

Collected Messages of Dan Snaddon

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1 Corinthians 14

This chapter concludes the subject of spiritual gifts. As to Spiritual Gifts:

- Prophecy is shown to be greater or superior to that of tongues (1 Cor. 14:1-25).
- There are certain regulations governing the exercise of each (1 Cor. 14:26-33).
- Women members of the assembly are to refrain from speaking at its gatherings (1 Cor. 14:34-36).
- The instructions given are the commandment of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37-39).
- The exercise of spiritual gifts is to be decent and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).

Chapter 12 describes the gifts and the Body. Chapter 13 describes the love that alone gives the use of gifts any value. And chapter 14 regulates the ministry of gifts in the primitive, apostolic assembly of believers.

Prophecy is Superior to the Gift of Tongues (1 Corinthians 14:1-25)

The more excellent way - 1 Cor. 14:1 says, "Follow after love." This is what Paul describes as "the more excellent way" (see 1 Cor. 14:12-31). Chapter 13 is the divine exposition of "the more excellent way." Now, says Paul by inspiration, "Follow the way, beyond all comparison the best." While following this more excellent way, make spiritual gifts your aspiration; especially desire the gift of prophecy.

Note the contrast in exercising the gifts of tongues and prophecy (1 Cor. 14:2-4). Those tongues were known, recognized languages—the word unknown is not in the original writings. Those who used this gift spoke to God—the others in the assembly did not understand. Despite this, he spoke mysteries in the Spirit. In contrast to this, the person who prophesied spoke unto men, for God, to their edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3). The summation of the regulated use of the gifts in question is:

- He that speaketh in tongues edifieth himself.
- He that prophesieth builds up the church.

1 Cor. 14:5 shows Paul's desire for the Corinthians. He desires that they should all speak with tongues, but he would rather that they prophesied, because he that prophesieth is more useful to the assembly, unless he who speaks in tongues can interpret to the building up of the assembly.

Paul makes an observation in the following verse, when he says, "If I come to you speaking in a foreign language, what shall it profit you?" (1 Cor. 14:6) Keeping in mind the former exhortation, we know the answer is "nothing." But, he continues, "It shall profit you if I came to you speaking by revelation (enlightenment) or by knowledge or by prophecies or by teaching, because you understand what I am saying."

Do what profits your brother - In 1 Cor. 14:7-8a, Paul gives an illustration by first drawing a contrast between "musical instruments." He says that they have to sound their notes clearly or how can one recognize the tune? He now takes a stronger example. If the bugle does not sound loud, clear, and distinct, how shall the soldier

understand the message, and prepare himself for battle? Likewise, if what one utters is garbled or spoken in a foreign language, how can it be understood? It is like talking to the trees in the forest.

There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none of them is without meaning, but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. Apply this to yourselves. Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

1 Cor. 14:13-14 teaches that praying or speaking in an unknown tongue is unprofitable. Those who exercise this gift should pray for the “gift of interpretation.” What then shall I do? When I pray, I will pray in the Spirit, in a manner that both those who hear me and I can understand. When I sing, I will sing in the Spirit, using ordinary language. Otherwise, when you give God thanks, in a language unknown to the assembly, how is it possible for one without unlearned gifts to understand and say Amen? (1 Cor. 14:15-16) You may give God thanks well enough, but the other brother is not built up or encouraged.

Paul concludes his reasoning here relative to the importance of the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues. He says “[I talk in strange languages more than any of you—in private. But, when I am in the assembly, I would rather speak five intelligible words that would instruct others, than ten thousand words in a language that no one understands].” Be not children in understanding. Some of you have been abusing and showing off this gift of tongues, just like children would

do. Cease to do so and become mature in your thinking - in other words, “know what edifies” and practice it (1 Cor. 14:18-20).

1 Cor. 14:21 is a quotation from Isaiah 28:11-12. The apostle is about to show that “speaking in tongues” is a sign for unbelievers—and “prophecy” is for believers. 1 Cor. 14:23-24 illustrates the point: If the assembly is gathered together and speaking in tongues and an unbeliever is present, he will come to the conclusion that everyone has lost their mind. On the other hand, if the assembly is gathered together and one prophesies in the Spirit, the unbeliever is both convicted by God and judged by all; the secrets of his heart are manifested. In this condition, the unbeliever becomes a believer; he falls on his face, worships God and confesses that God is among you.

Regulations Governing the Use of these Gifts (1 Corinthians 14:26-40)

In 1 Cor. 14:26, Paul says, “How does it stand with you brethren, in the light of the foregoing?” Then he goes on to answer his own question. When you come together, each one has a hymn, lesson, revelation, tongue or an interpretation. If each one was determined to exercise what he thought was his gift, apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit, there would be confusion. Hence the exhortation, “Let all things be done for edification.”

If any are going to speak in a tongue let it be two, or at the most three, and let someone interpret. If there is no interpreter they are forbidden to speak publicly (1 Cor. 14:27-28) 1 Cor. 14:29 seems to regulate the prophets. Two or three may speak - the congregation must listen and consider what they say. No one has to take up the

whole time. Opportunity has to be given for others who may have been given a revelation from God. In this way, all who have a message from God will be given opportunity to give it for the encouragement of all present. This means that the prophet who is under the control of the Holy Spirit is subject to Him. He will stop at His direction to allow another prophet, being moved by the Spirit, to deliver his message. There had been utter confusion. In the church meetings, brethren and sisters had been carried away in uncontrolled ecstasy – false spirit – perhaps many speaking at the same time. This was wrong. “God is not the God of confusion but of order and peace.”

In 1 Cor. 14:34-36, we see that women members of the assembly are to refrain from speaking at its gatherings. The spiritual in the assembly will acknowledge the foregoing instructions as the commandment of the Lord. If anyone in a carnal state will not recognize this as a commandment from the Lord, let him refuse it at his peril. The conclusion of the matter is (1) Cultivate the gift of prophecy, and (2) Do not forbid the speaking of tongues. 1 Cor. 14:40 says, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Tongues - Then and Now

Miraculous gifts were “sign gifts.” They were given to authenticate the establishment of the Church. Periods of miracles happened at times when special testimony was needed to the authenticate God’s servants. Consider the periods of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and finally, Christ and the apostles (see Mark 16:17-18). The third period occupies our attention tonight.

