and put to death the Son of God. The great sin today seems to be the utter indifference, on the part of men, to the claims of God and the revelation of His word, the Bible. Once more, there are the sins of omission, or the failure to do the good we should. The Bible puts it this way: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Finally, there is the sin of unbelief, or the refusal to believe what God says, and to accept the salvation that God has provided at such infinite cost. We read: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." (1 John 5:10) Unbelief is therefore the damning sin for we are told by the Savior Himself: "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16)

Second, consider the individuality of sin. It is your own personal sins that God has in view: those black, vile, hideous sins which you have committed against an infinitely holy God, who hates sin in any shape or form, and who "can by no means clear the guilty." Try to visualize these many sins. Let them march down the

aisle of your memory, and then lay to heart the fact that they are your sins for which you are responsible to God!

Third, think of the enormity of these sins, for all sin is hateful to God who has said: "Do not this abominable thing that I hate!" Remember, all sin is against God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." Christ declared "Every idle word that men speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment." We are apt to classify sins into various grades of small, medium and large, but God hates all sins of every kind.

Fourth, think of the universality of sin. God has gone on record as declaring: "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Again we read: "All we, like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." And again: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (Isa.64:6) All includes each, and there are no exceptions. for we are told: "There is not a just man upon earth. that doeth good and sinneth not." (Eccl. 7:20)

Fifth, think of the responsibility of it. We are told that: "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:12) Many seek to shift the responsibility for their sins on their circumstances, heredity, friends and environment. Still others compare themselves, to their own advantage, with others, and imagine that this will mitigate against their guilt; but all such devices are in vain. God holds every person responsible for his own sins.

Sixth, think of the penalty of sin. Just as the law of our land imposes penalties on those who break those laws, so God has decreed that those who break His laws, and

die in that condition, must face the penalty He has imposed. This penalty is eternal banishment to a place of “outer darkness”, where there is “weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Let no one be deceived as to this matter of eternal punishment. The Lord Jesus, who died to provide a way of escape from this dreadful place, spoke much of hell and its awful reality. See Mark 9:43-48. Compare Rev. 20:11-15. It would be far better never to have been born, than to live and die unsaved!

Seventh, think of the remedy God has, in wonderful grace, provided for sin and the sinner. God does not desire one soul to be eternally lost. In proof of this, He has made provision for the salvation of the sinner at the infinite cost of His beloved Son, whom he sent from heaven to take our place and bear our sins on the cross. Christ willingly assumed the liability of our guilt and sin and met, by His death, all the righteous judgment of a holy God by dying in our stead, and thus satisfying all the demands of divine justice against each sinner who will own his need as a sinner, trust Him as his own personal Savior and confess Him as the Lord of his life. We shall deal with this matter a little more fully later on when we come to the last point.

II. Your Own Soul. (Mark 8:36)

“For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” By the word “soul,” is meant the spiritual part of man’s being, as distinct from his natural body. It is that part of man that continues to exist for ever after the body has died. Thus its tremendous importance may be realized. We will think of four things in connection with the soul.

First, each person has a soul. Perhaps it would be better to say, each person is a soul having a body. The body is only the casket, or the house in which the soul lives. It has been well said: "There is nothing great on earth but man, and there is nothing great in man but his soul." It is the possession of his soul that gives to man his great value in the sight of God, for the gain of the whole world would not compensate for its loss. Its value can be estimated by the price the Son of God paid for its redemption, His own most precious blood.

Second, the soul is negotiable, for it can be exchanged and bartered for something else, the world, for instance. Judas exchanged his soul for thirty pieces of silver; Pilate, for the favor of a fickle populace; Agrippa, for sinful lust; Felix, for filthy lucre. Truly it was a bad bargain for these men! But what shall be said for those, in this day, who barter their souls for the fleeting pleasures, popularity, power and pelf of this passing world? The poet has put it thus:

"It may not be for silver,
It may not be for gold,
And yet by countless thousands
Is this precious Savior sold.
Sold for a Godless friendship,
Sold for a selfish aim,
Sold for a fleeting trifle,
Sold for an empty name.
Sold in the mart of Science,
Sold in the seat of Power,

Sold at the shrine of Fortune,
Sold in Pleasure's bower.
Sold where the awful bargain,
None but God's eyes can see
Ponder, my soul, the question:
Shall He be sold by thee?"

Remember, whatever it is that is keeping you from trusting Christ as your Savior and living for Him, is the value you are placing on your soul; and what shall it profit you if you realize your life's ambition and, in so doing, lose your precious soul?

Thirdly, a person's soul can be eternally lost. If the reader is unsaved, then your soul is lost, but not eternally. Death fixes the eternal destiny of the soul, either for heaven or hell. May we ask you, in all kindness, where will you be in eternity? It depends entirely on what you do with the Lord Jesus Christ. Someone has put it thus:

"To lose your wealth is much,
To lose your health is more:
But to lose your soul is such a loss
That no man can restore!"

Fourthly, each person is responsible for the destiny of his soul. The great American statesman, Daniel Webster, was once asked what was his greatest thought. He replied: "My personal responsibility to God." Should the reader die unsaved, which God forbid, he will have no one else to blame but himself for his abysmal folly and sin. The story is told of a little girl who went to a great

bank and asked to see the manager. When the manager came, she asked him if he would please show her where all the money was kept. The manager took the girl down into the sub basement and showed her the strong room and the large piles of money stored therein. The girl then asked: "But supposing burglars came, wouldn't they steal all this money?" "No," replied the manager: "Once that big steel door is shut and locked, it is burglar proof." But supposing the bank caught fire, wouldn't all this money be burned?" "No", was the reply: "This strong room is also fire proof!" "But," persisted the girl: "Supposing a big flood were to come, wouldn't it destroy all this money?" Again the manager assured the girl that the strong room was also flood proof. At this the little girl gave a sigh of relief and said: "I'm so glad, for you see, I've got a whole dollar in this bank and I wanted to make quite sure it was safe!" We may smile at the simplicity of the child who wanted to make sure her dollar was safe; but may we ask you, in all faithfulness: "Is your soul thief proof? fire proof? and flood proof? Have you made certain of this most important matter? If not, give your-self no rest until you know, on the authority of the word of God, that your soul is in the safe keeping of the One who died and rose again to secure the salvation of your soul.

III. Your Own Place. (Acts 1:25)

After the treacherous betrayal and suicide of Judas, the eleven disciples met together to select another to take his place. After much prayer they selected two men, Barsabas and Matthias, and then said "Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by

transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” The three last words are full of deep spiritual significance. Judas, at his death, went to that dreadful place for which he had fitted himself by his diabolical treachery, and he has been there ever since.

Every person, now reading these words, shall also, at death, go to “his own place.” The Bible speaks of but two places to which a person shall go at death: heaven or hell. It knows of no such place as purgatory where, it is alleged, those go who are too bad to go to heaven and not bad enough to go to hell. This is a pure Invention of man, and has no foundation whatever in the word of God. The question we would courteously put to each reader is: Where would you go if you died this moment? One thing is certain: you would go to “your own place,” for which you have fitted yourself while on earth.

A preacher once observed: (1) Every man has his own place, here and hereafter. (2) Everyone fits himself for his own place. (3) Everyone will find his own place. (4) Everyone will feel it is his own place when he gets there. Let us spend a few moments thinking of these two places which shall be the eternal destiny of all humanity, remembering that the Bible speaks of each as a place, having a definite location, and being an actuality. Let no one be under any misapprehension as to this. There are many who deny the reality of both, but denying a fact does not eliminate it.

First, Let us think of hell, the destiny of all who, having reached the age of responsibility, die rejecting, despising or neglecting the salvation secured by the Lord Jesus Christ at the infinite cost of His precious blood. Let us note four things about this place.

1. It is a place that is described by none other than the Savior, and in solemn words that admit of no other meaning. The reader may verify this for himself by reading the following passages from the Bible. Luke 16:19-31; Mark 9:43-48; Matt. 25:41- 46; John 12:47-48; Revel. 20:11-15. To those who say: “No one has come back from the dead to tell us what happens after death,” we would reply: “The Son of God has died and come back from the dead, and He has told us what takes place after death, and no one has come back to contradict Him!” Someone has described hell as “the truth seen too late!”

2. It is a prepared place. (Matt. 25:41) It was prepared for the Devil and his angels, and also for all who side with him in his mad rebellion against God and His Son. These must therefore share his eternal doom.

3. It is a place of just retribution Christ spoke of it as “everlasting punishment.” Each person who finds himself in this fearful place will be in full possession of his memory, by which he will be enabled to recall the many lost opportunities he had of being saved and going to heaven. He will have his conscience, which will perpetually accuse him. He will also have his reason, which will justify God in placing him in hell. He will admit the justice of a holy God in consigning him to this place of torment.

4. It is a perpetual place. It is described as “everlasting punishment.” The same word translated, ‘~everlasting,” to describe the duration of God’s retribution on the impenitent, is also used to describe the eternal existence of God. No hope is held out in the Bible for a “second chance” after death. Death is the determiner of one’s

eternal destiny. There are many today who carelessly say: "I'll take my chance on what comes after death." These foolish people fail to realize that their "chance" is their "choice!" A person does not take a "chance" of being killed if he jumps from the top of a fifty story building to the street below, he will most certainly be killed. No sane person would jump on any train that happened to be leaving a station, and take his "chance" that it would bring him to his desired destination. No, a person makes sure he is on the right train.