The “sign gifts” are as follows:

1. Apostleship
2. Prophecy
3. Miracles
4. Healing
5. Tongues
6. Interpretation
7. Discerning spirits

See the actual conditions in the Book of Acts:

- Signs and Wonders: Acts 2:43 (last mentioned in Acts 14:3).
- Tongues: last mentioned in Acts 19:6.
- Miracles: last mentioned in Acts 19:11.
- Prophecy: last mentioned in Acts 21:9.

Tongues shall cease (1 Corinthians 13):

- That which is in part (1 Cor. 13:9, "For we know in part and we prophesy in part.")
- That which is perfect is come—the inspired Word.
- That which is in part shall be done away.
- Tongues are languages.
- Women and tongues (see 1 Corinthians 14 - Keep silent).
- Hypnotism and tongues.
- Evil spirits and tongues.

Three things that are to cease in 1 Corinthians 13: (1) Prophecies, (2) Tongues, and (3) Miraculous knowledge.
Three things to abide throughout the Church age: (1)

Faith, (2) Hope, and (3) Love. Faith and hope will disappear when the Lord returns. Love never fails, it shall not cease; love is as eternal as God Himself.

2 Thessalonians 2

The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord extends from the Rapture until the purgation of the heavens and the earth by fire, preparatory to the new heavens and new earth. Momentous events will take place within this “Day:”

- A confederation of countries will form a Roman Empire (see Daniel 2 and Daniel 7). A political ruler will rise to rule this empire and he will make a covenant with Israel (see Daniel 9:27 and Revelation).

- A false religious system will be formulated under a false prophet (see Revelation 13:11-18).

- The pouring out of judgments will take place: the seal judgments (see Revelation 6), the trumpet judgments (see Revelation 8:11), and the bowl judgments (see Revelation 16).

- The overthrow of the professing Church will occur (see Revelation 17-18).

- The events of the campaign of Armageddon will take place (see Ezekiel 38-39; Revelation 16:16 and Revelation 19:17-21).

The “Day of the Lord” is a day of suffering and judgment. Future events cast their shadows before, due to a combination of extensive tribulations and the teachings of false teachers. The Thessalonian believers thought that the Day of the Lord was arriving (2 Thess. 2:1-2). Paul says in 2 Thess. 2:3, “Let no man deceive you by any means.” Certain things have to come to pass before this great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

1. There must be a “falling away” – (i.e. the Church Assembly, a rebellion, the world).
2. The man of sin or the “man of lawlessness” must appear:
 - a. His character – man of sin – wickedness (see 2 Thess. 2:3)
 - b. His destiny – perdition (see 2 Thess. 2:3)
 - c. His activity – opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is God’s (see 2 Thess. 2:6)
3. He must sit in the temple of God and proclaim himself to be God (Daniel predicts this—math repeats it)

2 Thessalonians 2:6 - Surely, after all I have told you verbally and written to you, “You know what is restraining him now, so that he may be revealed in his time.” The Holy Spirit is the “restrainer.” [Consider the individual in 2 Thess. 2:7]. The Holy Spirit will leave the world at the Rapture with the Church. At His departure a restraint will be removed. Lawlessness, which we see in embryonic form today, will result in unprecedented wickedness and violence.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 - Paul affirms that the “mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” “The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” This mystery of lawlessness indicates something that is beyond human knowledge. The fact of lawlessness can be understood, but who can define or stop the irresistible force that touches off and perpetuates this wickedness. “Restrict the sale of guns,” say some - “Build better houses,” say others. “Create employment, emancipate the underprivileged, provide welfare, which leads to higher taxation, and meet force with force.” Despite

these and many other schemes costing billions, lawlessness runs riot; the sinister force behind it remains uncurbed and untamed.

Beloved, I sincerely believe that the force that is at work in the world today is the same force that will control mankind during the reign of terror in the Tribulation. This leads us to a very solemn thought. If that is so, then we are living close to the end of the age. This is the beginning of sorrows and when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, for your redemption draweth nigh.

[Something to consider: When will the Holy Spirit be taken away?]

2 Thessalonians 2:8 - "A lot of blasphemy" indicates the character of his rule. This is the description of the "man of sin" the man appointed by the people, controlled by Satan.

Baptism and Receiving the Holy Spirit

In Acts 2, we read about the early church as followers of Jesus, and Peter's first sermon that many hear and believe. The process here of these early believers (Jews) began with repenting of their sins. (See Acts 2:38) Following this they were baptized, received the remission of sins, and then received the Spirit as new believers in Christ. In Acts 8 we also read about the process of the Samaritans coming into the early church when the Jews in Jerusalem are scattered to other places due to persecution. With Simon, the sorcerer, we see a process of believing the gospel, then being baptized, and then receiving the Spirit some time later by the laying on of the apostles' hands. (See Acts 8:18) Finally, in Acts 10, we read about Gentiles listening to Peter once again, and the gospel causes them to believe while hearing the words about Jesus. Immediately after they believe, they receive the Spirit upon them, and following this they are baptized. (See Acts 10:44-48) This process of believing and being baptized is the order for today and for us as believers in the 21st century.

The disciples, as we read when we look at the stories in Acts and the scriptures of the New Testament, were filled with the Spirit. They also spoke in the power of the Spirit. The indwelling of the Spirit is a reality for all believers, not just the disciples of the early church. The Spirit actually dwells in us, rather than upon us. This means that within each of us, when we believe the gospel, the Holy Spirit is already dwelling as a result of our faith in the Lord. He is not upon us sporadically, but always. He comes into each believer to seal us, baptize

us, and fill us. In fact, He has a three-fold ministry for, in, and through the believer. First, He seals us for security. This means that we are sealed unto the final day of redemption and restoration. Secondly, He also is the earliest foretaste of eternal blessings for satisfaction that we will have before we are with Jesus eternally. Thirdly, He anoints us for His service in this life. Many believers do not realize the untapped power they have in them with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He is the greatest unused power in the world! The Holy Spirit's work is also essential in regard to the study of the Scriptures. It is He who inspires, reveals, and illuminates us and gives us insight and wisdom as we read the Word of God. Let us remember our need for repentance, baptism, and the unmerited gift of the Holy Spirit in our own lives as we read this passage from Revelation 3:19a-22: "Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Broken to Usefulness

F.B. Meyer, the well-known pastor, once said, “Brokenness is attractive to God.” Many times God chooses his servants and shapes his vessels from the least likely material found in the least likely of places. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.” God will not use a person who is self-sufficient to do His serious work, rather He chooses to use those who are humbly aware of the fact that they are broken vessels.

The book of Judges offers clear evidence that God delights to use the weak and broken to perform his work. Take the example of Gideon in Judges 6:15. Gideon cries to the angel of the Lord, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” Yet God gives him signs, might, strength and military prowess to conquer the land and lead His people in the time of the judges, when “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6 and Judges 21:25)

Jacob’s experience is another example. Jacob met God in the stillness of night and struggled against him. This wrestling match forced his hip out of socket and left him lame with a limp. See Genesis 32:22-32. Yet he worshipped God leaning on his staff, and God used Jacob, or Israel, to become the father of twelve tribes of Israel. Another example is Paul’s thorn in the flesh that

he speaks of in 2 Corinthians 12:9. While we don't know what exactly this "thorn" was, we know that the Lord's response to this painful experience was that His "grace is sufficient" and Paul's "strength is made perfect in weakness."

A servant who seeks the Holy Spirit sometimes must first experience the breaking process or the "Gethsemane experience" of utter betrayal, loneliness or need. An awareness of our sinfulness is a prerequisite cause for our brokenness. Like Peter when he is called as a disciple from his fishing boat, let us all fall down at Jesus' feet, acknowledging our sin and proclaim, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8)

Another biblical image of brokenness is that of the anointing oil used by the Levitical priesthood, which enhanced fragrances. Pressing or breaking the plants produced all of these oils. Just as myrrh's sweet fragrance is only produced as the living juice that lives, flows, and drops through the broken pieces of the plant, many times we bear fruit and grow in our walk with God through this same process of being broken.

Myrrh, like fragrance, should come from the life of a bondservant of God, broken to usefulness for Him. Indeed, real life in the Lord comes through dying, as Jesus illustrates with an image of wheat bearing seeds in John 12:24: "unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds." This principle speaks of our hopelessness as selfish human beings and is also a message for broken hearts, because God uses broken things for his glory. For instance: broken clouds produce rain, broken soil produces crops, broken seeds yield

precious grain, and broken grain transforms into bread, which ultimately gives strength to its recipients. This image parallels our brokenness, in our humanity, being able to bear fruit, grow closer to God, strengthen us in the Word, and encourage others in their faith through this nourishment. Brokenness produces usefulness!

Brokenness often comes during a crisis. Sickness is also used by God to break or humble a person. God will sometimes employ sorrow or the waywardness of family members to humble His people. The Lord was indeed a Man of Sorrows, and understands the kind of grief we experience in this life. It is the mourning through brokenness that God uses to design his superior servant. In Jeremiah 18:1-11, Jeremiah's potter reshaped the vessel instead of discarding it. The original image was corrected, remodeled and fashioned to something new. What some would have discarded as destroyed was made anew into a masterpiece.

An example of this can be seen in the scars and the beatings, the stigma that marked Paul as a servant of God to the Gentiles and lost Jews. This ultimately brought him both pleasure in the gospel's truth preached and an eternal profit. The cross of the Lord Jesus, the emblem of suffering and pain, has become the theme of the ransomed throng who cries, "worthy is the Lamb who was slain." (Revelations 5:11-12) In God's service we become useful in proportion to the brokenness of our hearts.

Christ's Travail and Glory

In John 12 we read about Jesus coming to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover feast and dining with Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. Crowds of people, mostly Jews, gather to meet Jesus because of what they had heard he had done by raising Lazarus. The “Greeks” mentioned here, god-fearing Gentiles present in Jerusalem for the Jewish feast, came to Philip seeking Jesus saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” (John 12:21) While the Jews want to see Lazarus, the Greek god-fearers came to see Jesus. This was a noble request. In fact, no one who has this sincere desire to see Jesus has ever been turned away unrewarded. Consider some of the men who saw the Master face to face and whose lives were changed completely: Andrew and Peter, James and John, Matthew, Paul, and Zacchaeus. When John saw the Lord in all his awesome glory he “fell at his feet as one dead.” (Revelation 1:17) As we paint a word picture of the Lord, we should see him in his travail and glory, fall at his feet in absolute surrender, and worship Him. Even Moses, as he was leading God’s people in the wilderness asked God, “Please, show me your glory.” (Exodus 33:18) May our prayer be, “Blessed Holy Spirit, show us the travail and the glory of the Lord.”

Christ’s Travail

Although we know that Christ was indeed the Lord, we also know that he became man and experienced much pain and human suffering in his life here on earth. Paul tells us He “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He

humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:7-8) Jesus experienced life as a human being would. He knew the pain of being squeezed through a birth canal, and even suffered innuendos involving the legitimacy of his birth. He felt the pangs of hunger from his forty days in the wilderness, and knew the pain of rejection from his own people, his hometown and his family. He knew what it was like to be falsely accused, and then felt the refusal of his Father the night he anguished in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knew what it was like to be deserted by his closest friends, to be denied and betrayed. He knew the fists of the Roman soldiers and the weight of the rods as they fell across his back. He knew what it was like to be mocked as a crown of thorns was mashed into his head, a purple robe was draped over his shoulders and a sign was placed in his hand as they taunted, “Hail the king of the Jews.” He knew the bite of the whip as it tore away his flesh, and winced as the huge Roman spikes were pounded into his hands and feet. He felt the sting of the insults thrust at him by the crowd and knew the agonizing thirst of fever and dehydration as he hung upon the cross. Because we know these things happened, we should behold the man, behold our king, and behold our God. He endured these sufferings just as a human would endure, even though He was God!