If every person now living knew what every person discovers after he dies, there would be no souls in hell! The sinner's only hope of escape from eternal retribution rests in the false assumption that perhaps the Bible is not true! The word of God describes hell as a place of unimpaired memory, ungratified desire, unanswered prayer and inescapable doom. God, in His grace and mercy, has left us in no doubt as to the awful reality of hell, so that men and women may take advantage of His provision and escape the consequences of their sins through faith in the Son of God. Remember what the Bible says, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." (Prov. 9:12)

Second. Let us think of heaven, the home of the redeemed of all ages.

1. It is a place. Our Lord said: "I go to prepare a place for you.. that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3) Thus heaven is just as definitely a place as is hell.

2. It is a prepared place, and prepared by none other than the Lord Jesus. It is a prepared place for a

prepared people, and the preparation for that place must occur on earth. The question is: "Have you been prepared for that place by being saved?"

3. It is a pleasant place. See Revel. 21 and 22. God uses negatives to describe the glories of heaven. We are told there is no sin, no curse, no night, no defilement, no sickness, no pain, no parting, no death and no sorrow. It is a place of unending joy, perfect fellowship and complete satisfaction. No words of man can adequately describe the surpassing beauties and glories of this blessed home of the saved of all ages. Let the reader make sure that he will be there by coming to know the Lord Jesus as his own personal Savior!

4. It is a perpetual place, for the redeemed shall be there for ever! Best of all, they shall be with and like their blessed Lord and Savior, the One who loved them and gave Himself for them, and they shall share His eternal glory!

"Come, sing of the home which the Lord has prepared
For those He has saved by His grace;
What comfort and joy His own words to us bring:
I go to prepare you a place."

No tongue can e'er tell, and no pen can describe
That home, blest, supernal and fair;
No sin and no sickness, no pain and no death,
And naught that defiles shall be there.
With glorified bodies, made like to their Lord,
The ransomed His glory shall share,
Whose infinite grace and His own precious blood

Entitles each one to be there.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the light of that home,

Its center, attraction and joy;

His servants shall serve Him, His face they shall see,

His praises their tongues shall employ.

The theme of their song, in that beautiful home,

Is Christ, the Redeemer of men:

‘To Him who hath loved us and bought us by blood,

Be glory for ever, Amen!’

Home, beautiful home! Home, glorious home!

Home which the Savior has gone to prepare;

Home, which the saved of all ages shall share;

Home, bright, eternal, beyond all compare, Home,
beautiful home!”

IV. Your Own Salvation. (Phil. 2:12)

Paul, writing to the Christians at Philippi, makes use of this expression, and said: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God, which worketh in you both to will and do of His good pleasure.” We also read in Isa. 12:2: “Behold, God is my Salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my Strength and my Song: He also is become my Salvation!”

The words, “your own salvation,” can only be true of one who has been saved by the grace of God through faith in the Son of God, and consequently has been born again by the Holy Spirit of God. Is this true of the reader? If not, make sure that it is ere you close your eyes in sleep.

Pay good heed to God's way of salvation as it is described in the words that follow. We shall think of seven things concerning this salvation.

1. This salvation is in a Person, and that Person is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for we read: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) Many falsely imagine that salvation lies in the repeating of a creed, or in submitting oneself to certain ordinances, or in joining some religious organization, or in the performance of a host of good deeds, or in the making of good resolutions to live a better life in the future, or in the sincerity of one's belief. Mark carefully what the word of God has to say regarding this matter: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John 5:11-12) Surely nothing could be clearer than this, yet thousands substitute the things we have mentioned for simple trust in the Son of God, and the work He did on the cross for sinners. He said: "I am the door, by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." (John 10:9)

2. This salvation has been provided by God and purchased by Christ. All the work needed for the salvation of every believing soul was accomplished by Christ over nineteen hundred years ago, when He willingly bore our sins in His own body on the cross, and then suffered all the righteous judgment of God against them by dying in our place, and rising triumphant from the dead. Since the work that saves has all been done, to God's complete satisfaction, what is left for the sinner to do in order to have this salvation as his very own? We

are not left in any doubt as to the answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31)

3. This salvation is now freely offered to every lost and guilty sinner. Hear the glad message: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23) Notice, it is a free gift, which cannot be bought or earned by our good works. God will never sell it or exchange it for something we can give Him in return for it, for we are told it is "not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:9)

4. This salvation must be personally received if it is to be ours. Though a gift may be offered to a person, it does not become his until he receives it. Thus we read: "To as many as received Him (Christ) to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:12) What would you think of a person who, when offered a valuable gift, fell down on his knees and asked for it to be given him? Yet this is what thousands are doing right now. Instead of taking the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and thus receiving the free gift of God, they are praying for something that God is offering them! Why not, right now, take the gift and thank the Giver?

5. This salvation is assured by the word of God. It is not a question of feeling, but of fact. Note carefully what the Bible has to say on this matter: "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." (1 John 5:13) Hear the very words of the Savior Himself: "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into

condemnation but is passed out of death into life.” (John 5:24) Thus, every believer is assured, by none other than God Himself, that he is already the possessor of eternal life and is now saved eternally. Could anyone wish for anything better than this?

6. This salvation, when received, should be confessed, for we read:..If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Rom. 10:9) By this confession of Christ, by word of mouth, the believer thus nails his colors to the mast, and lets others know he is now on the Lord’s side.

7. This salvation should be evidenced in the life, so that others can see, in the changed life of the believer, the proof of God’s saving grace Paul could write to those who had been saved under his ministry and say: We give thanks to God for you.... remembering your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope.” The real evidence of a genuine work of God in the soul is a life lived to the glory of the One to whom he now belongs, body, soul and spirit, for time and all eternity.

May the reading of this booklet bring each reader to face the question of his own sins; a realization of the value of his own soul; a knowledge of heaven as his own place and, best of all, to an assurance of his own salvation!

Alfred P. Gibbs

Three Questions

Undoubtedly this is the day of the questionnaire. Quiz programs were never so prevalent and popular as today. For several years one of the best known programs on the radio was called "Information Please." It consisted of all sorts of questions being put to a team of experts, and their knowledge tested on a wide variety of subjects, at the expense of the company who sponsored the program. At other quiz programs, huge sums of money and valuable prizes are given away to those who are fortunate enough to be able to answer the questions put to them.

The question and answer method of teaching is recognized as being one of the most successful means of imparting knowledge, and consequently is widely used in our schools today. This was the system adopted by Socrates, the great Grecian philosopher of the third century B.C. He used it with great skill, not only to impart knowledge to his pupils, but also to impress them with the consciousness of their own ignorance. In fact, he once remarked: "I have spent all my life bringing people from a state of unconscious ignorance into a condition of conscious ignorance," and surely this was time well spent. The first step into the Hall of Knowledge is the admission of one's own ignorance. God Himself will only undertake the education of those who are prepared to admit their need of His instruction, for we read: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool [or own his ignorance] that he may be wise." (1 Cor. 3:18)

The Bible is full of questions and answers, some asked by men and answered by God, and some asked by God and answered by men. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest of all teachers, during the brief recorded period of His public ministry, as found in the four Gospels, is described as asking over one hundred questions. Let us briefly examine three questions, each of which relates to the most important matter of salvation.

The first question is found in the Gospel of Luke, chapter thirteen and verse twenty-three, where it is recorded that person asked the Savior: "Are there few that be saved?" We shall call this:

I. AN INQUISITIVE QUESTION

The questioner's motive may be inferred from the answer the Lord gave him, for He replied: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, then shall ye begin to stand outside and say: 'Lord, Lord, open unto us!' But He shall answer and say unto you: 'I know not whence ye are!'"

In these intensely solemn words, our Lord rebuked the idle curiosity that undoubtedly prompted the question. Apparently there was no seriousness on the part of this inquirer, he was merely indulging his flair for statistics. It mattered nothing to him whether few or many would be saved; but it was a vitally important matter to the Son of God, who had left the glory of heaven to come into a world of sin and shame to seek and save that which was lost, knowing full well it would cost Him untold suffering and His own life.

God is greatly concerned about the salvation of sinners, in proof of which He gave His only Son to be a substitutionary sacrifice on their behalf, for we are told: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) God has gone on record as saying: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked... but that the wicked should turn from his evil ways and live. Turn you, turn you, for why will ye die?" (Ezek. 33:11) Notice, God does not ask: "When will ye die?" or: "Where will ye die?" or "Of what will ye die?" but "Why will ye die?" It is as if He says: "Why die in your sins and be eternally lost when I have made every provision for your eternal salvation, if you will turn to Me?"

Let us look a little further into our Lord's answer to this frivolous and inquisitive questioner. Notice carefully the four words He used: "Strive to enter in." The word "strive" is the word from which we get the English word "agonize." The question of the soul's eternal destiny is so important that Christ advises people to agonize to enter in at the door of salvation. It should be the supreme object of the reader to make absolutely certain that he is truly saved, that his sins are all forgiven, that he has been born again by the Spirit of God, and that he is consequently ready for eternity.

Why did Christ advise this person to agonize to enter in the door? The answer is simple. Our Lord knew, as none other, the tremendous forces which would combine to hinder the sinner from entering the door to God's great salvation. Let us name some of these opposing forces which would seek to rob the soul of the salvation God

desires him to have, remembering that to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

First, there is Pride, which lifts its haughty head and refuses to admit that man is, by nature, the lost and guilty sinner that God declares him to be; that refuses to bow in contrition and confess: "God be merciful to me the sinner." We are told: "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly, but the proud He knoweth afar off." (Psa. 138:6) So long as a person adopts a superior air, and imagines himself to be quite good enough to merit God's favor by his own efforts, so long will he remain in his sins and, if he dies in that condition, will be lost forever.