The Lord also experienced other travail. Mark records that the Lord and His disciples come to a place called Gethsemane. (See Mark 14:32) From the main group of disciples, Jesus takes Peter, James and John to pray, and in their presence begins “to be greatly amazed and very distressed.” (Mark 14:33) We should note the words and

phrases used to describe the Lord's anguish. They are among the strongest in the original language. The Lord has anticipated the passion, but when He is about to participate in its complexities, His terrors exceed His expectations, and as He is in a sea of anguish, He is "sorely astounded and sorely distressed."

Horror and dismay come over Him as He is gripped and overwhelmed with intense agony of soul. In the midst of this anguish in the garden He says to His disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." (Mark 14:34) This unfathomable depth of anguish and sorrow brings Him to the point of death! Luke then tells us that "He withdrew himself a stones throw" as He kneels down and begins to pray. (Luke 22:41) "He withdrew himself" is an interesting phrase. This means that He tears himself away from His disciples against His own will, dreading being alone. Mark says that "He went forward a little and fell to the ground" repeatedly. (Mark 14:32-41) While He lay exhausted on the ground, He prays that the hour might pass from Him and that the cup would be taken away. In His prayer, He appeals to God as His father and "Abba." The heavens are as brass as He prays "not my will but thine be done."

Utterly exhausted, He returns to his disciples for support but finds them unconcerned and asleep. He goes back into the Garden for the second time and speaks the same words. The heavens are silent; He bears the burden alone. He comes again to his disciples the second time, only to find them fast asleep again. He enters the garden the third time and Dr. Luke records that an angel appears to Him and strengthens Him. (Luke 22:43) Despite this heavenly ministration His anguish becomes so intense that His blood forces its

way out of His pores and falls to the ground! What caused this overwhelming anguish? First, the physical suffering involved caused intense fear and anxiety. Secondly, He was about to be made sin for the rest of the world and a curse. Finally, He was about to be forsaken by God, His own father. Even before this redemptive work takes place, though, Jesus sweats drops of blood! This horrific experience of anguish was not the climax of his redemptive work, but was preliminary to it.

Next, we know Jesus is taken from Gethsemane to Golgotha. He is lashed under Roman law and then taken on to Golgotha. By this time His back is stripped raw, His face has been exposed to shame, cruel men have torn His beard from his face, and the vile spittle of ungodly men have poured into open wounds. (See Isaiah 53) He is so battered and disfigured that His appearance does not appear human. (See Isaiah 52:13-15) Picture Him now nailed to the cross, crowned with thorns. For three hours, His body is exposed to the burning rays of the pitiless eastern sun, His soul exposed to the merciless attacks of the powers of evil. Worse than any of this, He has for the first time throughout eternity experienced abandonment by God. This breaks His heart, and He shatters the silence with the shuddering cry of desolation, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In the three hours of darkness the Lord is precipitated into the vortex of God's unmitigated wrath. The white-hot fury of God's wrath against sin crashes relentlessly upon His spotless soul. In that one mysterious hour, the Lord takes the full blast of hell. On the Mount of Transfiguration God says, "Hear him." (Mark 9:7) But on the Mount of Calvary God says,

“See him.” The hymn When I Survey the Wondrous Cross declares, “See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down! Did e’er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

Christ’s Glory

Since we have examined Christ’s travail, let us now take a look at Christ’s glory. On the cross the Lord cries with a loud voice, “It is finished.” (John 19:30) This loud voice Jesus used was not like a victim’s cry of pain, rather the voice of the victor crying in relief. He yielded up His spirit in this moment, and this distinguished His death from all others. Humans die because we have to; it is the curse on humanity. But Jesus, who was God, died because he chose to. As Jesus says in John 10:17-18, “Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from my Father.” After Jesus cries out, the veil in the temple splits in two, the earth quakes and rocks are split, and many people are raised from their graves! (See Matthew 27:51-53) This signals the victory over death of our Lord! Christ’s work of redemption is completely finished. Nevermore shall God cause Jesus to suffer, striking “the shepherd with the sword.” (See Zechariah 13:7-9 and Matthew 26:31) Never again shall cruel sinners set at naught our glorious Lord. The hymn, Look Up, Ye Saints, The Sight is Glorious, describes this victory of the Lord: “Look, ye saints! The sight is glorious: see the Man of Sorrows now; from the fight returned victorious, every knee to Him shall bow; crown Him, crown Him, crowns become the Victor’s brow.”

When Christ died, He conquered all, leading “captivity captive.” (Ephesians 4:8)

Christ’s glory of His death on the cross, which is the greatest demonstration of the love of God, highlights Christ’s glory in His resurrection, which is the greatest demonstration of the power of God. The resurrection is not only a great historical fact, but a culmination of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. Loving hands took him down from the cross and laid him in a new tomb. The hymn *Low in the Grave He Lay* describes this moment: “Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior, He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord. Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph over His foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain.” Jesus indeed rose after three days, a victor over death, hell and the grave. We should see Him as He stands in majesty and says, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” (Revelation 1:18) While those human hands emptied the cross and filled the tomb, the almighty God emptied the tomb and filled the throne forevermore.

We should also look at the glory of the Lord’s ascension. After forty days of manifestation, Jesus was taken from the disciples and carried up into heaven. Jesus had predicted this earlier in his ministry when he told his disciples, “If I go I will come again.” (See John 14:3) Paul calls Jesus’ glory a “mystery of godliness,” that “God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” (1 Timothy 3:16) But the Lord in all His glory also promises us that He is coming again to this earth, where He will reign over all things. In Acts 1:11 after Jesus has just ascended into

heaven, the angels assure the witnesses, saying, "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner." We know that the Lord will indeed return; He himself will descend. Paul says that when the Lord comes to rapture his church there will be a shout, a voice and a trumpet. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:16) These would have all been signals of the Roman army at the time of Paul. We can understand these signals as heralding the resurrection of all and the final judgment. At the shout, dead believers will be raised. With the voice, those still living will be changed, and with the blast from the silver trumpet of heaven, together we shall rise to meet our Lord.