Second, there is Prejudice, which consists of a wrong opinion formed before proper investigation. This has blinded many a person to the truth of the gospel and resulted in untold misery. The sinner forms a wrong impression of God, and of Christ, and of God's "easy, artless and unencumbered way of salvation." This prejudice may take many forms. It may be religious prejudice that hinders him from accepting God's way of being saved. It may be social prejudice that prevents him from taking his place as a sinner, no different from anyone else. It may be racial prejudice that causes him to refuse a salvation that is for "whosoever will.'

Third, there is Popularity. Many have been deterred from walking the upward and heavenly pathway because they fear that such a path will cause them to become unpopular with their worldly friends. They dread the ridicule that living a consistent Christian life will bring them, and thus they allow themselves to be laughed into a lost eternity. The Bible speaks sadly of those who

“loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” (John 12:43) Christ declared that “the truth shall make you free.” Note: not popular, rich, powerful and successful, but Free. It may and will entail the world’s unpopularity, but it is the path of true and eternal satisfaction.

Fourth, there are material Possessions. “The love of money, which is the root of all evil,” has kept many from taking advantage of God’s offer of salvation, and from trusting the One who, “though rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.” The lure of the almighty dollar has turned many a person into an “I-dollar-ter,” who has discovered, too late, that his love of temporary wealth has plunged him into eternal bankruptcy!

Fifth, there are worldly Pleasures, which often prove to be an obstacle to the enjoyment of the true and lasting pleasures that only Christ can give. The Bible speaks of “the pleasures of sin,” but goes on to say they are only for “a season.” Robert Burns, the great Scotch poet, wrote of worldly pleasures:

“Pleasures are like poppies spread,
You grasp the flower, the bloom is shed;
Or, like the snowflake on the river,
A moment there, then gone forever!”

In spite of this fact, thousands of men and women are bartering their souls for the fleeting pleasures of a world that crucified its Creator, and still lives in rebellion against the Son of God.

Sixth, there is Procrastination, or delay. There are many who have been brought to realize their lost and guilty

state in the sight of a holy God. They have heard of the way of salvation through an acceptance of Christ as their personal Savior, and yet they still linger in their sins and are thus exposed to the wrath of God. What is the reason for this folly? It is procrastination. This has sealed the eternal doom of thousands. They always intended to be saved "some other time," but death came upon them unawares, and they were just as assuredly lost as though they had flatly refused to accept Christ as their Savior. There is an old proverb which says: "The road of By and By leads to the town of Never."

Seventh, there is the Prince of this world, the Devil. He is the great hinderer. The Bible speaks, clearly and definitely, of his personality, wisdom and power. We are told: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:4) It is only when a sinner seeks to escape from Satan's clutches that he is made to realize how great is this power that the enemy wields.

In view of this formidable array of opposition, our Lord's words need to be laid to heart: "Strive to enter in." May the reader give himself no rest or peace until he is certain that he has entered through the door of salvation, and knows the blessedness of his sins forgiven, of his peace with God and the possession of eternal life!

The second question is found in Mark 10:26, where the disciples of Christ asked: "Who then can be saved!" We shall call this:

II. AN INCREDULOUS QUESTION

This question can best be appreciated by a consideration of the circumstances which prompted the query. A rich young man, of high morality and intense religiousness, came running to Christ. Kneeling before Him, he earnestly inquired: "Good Master, what shall I do that I might inherit eternal life?" The Savior, who read him like an open book, proceeded to show this young man the utter impossibility for anyone to inherit eternal life on the basis of his own morality or self effort. Christ said: "Thou knowest the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery; do not kill; do not steal; do not bear false witness; defraud not; honor thy father and thy mother.'" At this, the young man replied: "All these have I observed from my youth." Then Christ proceeded to put His finger on the hidden cancer of the love of wealth which lay deep within his breast. He therefore said to him: "One thing thou lackest. Go thy way, sell what thou hast and give to the poor... and come, take up the cross and follow Me."

We are told that when the young man heard this, he was "sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." Thus this man turned his back on the Son of God, and made his fatal choice for earthly riches and worldly prosperity, and we never hear of him again. As the young man went away, the Savior said to His disciples: "How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter into the kingdom of God!" It was these words that provoked the incredulous question: "Who then can be saved?" Notice the answer that Christ gave: "With men, it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible."

There are many today who resemble that rich, moral and religious young man. While possessed of many

admirable qualities, they lack the one great essential requirement which is necessary to be a truly born again Christian, and this lack is fatal. This man trusted in his riches and turned away from Christ and departed, joyless, nameless, hopeless, lifeless and Christless! He valued his wealth above the far more exceeding value of his soul. Whatever it may be that keeps a person from trusting Christ is the value he places on his soul, and “what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

There are those today who are trusting to their morality to merit God’s salvation, and falsely imagine that living a fairly decent and respectable life will win them a home in heaven. They have not yet learned that salvation is by grace alone, and is “not of works, lest any man should boast.” See Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:4

Still others think that because they have passed through some religious rite or ceremony they have been thereby fitted for heaven. Many are trusting in their baptism and the fact that they take communion regularly, and thus make an ordinance a substitute for Christ! Baptism and communion are ordinances for those who are already saved and on their way to heaven, but they have no saving virtue whatever.

To all such the words of the Savior: “One thing thou lackest,” should come home with force to their souls. The great need of all men is to have Christ as a living reality in their lives. This can only be brought about by believing the gospel which proclaims that Christ died for their sins. Only through accepting Him as their own personal Savior and confessing Him as the Lord of their lives can salvation be theirs.

The third question we shall entitle:

III. AN IMPERATIVE QUESTION

This is found in Acts 16:30. It was asked by the jailer of a prison in which Paul and Silas were imprisoned for preaching the gospel. God sent an earthquake so that all the doors of the prison were opened. The jailer, thinking his prisoners had escaped, was about to commit suicide when Paul called to him and said: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here. At this, the man cried: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Back came the answer from the lips of Paul: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!"

Is this your question, my friend? Has God shown you that you are a lost and guilty sinner, helpless to save yourself by any efforts of your own? If so, thank God, for you are just the kind of person for whom the Son of God suffered, bled and died on the cross of Calvary. He knew your dire need and deadly danger and, in wonderful love, allowed Himself to be crucified in order that He might bear all your sins in His own body on the tree. As He hung there, despised and rejected of men, all God's righteous wrath against sin fell on Him, in unparalleled force, until every claim of God against sin had been satisfied by His substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of sinners. Mark the loud and triumphant cry of the Savior ere He bowed His head in death and dismissed His spirit: "It is finished!" What was finished? All the work necessary for the salvation of every sinner who will trust in His finished work of redemption and receive Him as Savior and Lord.

God has signified His absolute and complete satisfaction in the finished work of His beloved Son on your behalf,

and is now prepared to receive, pardon and save every sinner who trusts in Christ and rests, simply and entirely, in the virtue and value of the precious blood of the Son of God as the alone foundation of his hope of eternal blessedness.

May God, in His mercy, grant that this imperative question may be yours, and that from the heart you may sincerely say:

“Just as I am, poor, guilty, lost,
I come to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ;
In simple faith I trust in Thee,
Who bore my sins and died for me.

God’s word will then assure you that you are saved, and saved eternally; that your sins are all forgiven; that you are the possessor of eternal life; that God is your Father; that the Lord Jesus Christ is your Savior; that the Holy Spirit is your indwelling Comforter; that the word of God is your infallible guide; that Christians are your heaven-born, heaven-bound and heaven-bent companions, and that heaven will be your eternal home. May it be yours to say of the Lord Jesus, right here and now: “He is mine, and I am His, for ever and for ever!

“Come, come, sin laden one,
Just as you are in your sins;
Trust, trust, Christ’s precious blood
That satisfied all God’s claims;
Look. look, to Him who bore
All of your sins on the tree;
Rest, rest, on His own word.

Then saved by His grace you shall be!”

Alfred P. Gibbs

The Unanswerable Question

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.” (Hebrews 2:1-3)

It is a recognized fact that one of the best hods of teaching is by the use of carefully prepared questions. This serves the double purpose of discovering the pupil’s ignorance or knowledge of the subject, and of imparting to him the information necessary to his education. This was the method employed by Socrates: the great Grecian philosopher who lived over two thousand years ago.

God’s word, the Bible, contains a great number of questions and answers and much can be learned from them, for many of them are of importance to humanity.

For instance, when Job inquired: ‘How then can man be justified (or declared righteous) with God?’ the answer comes both clear and definite: “Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Job 25:4; Rom. 3:24) When Nicodemus asked: “How can a man be born again?” our Lord left him in no doubt as to the answer: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:1-16) In response to the query: “If a man die, shall he live again?” our Lord

answered: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live." (Job 14:14; John 11:25) When Solomon asked: "Will God indeed dwell on the earth?" the affirmative answer was given when the angel proclaimed to the shepherds: "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord." (1 Kings 8:27; Luke 2:7-11)

Some years ago a friend of mine saw a piece of paper lying on the street. On it, printed in large letters were the words: "Twenty five thousand dollars reward!" Attracted by the munificent offer, he picked up the paper and read these words: "Twenty five thousand dollars will be given to the person who can correctly answer the following question: 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' " Needless to say, the reward is still unclaimed, for this is one of the unanswerable questions of the Bible. As such it deserves our closest attention and we shall do well to give it our most earnest consideration.

Let us think of three things regarding this unanswerable question. First, we shall consider the great salvation. Second, we shall think of the tragic possibility. Third, we shall concern ourselves with a the dreadful result of neglecting this great salvation.

I. The Great Salvation

We can be certain that when God calls a thing great, it really deserves the description. Man's idea of what constitutes greatness, and God's, are as far apart as heaven from earth. Man hails the discovery of the poles as a great achievement, but God rejoices in seeking, finding and saving a lost and guilty sinner. Man

congratulates himself on the successful completion of a gigantic enterprise such as the construction of a great canal that links two oceans; or a huge dam that conserves an enormous water supply and furnishes a state with electric power; or in a railroad that connects distance places. But God speaks and rejoices in the accomplished work of His beloved Son, by which a full, free and eternal salvation has been provided from sin's doom, dominion and domain for every sinner who will receive Christ as his Savior and Lord.

Man thinks in terms of time, but God in terms of eternity. Man estimates the value of a thing from a natural and materialistic standpoint. God views things in the light of their spiritual and eternal value. In fact, God Himself tells us: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." (Isa. 55:8)

Let us now consider several reasons why God's salvation can be truly described as being great.

First, it is a great salvation because of its Personnel. This consists of the Divine Triunity of the eternal Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each of Whom united in the provision of this great salvation. God, the Father, is its Originator and He made it possible by the gift of His beloved Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God is its Provider, and He made it available by His incarnation, substitutionary sacrifice death and resurrection and glorification. The Holy Spirit is its Empowerer and He makes it actual in the experience of the believer by His convicting and regenerating power. Thus the triune Godhead is

intensely concerned and actively engaged in this great work of salvation, the greatest thing in the universe!

Second, it is a great salvation because of the Person who published it. Note the words: "Which at first began to be spoken by the Lord." Our Lord did not come into the world primarily to preach the gospel, but to make it possible for a gospel to be preached! This necessitated His incarnation, death, resurrection and glorification. His first recorded utterance was: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" He declared: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." Again we hear Him saying: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." From the cross, where He allowed Himself to be crucified in order to bear our sins, He cried with a loud, triumphant voice: "It is finished!" Before He ascended back to heaven He commissioned His disciples with these words: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature!" Thus the greatness of this salvation is demonstrated by the character of the Person who came to make it possible, died to make it actual and now lives to make it experimental in the lives of all who trust Him.

Thirdly, it is a great salvation because of the price paid to secure it. This price was nothing less than His precious blood, or outpoured life. God had declared: "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: "for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. 17:11)

Because of the absolute holiness, righteousness and justice of God, sin must be punished; either in the

person of the sinner, or in the person of a divinely provided, offered and accepted substitutionary sacrifice which takes the place of the sinner, bears his sins and dies in his stead. This is what the Lord Jesus did for us when He willingly went to the cross and allowed God to put all our sins upon Him. As He bore our sins in His own body, all God's judgment against sin fell, in all its concentrated fierceness, upon Him. We read: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53:6) The heart of the gospel is found in these inspired words: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." (I Cor. 15:3) Thus this salvation is the most costly thing in the universe, for it cost the incarnate Son of God the suffering and death of the cross. While salvation is free, it is not cheap, for it was secured at infinite cost.

Fourthly, it is a great salvation because of the purpose it reveals. God's salvation reveals at least three things. First, it reveals the lost, guilty, helpless, hopeless and hell-deserving condition of man by nature. The infinite value of the precious blood of Christ, shed for our salvation, reveals, as nothing else, the awful character of man's sin.

"Oh how vile my lost estate,
Since my ransom was so great!"

It is only as we realize, in some measure, what it meant for Christ to be forsaken of His God in that "lone, dark and mysterious hour," as He hung upon that cross, that we can measure the lost and guilty state of man that necessitated such infinite suffering on the part of the Son of God.

Secondly, it reveals God's wonderful love. Calvary tells out, in all its fullness, the infinite love of God. Nature, "red in tooth and claw", does not reveal God's love, but rather His "eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. 1:20) History does not tell out God's love, for its pages are red with the blood of countless thousands slain in its many wars. Nor does providence declare the love of God, for the ungodly still seemingly prosper, and the righteous suffer adversity. The only place where God's love is demonstrated, beyond all possibility of contradiction, is at the place called Calvary. Mark what God has to say about this: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." (I John 4:9) No one can doubt the love of God as he looks at Calvary.

Thirdly, it reveals the only remedy for sin. God's salvation takes care of the believer's past, and provides for the forgiveness of all his sins. It secures the Christian's present, for it assures him of his perfect acceptance in the sight of God, in His Son, and thus grants him peace of heart and mind. It also guarantees the future of every child of God, and assures him of "a home eternal in the heavens," with the redeemed of all the ages. What could possibly be more attractive than this? Thus the believer's past, present and future is all included in the divine purpose of this great salvation.

Fifth, it is a great salvation because of the power it unlooses. We are told that the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 1:16) The Greek word for "power" is "dunamis", from which the word "dynamite" is derived. This great salvation, when accepted by the sinner, is accompanied by the mighty power of God which delivers him from the

bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It translates him from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. It communicates a divine life and spiritual power which enables the believer to live a life to the glory of God, and to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” No one can start the Christian life until he has the life of a Christian, and this life is in Christ. Thus we read “He that hath the Son bath life.” (1 John 5:12) How wonderful it is to know that “the exceeding greatness of God’s power,” which was demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ, is now placed at the disposal of every believer on Christ. Thus there is no possibility of a lack of power to live the Christian life. (Eph. 1:15-23)

Sixthly, it is a great salvation because of the provision it supplies. It provides the believer with deliverance from the penalty of his sins, which is eternal separation from the presence of God in hell. It delivers him from the power of sin, in the measure in which he avails himself of the means which God has provided for this purpose. One day, at the coming of the Lord Jesus, it will deliver him front the very presence and possibility of sin. Salvation is therefore an inclusive term, and all the things necessary for the believer are included in God’s rich provision in Christ.

Seventhly, it is a great salvation because of the fearful perdition from which it delivers. God’s word clearly indicates that there is an eternal destiny for all humanity: heaven or hell. No one spoke more about hell than our Lord Jesus Christ. He solemnly warned His hearers of the dreadful danger of dying in their sins, and being cast into hell, “where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.” See Mark 9:42-48. Remember that

the Christ that spoke so much about hell, suffered infinitely to save humanity from going there, and died to secure their salvation from eternal punishment. Take heed therefore lest, after reading this warning, you die unsaved, and hear from His lips the dread sentence: "Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41)

Now let us consider:

II. The Tragic Possibility

This is found in the words: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The fact that Christ's death has made possible salvation for all does not mean that all will be saved. The fact that there is a medicine, which is a sure cure for a certain disease, does not guarantee that every person suffering from that disease will be cured. This medicine must be taken if it is to be effective. In like manner, the salvation secured by the finished work of Christ on the cross, and proclaimed by God in the gospel, will be of no benefit whatever to a person unless Christ is received by faith as one's own personal Savior and confessed as the Lord of the believer's life. Let us note carefully what the Bible has to say as to this: "To as many as received Him, (Christ) to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:12) Thus this great salvation, though sufficient for the salvation of all, is seen to be efficient only to that person who avails himself of it by receiving Christ as Savior and Lord. The question is: will you be that person?

There are three tragic possibilities in regard to this great salvation.

First, it may be slighted and treated with utter indifference. There are many who adopt this attitude. They do not deny the fact of God, or the fact that they are sinners, nor even the necessity for the death of Christ to secure their salvation. They treat the whole matter with utter indifference, and live their lives with no reference to God or salvation. Should these people die in this condition they will be as assuredly and eternally lost as though they had deliberately denied the revelation of God concerning this salvation.

Second, this salvation can be coldly, dispassionately and deliberately rejected. There are many such who deny the truth of the word of God, and actively oppose those who seek to preach the gospel. They rebel against the authority of God and spurn the offer of His salvation. By so doing they seal their own eternal doom.

Thirdly, this salvation may be neglected. A person may be convinced of his need as a lost and guilty sinner in the sight of God. He may be certain he is the object of the love of God and the finished work of Christ on his behalf. He may know the way of salvation, and be able to quote scriptures to prove it. He may be almost persuaded to trust the Lord Jesus as his Savior-and yet be lost by neglecting to personally receive the Son of God and own Him as the Lord of his life.

Neglect turns a well tilled field into a wilderness. It runs a once profitable business into bankruptcy. Neglect sinks ships, wrecks trains, automobiles and airplanes. It results in tremendous losses every year in the way of property and life. What is neglect? It simply consists of letting things alone that should be attended to. Is this to be your fate, my friend? An old proverb has it: "The road

of By and By leads to the town of Never." To be "almost persuaded" is to be almost saved, and to be almost saved is to be eternally lost!