The hymn, *When my Life Work is Ended* describes this rapture in eagerness: "Oh, the soul thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face, and the luster of His kindly beaming eye; how my full heart will praise Him for the mercy, love and grace, that prepare for me a mansion in the sky." Another wonderful hymn, *Our Lord is Now Rejected*, describes the glory of Christ that we will all one day experience: "The heav'ns shall glow with splendor, but brighter far than they the saints shall shine in glory, as Christ shall them array, the beauty of the Savior, shall dazzle ev'ry eye, for the crowning day is coming by and by." Beloved Christian, do you see Him in His travail as well as His glory? One day soon we will see Him, for He is coming back. As Psalm 42:5 cries, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." Fix your eyes on Him and look full on His wonderful face!

Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses

The component parts of a spiritual assembly are clearly defined. Saints, bishops, and deacons are distinct functions (Philippians 1:1). They can be in the same person, but they spring from a different source:

- To be a saint comes from conversion.
- To be a bishop comes from desire and character.
- To be a deacon comes from spiritual gifts (see Romans 12:7).

Elders

Eldership is not in itself a spiritual gift. 1 Timothy 3:1 says, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, or elder, he desireth a good work." Another has translated this "If a man stretcheth himself to overseership." This implies deep and prolonged spiritual exercise before God, and a faithful ministry before men.

There are five duties that should characterize a true elder:

1. He should be a pastor or shepherd to feed the flock.
2. He should be a sentinel to protect the flock.
3. He should be a pillar to support the flock.
4. He should be an administrator to guide the flock.
5. He should be an example to encourage the flock.

In 1 Timothy 3:5, the Spirit reveals to us that the elder has to take care of the Church of God, but he must take care of his own home first. He has to act on behalf of the

Great Shepherd as an under-shepherd. His duties to the flock are laid out in Isaiah 40:11:

1. He has to feed the flock as a shepherd.
2. He has to gather the lambs in His arms.
3. He has to carry them in his bosom.
4. He has to gently lead those that are with young.

An elder should bind up the wounded and comfort the distressed. He should help those who fall into the hands of the enemy, for the true shepherd never abandons a wounded sheep. The work of a true elder is endless, sacrificial, and demanding.

Every spiritual brother should desire eldership; it is a good work. Spiritual brothers should strain with outstretched arms towards eldership. This is the duty and responsibility of the spiritual among us. Consider at this point the saints attitude to their leaders:

“Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17)

“Remember these who have the rule over you who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their manner of life.” (Hebrews 13:7)

“Rebuke not an elder, but plead with him respectfully, just as though he were your own father.” (1 Timothy 5:1)

“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.” (1 Timothy 5:19)

True elders—those appointed by the Holy Spirit, divinely equipped for doing the work—should be obeyed, respected, prayed for, and their godly example followed.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” This temple is the local assembly. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 reads, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Who is in you...Whom ye have of God...you are not your own...you are bought with a price...therefore glorify God in your body.”

An elder is to be a steward of the mysteries of God:

- The Mystery of the Gospel
- The Mystery of the Rapture
- The Mystery of the Church
- The Mystery of Godliness

“To Him whom men despise and slight,

To Him be glory given;

The crown is His and His by right

The highest place in heaven.”

In Revelation 5:11-13, the angels join the elders and there is universal adoration. Every creature in heaven, earth, under the earth, and in the sea join their voices in unison saying, “Blessing, honor, and glory be unto Him who sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

We say, “Lord, break me of my pride, self-will, unforgiving spirit, worldliness, impurity, temper, and

every work of the flesh.” As we stand or bow in our surrendered condition before Him, we allow Him to change us from being a Jacob to being Israel, from a cheat to a prince, from a powerless schemer to one who has power with God. Then as we go through life with the limp of a broken man, our life will exude the fragrance of the Lord. We proclaim for all to see, that “Christ is Lord” of my life.

Able to do what we ask or think
Able to do what we ask or think
Able to do above what we ask or think
Able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think
Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Isaiah 43:2 says, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” An example of this can be seen in the Red Sea illustration and that of the Hebrew children. Zech. 4:6 says, “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit.”

Deacons and Deaconesses

1 Timothy 3:8-13 - In verse eight, Paul turns abruptly from the qualifications of elders and presents the qualifications of deacons. From this passage of scripture we learn that the leaders in the local church are both elders and deacons. A deacon has received three things: (1) A gift from Christ, (2) A call from Christ, and (3) The recognition of the Church for public service (the term deacon, in general, means “one who serves.”).

Deacons are temporal, while the elders are spiritual. No statement is made relative to the deacons’ duties.

Consider Stephen and Philip - one aspect of their duties is found in Acts 6. These duties include: serving tables and collecting and giving money to widows. Notice the very high standard of conduct and character demanded of those chosen as deacons. They were to be of honest report (i.e. they were reputable, full of faith, and full of power). Full of the Holy Spirit, they were to be spiritual. Full of wisdom, they were to be practical.

When the disciples (or apostles) were released from serving tables to devote themselves to ministry and prayer, there was a great forward thrust of the Gospel. The Word of God increased and the number of disciples was multiplied greatly. A great number of priests were obedient to the faith (see Acts 6).

Note the qualifications of the deacon in 1 Timothy 3. They must have something to do with wonders and miracles. They should be men of dignified character (1 Tim. 3:8). They must not speak with two voices, saying one thing to one and something different to another. They must speak the truth at all the times. They must not be given too much wine; rather they are to be filled with the Spirit, not having their hands soiled with disreputable ways of making money. He must manage his own house well.

They must be blameless, having an outward flawlessness of character and walk. Paul is not only concerned with the outward blamelessness demanded of deacons; they must possess a vital spiritual life. They must be known as those who hold the mystery of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9). They must know the doctrine of the faith, and must conscientiously put the truth into practice in their own lives.