Now let us consider:

III. The Dreadful Result

"How shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation?" This is the unanswerable question, for God's word holds out no hope whatever for that person who dies slighting, rejecting or neglecting this great salvation. Mark the solemn words of the Bible: "When they shall say peace and safety,' then sudden destruction cometh upon them.. and they shall not escape. (1 Thess. 5:3) Our Lord declared:

"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying 'Lord, Lord, open to us;' and He shall answer and say unto you: 'I know not whence ye are.'" (Luke 13:25)

It has been well said that: "The way to hell is paved with good intentions." Let this not be true of the reader. Right here and now, own yourself to be what God declares you are, a lost and guilty sinner. Believe that Christ bore your sins and, by His death, satisfied all God's claims against you. Accept the Lord Jesus now as your own personal Savior and henceforth confess Him as the supreme Lord of your life. God's word will then assure you that this great salvation is yours for time and all eternity. Say with one of old: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation!" (Isa. 12:2) May God grant it for His name's sake!

Alfred P. Gibbs

Musings on "Me"

Some years ago there was issued a little booklet that bore the intriguing title: "How to make the most of Me." It contains instructions on how to develop one's personality, increase one's intellectual capacity and thus further one's influence over others which would result in a prosperous and successful life. Though the word "me" has but two letters, it is very often upon the lips of people. How often one hears the words: "I" "me," "my, " and "mine." This is rightly so, for this expresses the personality of each individual. No two persons are absolutely identical. Their appearance may be similar, as in the case of identical twins, but their personalities are quite distinct.

It is obvious that we are living in a world characterized largely by mass production, which is based on uniformity of design. It is an interesting experience to visit an automobile factory and watch the cars rolling off the assembly line, each car being identical with the other. While this method certainly makes for business efficiency, this mechanical process does not work with humanity, for each person is a distinct individual, totally separate from every other person. It has been well said that when God makes a person He breaks the mold. Thus there will never be another person just exactly like you or me.

Personality is a difficult thing to define. It seems to consist of the impression which a person produces on others because of what he is, intellectually, emotionally and volitionally. By means of his intellect a person is enabled to obtain, retain and reproduce knowledge. His

emotions endue him with the ability to react to what he knows and experiences through his five senses: sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing. His will is that faculty which enables him to determine, and to carry out that determination by an act. Therefore we say that the impact which a person makes on others because of his intellect, emotions and will represents his personality. Thus when a person says 'I,' "me," "my," and "mine," he is simply expressing his personality. This is all perfectly right and proper.

The Bible clearly teaches that God, the Creator of man, respects man's personality and never coerces it. He will never force His way into a person's life, but always addresses His appeal to the whole personality of each individual. Through His word He seeks to enlighten the intellect, stir the emotions and bring about a decision of the will. The proclamation of the gospel is addressed to "whosoever will." Mark the gracious invitation: "The Spirit and the bride say 'come.' And let him that heareth say, come.' And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) Our Lord sadly addressed those of His day by saying: "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." (John 5:40) Again we hear Him saying: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me." (Rev. 3:20)

God is the God of the individual. In salvation, he does not deal with humanity as a whole, but with each person in particular. God is a Person, and appeals to persons. David realized this fact and testified: "The Lord is my Shepherd." He spoke of God as "my Rock my Strength... and my Salvation." (Psa. 23:1; 18:1-2) Martin Luther

once remarked: "The gospel is a gospel of personal pronouns." Let us select, from the many occurrences of the word, "me," four statements from the Bible which will combine to present what we may well call: "The gospel according to me," and learn, through these four texts, the way of salvation.

We shall first consider:

I. The honest "Me" of a plea for Divine examination.
(Psa. 139:23-24)

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." In this wonderful psalm, David acknowledges the omniscience, or all knowledge of God (verses 1-6). He realizes the omnipresence, or all presence of God in every place and at all times (verses 7-12). He confesses the omnipotence, or the all power of God (verses 13-16). It is in view of this that he prays the prayer recorded in verses 23-24. It takes rare courage to address such a petition to the God, "to whom all things are open and naked." Each person's complex personality is like an open book to Him, and nothing can be concealed from His all searching scrutiny, for "known unto Him are all things from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:18)

Does the reader, honestly and sincerely, desire God to search his heart and life, and then reveal to him His findings? If so, then mark carefully what God has already revealed and recorded in the pages of holy Scripture concerning all humanity in general and of each reader in particular. In Romans, chapter three, is found God's diagnosis of man by nature. Let each reader separate himself, in thought, from every other person on

the face of the earth, and lay to heart the fact that this is a description of himself as he appears in the sight of the God with whom he must have to do. Now mark the words carefully: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Are you prepared to accept this statement as a true description of yourself? Are you willing to honestly and sincerely admit: "Yes, this is a correct description of me, and I now admit myself to be the lost and guilty sinner that God says I am."

Now let us look at:

II. The humble "Me" of an awakened conviction and confession of sin. (Isaiah 6:1-7)

In this sixth chapter of his prophecy, Isaiah describes a vision that God gave him. In it he saw the Lord exalted upon a throne. Before that throne angels veiled their faces and cried: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory!" As the prophet glimpsed the majesty and glory of God, he was overcome with a sense of his own utter unworthiness and total unfitness to stand in the presence of such an August Being, 'and cried, from the depth of his heart: "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!"

Surely this must also be the confession of every person who is brought into the presence of the holy God of the universe. However excellent a person may imagine himself to be, as he compares himself with his fellow

men, he has no room for pride or self congratulation as he stands in the dazzling light of the absolute holiness of God! His confession must be: "Woe is me, I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips!"

No woman likes to hang out her washing on the line while the ground is covered with newly fallen snow and the sun is shining, for the best washed sheets look drab and dirty in comparison to the purity and whiteness of the snow. Likewise, the very best and noblest of men, when brought face to face with the unsullied holiness of God, are the first to admit how far short they have come of the standard of God's perfection. In fact, we are definitely told: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (Isa. 64:6) No wonder therefore that David prayed: "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." (Psa. 51:7) There is a vast difference between being whitewashed and being washed white. As the reader realizes, in some measure at least, the holiness, righteousness and justice of a thrice holy God, as revealed in the ten commandments, he will also take Isaiah's confession on his lips and confess: "Woe is me! I am undone!"

Now let us think of:

III. The heart-felt "Me" of a desired forgiveness. (Luke 18:9- 14)

In one of His wonderful parables our Lord described two men who went up to the temple in Jerusalem to pray. One was a smug, sleek, self righteous and self satisfied Pharisee, and the other was a humble Publican or tax collector. The Pharisee proceeded to inform God of his superior moral and religious attainments and said: "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are,

extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that possess." The Publican however, standing afar off from the altar, and not so much as daring to lift his eyes to heaven, smote himself penitentially on his breast and cried, humbly and earnestly: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

It will be observed that this man did not indulge in a "general confession," but in a specific and personal one. He did not use the word "us", but "me". He separated himself from all others and called himself by his right name, "sinner," and earnestly sought God's forgiveness and mercy. Nor did he cry in vain, for the Savior declared that he "went down to his house justified," or declared righteous by the God of heaven. As a man's heart is searched and his true condition revealed, he will not only own himself to be what God declares he is: a lost, guilty, helpless, hopeless and hell-deserving sinner; but he will, as this Publican, earnestly desire to be saved from the consequences of his sins, which is eternal separation from the presence of a holy God. How good it is to know that God has foreseen man's sinful state, and has provided a means whereby the sinner may not only be forgiven, but actually declared righteous in the sight of the God against whom he has so grievously sinned!

Let the reader, who has realized his need as a sinner, pay close attention to what follows, for this is the gospel of the grace of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and equal and eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, came from heaven to be the Savior of sinners. Born of a virgin, His life had no taint of sin, for we are told He had no sin, knew no sin and did no sin. His holy spotless life is described for us in the four Gospels.

But Christ did not come into the world merely to live a spotless life, for this would only have condemned us, and could not have saved anyone. Christ came to seek and save the lost, to pardon the guilty and to make it possible for God, in perfect righteousness, to receive, pardon and relieve sinners. To accomplish this, He allowed Himself to be nailed to a cross and there, willingly, in infinite love, bore our sins in His own body, and then suffered, at the hands of a holy God, all the judgment that our sins deserved. Thus the Lord Jesus, by His sacrificial and substitutionary death, has satisfied all the claims of God against every sinner who will trust Him as his own personal Savior, and confess Him as the Lord of his life.

Having accomplished all the work needed for our salvation, Christ rose from the dead, and is now glorified at the right hand of God in heaven, able to save to the uttermost every sinner who will own his need and receive Him as his own Savior. Is the reader to be that person? You have heard the gospel. May it be yours to take advantage of this wonderful way of salvation, and personally appropriate the forgiveness that Christ has made possible at such infinite cost. Make the desire of the Publican yours and say from the depths of your heart: "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Now let us examine the fourth "me", which we shall call:

IV. The happy "Me" of an assured salvation. (Gal. 2:20)

The glad confession of the great apostle Paul was: "The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." He knew what it meant to realize his need of salvation, for he speaks of himself as the "chief of sinners." He, too, had ardently desired to be saved and now, through

personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he knew, beyond any peradventure and doubt, that he was saved. He could also write to others who had trusted the Savior and say: "By grace are ye saved through faith... not of works, lest any many should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9)

The prophet Isaiah also, the same one who said "Woe is me," also testified: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my Strength and my --Song; He also is become my Salvation." (Isa. 12:2) Notice the personal pronouns in this statement. Best of all, you can also take these words upon your lips if you will rest in the work Christ did for you on the cross and receive Him as your Savior and Lord.

The story is told of a boy who received a beautiful pocket knife on his birthday, and took it to school in order to show it to his friends. As they gathered around him, he allowed each one to handle it and admire it. Every boy had something nice to say about the gift, but after they had all examined it, and it had come back to the boy he said: "Fellows, you have all had something nice to say about the knife, but I can say what you cannot for, best of all, it's mine!" Happy indeed is that one who can truthfully sing:

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

O what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of salvation, purchase of God,

Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood!"