Then there is the testing of deacons before they hold office (1 Tim. 3:10). They have to be tested like precious metal to prove their genuineness. This testing would be over a period of time during which the aspiring deacons conduct and character would be analyzed by the church. Meeting the approval of the church, they would then be appointed. Stephanus addicted Himself to the ministry of the saints (1 Tim. 3:15).

Verse 11 of this section is an interesting one. The reading in a KJV somewhat obscures the literal meaning as appointed by the majority of conservative scholars. The words, "Even so must their wives be," could and probably should be interpreted, "Woman in like manner must be." The words "must their" is in italics and was supplied by the translators to give the meaning they thought appropriate.

More recent research on this particular issue has produced the broader meaning, "Women in like manner." The context would determine that this is not women in general. Since Paul is here dealing with church leadership it refers to a certain class of women who were deaconesses, or servants, of the church.

Let us now consider the two views:

1. That the message is for the deacons' wives, and that the qualifications listed would certainly be required of deacons' wives.
2. The preponderance of evidence is in favor of the interpretation that the women referred to were deaconesses or servants of the church. (Consider Phoebe of Rom. 16:1)

The early church realized the value of women who were dignified and not malicious gossips, but instead, temperate and faithful in all things (see 1 Tim. 3:11 and Titus 2:3). If it was found necessary to have deaconesses in the early church, “Why don’t we have them today?” Why do we send our young sisters abroad when there is so much for them to do at home?

This also brings up another question: Why is it that most assemblies recognize the authority of the elders, but do not see the need for deacons? (See Philippians 1:1). One reason is that elders perform a dual task. Another reason is that many so-called elders are not truly elders, but deacons. Of course sometimes, elders are forced into this dual role because of the lack of brethren to do this kind of work. Epaphraditus is an example of this. [A few of the men who might be a brother and companion in labor: a fellow soldier, your messenger, the treasurer, the Sunday school superintendent, etc.]

Faith

Lesson 1

Through faith, we receive God's salvation. In Hebrews 11:4 we see that, by faith, Abel offered up a sacrifice. For a definition of faith, see Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

"Forsaking all, I take Him."

Living without faith is like driving in a fog. I cannot explain the wind, but I can hoist a sail. Faith's answer to the question, "How?" is one word: "God." Faith sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and touches the intangible. Faith is a grain of mustard seed (see Luke 17:6 and Matthew 17:20). Without faith it is impossible to please God (see Hebrews 11:6).

Faith is the substance of things hoped for; faith is being sure of the things we hope for. The evidence of things not seen makes us certain of realities we do not see. By faith, the patriarchs won God's approval, and their story was put on record. Before reaching the importance of faith, we must contrast the works of Cain with the faith of Abel. Consider Cain and Abel's approach. They are representative men.

Ephesians 2:8-9 "By grace are ye saved through faith."

Romans 8:1 "Being justified by faith..."

Romans 10:7 "Faith cometh by hearing."

[To believers who have brought their friends, quote Luke 5:20 - "And when He saw their faith, he said unto him, 'man, thy sins are forgiven thee.'"]

Lesson 2

[Contrast "professing faith" with "true faith."] See James 2:14-16. False faith is exemplified in Steve Angy and Bonnie MacNab. "Professing faith" is exemplified in Acts 8 with Simon the sorcerer, the devil's counterfeit. [Quote Matthew 7 and illustrate with Matthew 25, showing the "wise" and "foolish" virgins.]

[Illustrate the parable of the tares and wheat in Matthew 13.] The sower is the Lord and the field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, while the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy is the devil. The harvest is the "end of the age" or "the Rapture," and the reapers are the angels (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). The tares are gathered in bundles and cast into a furnace of fire. The eternal bliss of the "wheat" is "the children of the kingdom" (see Matthew 13:43).

True faith is illustrated by two Old Testament characters: Abraham and Rahab. Abraham believed God and called out, asking that God would give him a son. He then gave his son as an offering, trusting God to resurrect him again. Rahab believed the spies and hung out the scarlet chord and was saved.

Gideon was also a man of faith (see Judges 5, 6, and 7). The story shows that 22,000 returned and 300 lapped the water. 10,000 remained and the rest bowed down. What kind of faith do you have? Some say, "I believe in God," but the devils also believe and tremble. It is not

“head knowledge” then, but “heart knowledge” that matters most. After all, Judas believed. [Explain the term, “let Jesus come into your heart.” Discuss the term “believe” - emotion, intellect, and will. Apply concepts to Christian young people.] Good works must accompany salvation. We must bear fruit (see John 15 in regard to fruit bearing).

Lesson 3

Faith is the power to live a God-honoring, Christ-exalting life.

Consider Enoch (Hebrews 11:5 and Genesis 5:21-24). He was characterized by outstanding devotion (use the story of the slippers - “I have got all of Daddy. Daddy has got all of me.”) Great men of God were always characterized by devotion. Consider Daniel (he would not bow to the wishes of the king or the crowd), the three Hebrew children (they were cast into the fiery furnace) and Gideon. The expression, “walked with God” (see Genesis 5:24) is used only of Enoch and Noah (see Genesis 6:19).

Jacob spent a night with God. He lived 365 years, or rather, “walked with God” for that length of time. He and Elijah are the only two men whom God took up into heaven without dying first. The writer to the Hebrews attributes his translation to his outstanding faith.

Galatians 2:20 “Is your life God honoring and Christ exalting?”

“I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me

and gave Himself for me. Ye are not your own.
Therefore, glorify God [...]"

For the Christian, life is a continual battle. In light of this, considering the following verses:

1 Timothy 6:12 - "fight the good fight of faith. Flee the youthful lusts. Follow righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness."

Ephesians 6:16 - "Taking the shield of faith..."

1 John 5:4 - "This is the victory that overcometh (flesh, devil) the world even our faith."

Paul instructs us on how to live to a God honoring life:

Ephesians 2:2 - Ye once walked according to the lusts of the flesh.

Ephesians 4:1 - Walk worthy of your calling as a child of the King of kings.

Ephesians 4:17 - Walk not as other Gentiles walk.

Ephesians 5:2 - Walk in the love of Christ.

Ephesians 5:8 - Walk as children of the light not as children of the darkness.

Ephesians 5:15 - Walk circumspectly.

The God-honoring and Christ-exalting life is only possible as we: (1) Put off the old nature which is corrupt (lying, anger, stealing, evil thoughts and evil actions), and (2) Put on the new nature, which is kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

The Holy Spirit - The Spirit is God's greatest gift to the believer (see Galatians 3:7-14, Galatians 4:6, and Galatians 5:16-26). Every child of God is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (see John 3). Every child of God is baptized

into the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:13). This means then that every believer is the temple or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. [Quote 1 Corinthians 6:19-20] This should govern our walk both with God and before men. The Holy Spirit seals us (see Ephesians 1:13). This takes care of our eternal security and is the guarantee of our eternal inheritance (see Ephesians 1:14).

The Holy Spirit's work in the believer includes: The conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. His work to the believer includes the following: guiding into all truth; he shall not speak of Himself; He will show you things to come; He shall glorify Me. Each believer is instructed to be filled with the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 5:18). The results of this are that: (1) we will become more like Christ, (2) our prayer life will deepen, (3) we will worship more intelligently, and (4) our service will be fruitful.

Note the difference among the early disciples after Pentecost. Also consider the difference between baptism and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can give us victory in our lives. Romans 8 shows us that He frees us from condemnation, quickens us for service, leads our life, and helps us in our weaknesses. Romans 12:1 speaks of the renewing of one's mind and commands us to present our body to the Spirit. [Give the illustration here.]

In Galatians 5:16 we are urged to walk in the Spirit and so defeat the lusts of the flesh. The struggle for supremacy takes place between the old and new natures. Galatians 5:19-21 speaks of the works of the old nature, while Galatians 5:22-23 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit. "See then that ye walk circumspectly. Redeem the

time knowing that the days are evil.” “I’ve got all of daddy – daddy has got all of me.” Galatians 6:7-8 speaks of sowing to one’s flesh versus sowing to the Spirit.

Lesson 4

Noah’s life of faith led to action (Hebrews 11:7). Being warned of God, he built an ark in order to save his household. Consider the antediluvian civilization 1,700 years ago.

Genesis 6:5 “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that his imaginations and thoughts were evil continually.”

In the verse that follows, Genesis 6:6, God is sorry that He had ever made man. He says, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” Then, man began to multiply and there was an explosion in the population. They took wives unto themselves and later divorced. The earth was corrupt and lacked morals. The earth was filled with violence - there were riots.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, as he was good and righteous. Genesis 6:13 reveals God’s warning as He states, “The end of all flesh is before me. I will destroy them.” In the next verse He says to Noah, “Make thee an ark.” Noah made the ark and spent 120 years preaching while he built it. No one believed him. [Describe the coming of the flood] Everything outside the ark perished, but Noah and his family believed God and were saved.

The Lord said, “As it was in the days of Noah and Lot, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man.” Luke 17:26-28 says that they ate, they drank, they married wives (had sex), they bought and sold (engaged in commercialism),

they planted (agriculture), and they built (engaged in construction). Here, too, there was a population explosion, divorce, morals, and riots. It was an age of abundance, appetite, gluttony and drunkenness. It was an age of ungodliness. "As it was – so shall it be." [Compare these conditions with present day conditions.]

Noah was warned of God in these conditions and told to build an ark. God is warning you today. Will faith lead to action? How near is this event? When will Christ return? No man knoweth the day nor the hour, but He is coming. [Describe the Rapture]

Proverbs 27:1 "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Proverbs 29:1 "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Proverbs 30:25-26 "Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer; conies are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the crags."

Lesson 5

Abraham - The life of faith leads to separation, sojourning, and sacrifice.

Separation – [Describe Abraham. Describe God's call and it's uncertainty, according to human terms].

Abraham "OBEYED" and 'went out,' not even knowing where he was going. He went, trusting God implicitly. 1 John 2:15 says, "Love not the world." [Define the term world] Faith sees the invisible, hears the inaudible and touches the intangible. Here, we have faith's answers to

the questions, "How?" and "Where?" The answer is "God." [Describe this separation and what it meant to Abraham - apply this to our own lives]

See 1 Corinthians 6, which speaks of evil, idolatry, and godlessness. [Furthermore, address anything that might hinder our spiritual lives - like swearing, smoking, wild parties, immorality with the other sex, bad guys, etc.]. The expulsive power of a new affection is shown in James 3 (fountain, trees, Demas).

Sojourning - By faith Abraham lived in the land of promise. His lapse of faith nearly cost him his life and because of this lapse, he brought Hagar from Egypt to whom was born Ishmael, from whom came the Arabs, from whom came the Muslim religion and the present day circumstances in the Middle East.

[Stress the Pilgrim character of Abraham: he dwelt in a tent] Is anything too hard for the Lord? He had no settled home, he looked for a city whose builder and maker was God. Think of Philippians 3:20, which says, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto our Savior's body of glory."

Sacrifice - The supreme test of Abraham's faith is seen in the sacrifice of Isaac. Read Genesis 22. To love God and obey Him were the first principles of Abraham's life. It is better to obey than to sacrifice. Moses sacrificed the wealth and pleasures of Egypt because he had respect for the recompense of the reward. It cost Paul, Peter, John, David Livingstone, Mary Slessor, David Brainerd, Margaret and Mary Wilson and the early Christians.

Abraham's faith prevailed and he believed the impossible. He was willing to sacrifice Isaac, believing that God would fulfill His promises, even if it meant raising Isaac from the dead.

O that our faith might increase!

Fellowship in Acts 2

Webster's definition of fellowship is, "Companionship...a neutral sharing." He also designated a "fellowship" as "a group of people sharing the same interests; a brotherhood." In the Scripture, fellowship is described as, "Communion...a mutual sharing...a partnership...having common interests." In Christian fellowship we are "bound together" in Christ. We have a "reciprocal love" for one another. We also have "common interests." We are in "harmony" and "agreement" with each other relative to our ideals in Christ.