There are many who say: "No one can know for certain that he is saved, until after he dies and then, if his good deeds outweigh his bad deeds, he will go to heaven; if

not, he will end in hell." This is pure fallacy, and has no foundation whatever in the word of God. On the contrary, the Bible clearly and plainly affirms that each sinner who has trusted Christ as his own personal Savior may know that he is saved, that he is the possessor of eternal life, that he is accepted before God, that he is justified and that he is eternally secure. Let us look at just one scripture, out of very many we could quote:

"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." (1 John 5:13)

You will notice it is not a matter of feeling, but of knowing, and this simply because God says so. There is no such thing as "feeling saved." A person is not saved because he feels happy, but he will certainly feel happy when he knows, on the authority of God's word, that he is saved. Someone wrote:

"Believe, and the feeling may come or may go:

Believe in the word which was written to show,

That all who believe their salvation may know-

So believe, and keep right on believing!"

Long ago, in the land of Egypt, God provided a way of salvation for His people Israel, from a judgment He was going to bring upon the whole land. Moses was instructed to tell the Israelites to take a lamb, keep it for four days and then kill it and catch its blood in a basin. Then, by means of a bunch of hyssop, the blood was to be sprinkled on the lintel and on the side posts of the door of their houses. God then promised that when He passed through the land in judgment when He saw the

blood He would pass over them. Thus these Israelites not only had the blood of the lamb to secure their safety, but they also had the word of God for their assurance of safety: the blood made them safe, the word made them sure. See Exodus 12.

Likewise, every sinner who takes shelter in the finished work of Christ is not only safe from the condemnation and penalty of his sins, but also has the written word of God as the guarantee of his security.

Here then is “the gospel according to me.” The honest “me” of an earnest plea for Divine examination. The humble “me” of an awakened conviction and confession of sin. The heart-felt “me” of an ardently desired salvation. And the happy “me” of an assured salvation. May these “me’s” be true in the experience of each reader!

“Because the sinless Savior died,

My sinful soul is counted free;

For God the just is satisfied,

To look on Him and pardon me!”

Alfred P. Gibbs

The Meaning of Worship

Let us examine the incident with Mary in John 12 negatively, and seek to discover what she did not come to do on this memorable occasion. From this negative approach, we can learn much of the positive character of true worship.

Mary Did Not Come to Hear a Sermon

The greatest Teacher the world has ever known was there. It had been her privilege to sit at His feet and hear His words.

But this was not her purpose as she came into the presence of the One she loved above all others. The Lord's Supper exists to enable believers to remember Him, and thus give the worship of their hearts.

The primary purpose of such a gathering is not to hear an exposition of the Word of God, good though this is, but to spend the time in occupation with the One who said: "This do in remembrance of Me."

Mary Did Not Come to Make a Request

She had done this before (Jn. 11:32). Her purpose was not to pour out her soul in earnest supplication before Him who had omnipotence at His command. Though she realized the value of prayer, this was not the motive that actuated her. She came not to get, but to give. Likewise the Lord's Supper does not exist for the purpose of enabling believers to supplicate the throne of grace, invaluable though prayer is.

Mary Did Not Come to Meet Fellow Believers

There were many there, and she loved those who loved her Lord; but it was not to enjoy fellowship with them that was her uppermost thought. She desired to be occupied with the Lord Himself, to the exclusion of every other person and thing on earth. Surely this should be the purpose that should animate every Christian. Fellowship with Christians is good and necessary, but it is not the greatest thing. Fellowship primarily is “with the Father and with His Son,” and fellowship with each other naturally flows from this.

Mary Did Not Come to be Refreshed by Him

After the humdrum round of duties, she might have argued that she needed the spiritual refreshment that only He could impart, but this was not her motive in coming. Surely nothing is more invigorating to the believer than to sit quietly in the presence of the Lord, there to have cares dissipate and the calm of heaven enter the soul. Yet Mary’s act teaches us that this is not the greatest thing in life. She came, not to be refreshed, but to refresh the Lord and fill His soul with joy!

By this act Mary anticipated the cross, and saw to it that her Lord was refreshed on the eve of His redemptive work. Her deed surely teaches us that worship is not intended to produce self-satisfaction in the believer, but to give satisfaction to the Saviour.

Mary Did Not Come to Meet the Host

We are not told who the host was on this occasion, but Mary had no eyes for him. She viewed the Lord as the host and came to do Him honor. Christendom, with its

special caste of clergy, has largely eliminated from people's minds the fact that Christ is the host at His own table. Scripture knows nothing of an officiating clergyman apart from whose presence the Lord's Supper cannot be celebrated. May we give the Lord His rightful place, and refuse to allow any man, however pleasing his personality, however dynamic his leadership to rob Christ of His preeminence.

She Did Not Come Because it was Popular

The pent-up hatred of the world was about to break on the Son of God. He was "despised and rejected of men." His popularity had waned, and the eve of His betrayal was at hand. It was "six days before the Passover" when the world would stain its hands with the blood of Christ, that Mary came with her love gift to pour on His feet.

By this act she proclaimed louder than any words her sincere love and loyalty to One whom the world would not acknowledge.

The believer must also be prepared, in loyalty to his Lord and to His Word, to brave contempt in order to worship God in a manner pleasing to Him. The path of wholehearted discipleship has never been crowded or popular. The Christian who seeks to carry out those scriptural principles of gathering will find plenty of opposition, even from those who claim to be fundamental in their doctrine. He must be prepared to experience something of "the fellowship of His sufferings"

(Phil. 3:10). He can rest assured that, as with Mary, faithfulness to the Lord shall not pass unnoticed.

Mary Did Not Come to Withhold Her Best

She poured it all out fully, freely, and joyously at the feet of her Lord. Note several things about this gift:

It was very costly (v. 3). To secure it she had denied herself many things perfectly legitimate for her own use. Since the laborer of that period received but a penny a day, her gift represented a year's salary. Love is measured by the sacrifice it makes for its object. Our Lord "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph.

5:25). Can we do any less for Him? Worship which costs nothing is not worthy of the name. Her gift had been reserved for this purpose (v. 7).

She had treasured in her heart the words that fell from His lips.

Consequently, she knew He was to be betrayed, crucified, buried, and to rise again. The disciples never seemed to grasp the significance of His words, even though He used plain language. Mary thus had the signal honor of being the only one who anointed the Lord for His burial; the other women came too late (Mk. 16:6). Mary of Bethany had no need to go to the tomb; she knew that the One whose word had called Lazarus from death would take up the life He had laid down for her (Jn. 10:17-18).

Her gift was brought to the feet of Christ (v. 3). Those feet which had walked the rugged roads of Israel, and had carried blessings everywhere they went, were indeed "beautiful" to her (Rom. 10:15). She knew those feet would soon carry Him to Calvary, there to be pierced for her transgressions. She knew also that He would one day occupy a throne and reign until God

made His enemies His footstool (Ps. 110:1-2). She gladly gave her all to Him. The believer can surely profit by her noble example which received Christ's unstinted commendation. Worship must be wholehearted if it is to be pleasing to Him. Lukewarm devotion, halfhearted praise, and divided affections are nauseating to Him (see Rev. 3:14-18). He rightly deserves the place of absolute preeminence.

Her gift was accompanied by utter self-abnegation. After she had anointed His feet with the perfume, she wiped them with her hair. The Scripture informs us that a woman's glory is her hair. Thus by this act she literally brought her glory to His feet in lowly, yet sublime adoration (1 Cor. 11:15). What a beautiful picture this is of that necessary heart humility which should characterize the worship of God's people! God has distinctly declared that "no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:29). All the natural excellencies that man may possess must be brought into the dust in the presence of the God of the universe. Here brilliant intellect, physical skill, capable leadership, persuasive eloquence, magnetic personality, artistic genius, nobility of birth, or the possession of vast wealth has no place in the presence of Deity. Her gift filled the house with fragrance. She herself would long bear the fragrance of the spikenard. But each member of that company would also carry on his person some traces of that sweet perfume. True, there were those who criticized the act, and referred to it as "waste"; but the Lord's commendation more than compensated her for the adverse criticism.

Scripture views worship as both an individual and collective act. It is only as each believer in an assembly

brings to the feet of his Lord the perfume of his appreciation that the whole company of Christians will be affected. The sweet fragrance of such worship will linger pleasantly in the memory of those present.

Furthermore, some of its savor will be carried by them to others, who will thus take note that they have “been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13; see also 2 Chron. 5:13-14).

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Youth and the Church

Youth and the Church

Alfred P. Gibbs

Before dealing with the subject of Church fellowship, it will be necessary to devote some time to a consideration of what the Bible teaches regarding the great doctrine of the Church of God itself. It will surely be obvious that no one can come to an intelligent decision regarding the matter of his Church fellowship until he knows something of the scriptural definition of the Church of God.

During the centuries that have intervened since the Church came into existence at Pentecost, the clear teaching of the Word of God regarding this subject has become obscured by the admixture of a great deal of human misconception in the shape of traditions, innovations, customs, and ideas which have no support whatever in the Bible.

Just as a river, which is clear and pure at its source, becomes fouled by the drainage of the cities through which it flows, so the clear, pure stream of divine revelation concerning the Church has become contaminated by the constant drainage into it of a host of man-conceived ideas, rules, regulations, ordinances, decrees and denominational distinctions to which the Bible makes no reference.

This illustrates the truth of that old saying, "History repeats itself." The Lord Jesus, in His day, fearlessly denounced the religious leaders of Israel because of this same thing. He charged them with "teaching for

doctrines the commandments of men,” and pointed out that, in so doing, they had “made the Word of God of none effect by their tradition.” See Mark 7:6-13.

It will therefore help to clear away this debris of misconception regarding the Church if we first discuss the subject negatively, and see what the Church is not. Then we shall deal with it positively, and discover what it really is.

It is important to notice that there are only two aspects of the Church presented in the New Testament. First, the universal aspect, as composing all regenerated believers from Pentecost to the rapture of the Church at the second coming of Christ. Second, the local aspect, as composing those Christians in a certain area, who gather together, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for either worship, prayer, Bible study, or mutual edification. Let us now discover

What the Church is Not

It is never spoken of as a structure of wood, stone, or brick, erected by man, in which to hold religious gatherings.

This easily can be verified by turning to a few Bible references, and using our common sense: Acts 8:3. Did Paul pull down buildings? No, he arrested Christians who formed the local assembly in that place. Acts 11:22. Does a building have “ears?” Of course not, but a company of believers does. See also Revelation 2:7, 11, 17 etc. Acts 14:27. Did Paul and Barnabas gather bricks and stones and erect a material building? No, they called the people of God together. Acts 15:3. Did a building shuffle off its foundation and accompany them

on their journey? No, but the Christians aided them on their way (Acts 18:22). Did Paul salute a building or the Lord's people? Acts 20:28. Does a building have a mouth and a digestive tract, so that it can be fed? Was "the Church, which is in his house" a building erected inside a private dwelling? Perish the thought! Colossians 4:15; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 2; Ephesians 5:25. Did Christ love and give Himself for a material building, or was it the sum total of all believers?

Thus the Church, whether viewed universally or locally, consists of Christian men and women, and never refers to any building erected by man.

The Church does not consist of any sect, denomination, or religious system of men which calls itself by a name that is not common to, and inclusive of all Christians.

For instance, we read of the Roman Catholic church, the Episcopal church, the Lutheran church, the Baptist church, the Presbyterian church, etc., etc. Is every born again person a Roman Catholic, an Episcopalian, a Lutheran, a Baptist, or a Presbyterian? Most decidedly and emphatically not! We gladly concede that within these denominations there are many genuine children of God, who are real members of the body of Christ, the true Church; but the fact that a person is a member of a denomination does not indicate that he is in the true Church, which the Bible describes as composed only of those who have been born again.

The Church is not an occupation. It does not consist of a particular class of men who, by reason of special theological training, plus human ordination, are called "clergymen," or "ministers." It is sometimes said of the members of a family, one went "into the army," another

“into the navy,” one into “civil service,” and a fourth “into the Church.” Thus the Church is viewed as an occupation by which a person derives his livelihood.

The Church is not an organization, or a society that one can join by subscribing to its creed, or submitting to its rules.

On the contrary, the Church is viewed in the Bible as an organism, to which the regenerated believer is joined by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 6:17). An organism ‘consists of that which is pervaded by a common life as, for instance, the human body.

In fact one of the most striking similies of the Church is the human body. See Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:16; 3:6; 1 Corinthians 12:7-27. How did the various members of our body, such as the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands and feet, etc, become part of our body? Did these members float around in space, looking “for the body of their choice,” to which to join themselves, or were these members joined to our bodies by the mysterious process of physical birth?

The Bible makes abundantly clear that every member of the true Church the mystical Body of Christ, was joined to the Church, by the Holy Spirit upon his acceptance of Christ as Saviour and Lord. Not only so, but he was united to Christ, the Head of the Church in Heaven, and to every other believer in Christ on earth. This is the great truth of the Church of God, of which Christ is the sole Head, and every believer a member (1 Cor. 12:13).

Once a Christian firmly grasps this fact, and realizes he is already in the Church of God, he will not try to join some other Church, with some one else at its head, but will gladly meet, in happy Christian fellowship with

those Christians who have also seen from Scripture this blessed truth, and consequently seek to meet simply in the name of the Lord Jesus, as those who have already been united to Him.

Having viewed the subject negatively, and seen what the Church is not, let us now look at it positively and discover what it is.

What the Church is

We shall think of three things regarding this:

1. The Scripture Definition Of The Church.

The New Testament was written in the Greek language, and the word translated "Church" is "Ecclesia." This is a combination of two words: "Ek" meaning out of, or out from, and "Klesis," which means a calling (from "kaleo," to call). Thus its root meaning is clear, the Church is a called out company.

This word, "Ecclesia," had been in common use for 300 years before Christ. It was used to describe that company of Greek citizens who were called out from among the population of a city for the transaction of its public affairs. Thus the word did not originate with Christianity, nor does it have a mysterious meaning.

Our English word, "Church," is not really a translation of the word "Ecclesia." The word would have been far better translated, "assembly." In fact it is so translated twice in Acts 19:31, 41. Thus the word simply means an "out called assembly." By the word "Church," in its universal aspect, is meant the sum total of all those who have responded to the call of God in the Gospel, trusted Christ as their Saviour and Lord and, by the

regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, have been joined to Christ and to one another to form one Body, with Christ as the sole Head.

2. Christ's Own Revelation Concerning The Church (Matt. 16:13-18).

This passage of Scripture is most important for here is the first definite statement regarding the Church, and made by none other than the Purchaser, Founder, and Head of the Church. Let us notice three things:

(1) The Question Christ Asked.

"Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (v. 13). This was Christ's first direct claim to be the Son of Man. He had previously referred, indirectly, to a person called the Son of Man, and from His description, this Person possessed all the attributes of Deity. See Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41. Now He calmly and directly makes the stupendous claim to be this very Person.

(2) The Answer That Peter Gave (V. 16):

"Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." In this confession, both the divine titles are combined. the Son of Man is the Son of God. Note our Lord's words as to the source and blessedness of this confession.

(3) The Revelation Christ Gave Concerning The Church (V. 18).

(a) As to its foundation: "On this rock." The claim of Roman Catholicism that Peter was the rock on which Christ was to build His Church has no support whatever in Scripture. If Christ had meant Peter, He would have

said, "On thee will I build My Church." Peter himself, in his epistles, makes it crystal clear that the rock Foundation is none other than the Son of God Himself. See 1 Peter 2:4-10; 5:1 cp. Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11.

(b) As to its Builder: "I will build." It is not left to man with his limited wisdom, love, and power to build the Church. This is the sole prerogative of the omnipotent Son of God. Note also that Christ speaks of the Church in the future tense, for the Church could not come into existence until Christ had died, risen, ascended and was glorified to be its Head. (c) As to its ownership. "My Church." It is His purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. All directions as to its functioning must come from Him. All additions are only possible through faith in Him (d) As to its material. It is the "Ecclesia," the called out company of the redeemed who have been brought to know Him as their Saviour and Lord. These and no others form the Church. (e) As to its permanence. "The gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it." Hades refers to the unseen world. At death, a person disappears from view. In the case of the Christian, his spirit goes to be "with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23.; 2 Cor. 5:6-8). A Christian, at death, does not cease to be a member of the Body of Christ, he is a member forever! Thus the Church does not become less in numbers because of the death of believers, but continually is getting larger. The gates of hades cannot prevail against it.

3. The Formation Of The Church (Acts 2-3).

These two chapters describe one of the greatest events in the history of the world. It was the fulfilment of

Christ's prediction in Matthew 16:18. The Church, which He had promised to build, now became an actuality. Let us note three things.

(A) The Preparation For It (Acts 1:4-15).

Christ instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit, whom He had previously promised to send, should come and baptize them. See Acts 1:4 cp. John 7:37-39; 14:16-18; 16:7-15. His advent should empower them for world-wide witness (1:8). Then follows the description of His ascension and the promise of His second coming (1:9-11). In an upper room in Jerusalem, about 120 disciples gathered together in prayer (1:14-15).

(B) The Formation Of The Church (Acts 2:1-4).

That which had been hid in God, from the beginning of the world, now came into existence (Acts 3:9). With the sound of a rushing, mighty wind, the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 disciples and baptized them into one Body, of which Christ was the Head and each believer a member. Thus the Church, God's masterpiece, began. It was the birthday of the Church.

Not only were the disciples now formed into one Body, but each believer was now indwelt by the Spirit and enabled, by His supernatural power, to so witness for Christ in other tongues that 3000 souls were won for Christ and thus added to the Church.

A good illustration has been used to indicate how these 120 disciples became one Body. Let us imagine 120 nuggets of gold grouped together in a pan. Each nugget is different in shape and size. Now let a very strong current of electricity pass through these nuggets and

fuse them into one great nugget, yet each individual nugget retaining its own peculiar shape and size. In like manner these 120 disciples were fused together by the Spirit to form one Body, yet each disciple retained his own individuality and distinct personality. Peter was still Peter, and John was still John, etc., but each was now united to Christ and to each other in an organic unity.

(C) The Result Of It Was The Church.

To that which was formed on the day of Pentecost, each believer has been joined by the Spirit of God, and is therefore viewed in the Bible as a member of the Body of Christ, the Church. See 1 Corinthians 12:13. Let each believer, now reading these words, lay hold on this tremendous truth. Let him determine, by the grace of God, that he will say and do nothing that would hinder the outward practical expression of this unity of all true Christians.

Let him remember he is one with all who love the Lord Jesus, worldwide. Therefore may each Christian, as far as is humanly possible, endeavour to "Keep the unity of the Spirit, (which God has made) in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Thus he will enter into the enjoyment of what the Bible declares to be true: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Church Fellowship

Church Fellowship

Alfred P. Gibbs

In the previous paper we dealt with the subject of the Church, chiefly in its universal aspect, as comprising all regenerated persons from its commencement at Pentecost to its consummation at the Rapture.

We shall now be concerned with the Church in its local aspect. By this is meant a number of Christians in a certain area who assemble together, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for either worship, praise, the ministry of the word, or mutual edification.

One of the most important questions that faces a young Christian is this matter of his assembly association. This decision can either make or mar his whole Christian life. In view of this each child of God needs the spiritual enlightenment that comes from the study of the Word of God, (Acts 17:11-12; James 1:5-7).

We shall think of four things regarding this subject.

The Need for Church Fellowship

We know, from the Old Testament, that it was God's desire for His redeemed people to meet together, at stated times, in order to enjoy fellowship with each other, rejoice before the Lord, and unitedly worship Jehovah. For this purpose He appointed the seven feasts which are described in Leviticus 23. Compare also Deuteronomy 12:5-7.

A similar provision was made in the New Testament by our Lord Jesus Christ. He knew how much His disciples would need the mutual comfort, encouragement, strength, and edification from such fellowship. As He anticipated this coming together, He promised: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

He further provided for this by instituting the Lord's supper. He appointed the bread as the symbol of His body; and the wine, as the symbol of His precious blood, and requested them to "This do in remembrance of Me." Later on He gave a special revelation to the Apostle Paul concerning this ordinance (Luke 22:19- 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

The Book of Acts and the Epistles show how the early Christians met together in local companies for prayer, ministry of the Word, the Lord's supper, and a united testimony in the Gospel (Acts 2:41-47; 4:23, 32; 5:13-14; 8:4; 11:19-26; 13:1-4; 14:21-27; 16:4-5; 20:1; 20:17-38; 1 Cor. 12:1-14:40; etc.).

The Epistles of the New Testament were written, by divine inspiration, to these various companies of believers, and are full of "doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness." They were written for the purpose of encouraging these assemblies to exercise their spiritual gifts, and to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus develop into Christian maturity and consequent usefulness in the service of their Lord and Master.

The Pattern for Church Fellowship

We have in the Acts and the Epistles the scriptural pattern which God has given for assembly fellowship, and which should govern the whole period of Church history. It should therefore be obvious that we have no more right to alter this pattern of Church fellowship than we have a right to alter the way of salvation. It is for us to follow it, cost what it may and lead where it will.

As one reads and rereads the Acts and the Epistles, he will be impressed with the refreshing simplicity which characterized these New Testament assemblies. He will find no mention of highly organized and rival denominations such as exist today, each separated from the other by humanly constructed barriers in the shape of creeds, forms of government, rites, books of discipline, rules, regulations and traditions, and largely serviced by a group of ordained clergymen.

The young Christian of today finds himself in a world characterized by religious confusion. A multitude of voices seeks to advise him as to his choice of church fellowship. Eager hands beckon him here or there, to join this or that party. All sorts of inducements will be made to secure his membership in some organization.

What is the young believer to do as he faces these confused conditions in Christendom? There is but one correct answer to this question. The same holy Scriptures, which revealed to him the way of salvation and led him to trust Christ as his Saviour and Lord, must also be his guide in his church fellowship.

The Principles of Church Fellowship

There was no need in the early days of the Church for such a choice, for there was only one place where the believer could go! It is only the present confusion that makes such a choice necessary.

Let us therefore devote a little time to a consideration of those scriptural principles that should aid a young believer in his choice. An assembly of professed believers should meet a three-fold condition. First, it should be doctrinally sound; second, scripturally constituted; third, spiritually healthy.

It should be doctrinally sound: By this is meant that the great foundation truths of the Christian faith should be tenaciously held and fearlessly taught. Let us name a few of these fundamental doctrines.

The Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God in its every part, and is therefore absolutely authoritative on every subject dealt with in its pages (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

The essential and eternal Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ as equal and eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. That He became incarnate by a virgin birth, and combines in Himself absolute Deity and perfect humanity (1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 1:13-20. John 1:1-4).

The necessity for and the eternal efficacy of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice: This and His victorious resurrection and glorification held as the sole basis of a sinner's acceptance with God (Rom. 3:24-26; 1 Cor. 15:1-8; John 3:14-18).

The ruined state of all humanity by nature, and man's need of regeneration ere he can either see or enter the kingdom of God (John 3:1-7. Rom. 3:9-24).

That salvation is wholly of grace, and therefore entirely apart from human merit, and is conditioned by repentance towards God, faith in the Person and work of the Son of God, and confession of Him as Lord of the life (Eph. 2:1-10; Acts 20:20-21; Rom. 4:1-8; 11:6; 10:8-13).

The Deity and personality of the Holy Spirit: That He inspired the Word of God, convicts the sinner of his need of salvation and, on his reception of Christ, seals him as the possession of Christ forever (John 16:7-15; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The eternal retribution of the wrath of God upon all who die unrepentant, either neglecting or despising the salvation provided by the Son of God (John 3:36; Mark 9:43-48; John 12:47-48; Rev. 20:11-15).

These are foundation truths, and it is written: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:2). Any company that denies these truths is no place for a Christian (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

It should be scripturally constituted. That is to say, it should meet the requirements found in the pattern given in the New Testament.

It should have no name, but what is common to and inclusive of all believers.

It should believe in and act upon the truth of the unity of all believers as members of the Body of Christ, of which the Lord Jesus is the Head. Denominationalism is a virtual denial of this.

It should accept the Bible as the final authority on all matters of faith and doctrine. This will eliminate the decrees of men and books of discipline.

It should give liberty for the exercise and development of any spiritual gift which the Head of the Church has given, such as evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc. Its ministry should not be confined to one man.

It should be solely responsible to the Lord Jesus as its Head for the maintenance of godly order and discipline, and not to a central synod who dictates its policy and enforces its rules.

It should be prepared to welcome to its fellowship all believers who are sound in doctrine and moral in life, and who desire to meet with them.

It should practise the two ordinances that Christ instituted. First, baptism by immersion subsequent to faith in the Son of God. Second, the observance each Lord's day of the Lord's supper.

It should carry on its Gospel activity in a scriptural manner, soliciting no money from the unsaved.

It Should be Spiritually Healthy

A company of professed believers may meet the first two conditions and yet fail in this respect. By the term, "Spiritually healthy," we mean that the meetings are characterized by an atmosphere of spirituality. Would that this could be said of all such gatherings! Several things will combine to produce this spiritual atmosphere.

Sincere and fervent love for the Lord Jesus. This, as nothing else, stirs the hearts of believers and leads them out in prayer, praise, and adoration.

The warm glow of Christian love towards all who love the Saviour irrespective of the amount of Bible light they

have. This love will evidence itself in courteous consideration, in kindness, hospitality, generosity, and godly care for the flock of God.

Humility of spirit: This will be recognized by an absence of spiritual pride, religious snobbery, and Pharisaical pretention, which prides itself on a superior knowledge of the truth, a greater attainment of “separation” from other Christians, and a “holier than thou” attitude to other believers.

Openheartedness in relation to all believers, and a willingness to welcome to the Lord’s supper all Christians who so desire, and are both doctrinally and morally sound, simply because they belong to Christ.

Christian liberty of thought and action: This will be evidenced by the absence of the blight of legalism, which shows itself in rigid formality, a critical spirit, a jealous attitude, a censorious outlook on the work of others, and a quarrelsome mood. Such an atmosphere is fatal to spirituality and therefore is no place for a young Christian.

The Deportment of a Christian in an Assembly

Having found an assembly of believers that most nearly fits this description, what should a young Christian do?

He should make known his desire for fellowship to the elder brethren of this assembly. They, in turn, will expect him to give testimony to his experience of the saving grace of God, and also of his spiritual exercise concerning the matter of church fellowship. They will probably inquire as to whether he has been baptized as a believer, or whether he is willing to thus follow the Lord in this rite.

On being welcomed to the fellowship of this company of believers, he should make it a point to be present at all the meetings convened by this assembly, such as the remembrance of the Lord in the breaking of bread, the prayer meeting, the Bible teaching meeting, the Sunday school and the Gospel meeting. This will involve some effort and the sacrifice of time, energy and money, but the effort will be amply repaid in terms of spiritual blessing in his own life. He must not forget that he needs the assembly and the assembly needs him.

He should seek to develop his own spiritual life by diligent study of the Word of God, prayer, and personal witness for Christ, and godly life before the world.

He should stir up whatever gift the Lord has given him and, by exercising this gift, seek to contribute to the upbuilding of the assembly. Each Christian has been given some gift by the Lord, but this gift must be developed if it is to be of use in Christian service.

He should be a systematic, proportionate, cheerful and liberal giver of his means to the assembly for its Gospel, teaching and foreign missionary effort. This will mean that he will set aside a definite portion of his income for the Lord. This is a most important thing, for liberality and spirituality go hand in hand. It is possible to be very sanctimonious and very stingy! God devotes two whole chapters of the Bible to the grace of giving (2 Cor. 8-9).

May the Lord lead each young Christian reading these pages, to a greater realization of his tremendous privileges as a child of God, and a corresponding discharge of his responsibilities towards the Lord Jesus and His Church!