In some instances in Scripture, fellowship carries with it the thought of "social activity." One of the great blessings of Christianity is the "fellowship of saints." In Judaism no provision was made for the gathering together of the people, except on special occasions as at the annual feasts. Right at the beginning of the Christian era provision was made for the "fellowship of saints."

In Acts 2:42 we see the fourfold purpose for the coming together of the early church:

- They met together in fellowship for the preaching and teaching of the apostles' doctrine, especially the doctrine of the resurrection.
- They also came together "to fellowship."
- While they were together in fellowship they broke bread (see 1 Corinthians 10:16).
- They also made use of this opportunity to engage in prayers.

Keeping “fellowship” in its immediate context, it would include these activities. Notice the omission of “and” between fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. This would indicate that the last time activities were placed side by side with fellowship. The breaking of the bread meeting evidently consisted of a fellowship meal, which took place before the remembrance feast. Consider the love feast of 1 Corinthians 11. This same thought is also borne out in Acts 20, where the extended remembrance feast lasted until midnight.

We mentioned earlier that “fellowship” carries with it the thought of social activity. As the early church proclaimed the apostles’ teaching of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as the only means to man’s salvation, men of all walks of life were swept into the kingdom, and were bound together in love in one fellowship.

So real was this “fellowship,” that the wealthy believers sold their possessions to help care for the necessities of the poor (see Acts 2:44-46 and Acts 4:32-37). Acts 2:46 says that they broke bread from house to house. This closely knit “fellowship” manifested itself as they shared their houses and their food with each other. Fellowship in these days was a form of self-preservation. They separated themselves from the cruel world around them. The bulk of them were slaves. They lived in a hostile world - they were strangers there; there was nothing spiritual for the soul. (Abraham: Pilgrim - Stranger) So, at every opportunity they gathered to share, support, and encourage each other. It was an evidence of the new life when those believers desired to come together in fellowship.

Malachi 3:16 "They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another."

Acts 1:14 "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

Colossians 3:16 "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody with all your heart unto the Lord."

The fellowship between the Jew and Gentiles must have been particularly sweet. See also Ephesians 2.

God Can Use Small Things

In Exodus 4:2 the question is asked, "What is that in thine hand?" The response is that it is the tool of His calling – a shepherd's crook. Moses replies, "A rod." God used the rod mightily. The rod became a symbol of God's power. Moses smote the waters in Egypt with it and they turned to blood (see Exodus 7:20). He also stretched forth his rod toward heaven and God sent fire, hail, and thunder (see Exodus 9:23). On another occasion he stretched it out and an east wind arose which brought locusts that ate the fruit, trees, and herbs (see Exodus 10:15).

The same rod brought deliverance at the Red Sea (see Exodus 14:16). It brought water from the rock (see Exodus 17:5). It brought deliverance from the Amalekites (see Exodus 17:9). Because Moses allowed God to use him to be the instrument through which He would flow, God changed the meekest man in all the earth into the mightiest man. God used what Moses had to confound kings, to break the power of the tyrants, to bring judgment upon the sinner, and to bring blessing upon his people (see Exodus 10:12 and 15).

Other examples of God using small things include the following:

- Shengar, the third judge, slew 600 men with an ox goad (see Judges 3:31).
- Samson slew 1,000 men with the jawbone of an ass (see Judges 15:16).
- Rahab took some string and in faith hung it from her window and she and her household were saved.

- Dorcas used a needle to glorify God in making clothes for the poor (see Acts 9).

- A little boy had 5 small loaves of bread and two fish and he gave them to Jesus and He used them to feed 5,000 men, women, and children (see John 6:5-14).

- A little slave girl was used to cure Naaman from leprosy (see 2 Kings 5).

- In the book of Judges God used 7 things to accomplish His will:

1. An ox goad
2. A nail
3. Trumpets
4. Pitchers
5. Lamps
6. A millstone
7. The jawbone of an ass

- The men who felt like children were the men whom God used.

In 1 Kings 3:7 Solomon said, "I am but a little child."

Jeremiah 1:6 says, "Behold I am a child, I cannot speak."

In Exodus 4:10-12 Moses said to God, "I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue."

God said, "I will be thy strength, I will teach thee what thou shalt say, I will teach thee what thou must do."

God said unto Joshua, "Say not, I am a child. Go, speak and be not afraid." God then touched his mouth and he went forth and rooted out, pulled down, destroyed, threw down, built and planted.

1 Corinthians 1:21 says, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world (uneducated, unlearned) to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." His disciples were mostly fishermen. Paul says, "I am the least of the apostles." Consider also Ephesians 4.

Holiness in the Church

The church today should break out of its maintenance role and focus on growing. The church should come alive through the Spirit in proclamation of the gospel and significant church growth. As servants, we should all be desirous of seeing our churches grow, and new church plants developing to spread the gospel and worship the Lord. We should all be challenged by the message from Hebrews 12:14: "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

It is time for the Christian church to take a very strong stand on holiness; this emphasis should not be relinquished. The evangelical community needs to be reminded of this message, and so does our society. The world actually craves this message of holiness! As we strive after and pray for holiness in our churches, we should all highlight and preach it as Christians, for holy people are the best vehicles of evangelism. Part of being holy, as a Christian, is the process of finding out where hurting people are in our communities and responding to them compassionately. There are many needs around us that require Christians' involvement, care, and the gospel message of truth. Redemption in Christ is not the end of the story, for the restored world is still to come! In light of this, Christians ought to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in such a way that we do not alienate people from the gospel and so that we represent restorative relationships in our lives.

Humility

Matthew 18:4 - "Whoever humbles himself like the child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 23:12 - "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Proverbs 23:4 - "Humility and fear of the Lord bring wealth, honor and life."

1 Peter 5:6 - "Humble yourself, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

Psalms 126 - "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him."

When Dr. Morrison wrote home from China asking for a young man to be sent out to help him, a young man eagerly offered his services. The committee before whom he appeared was not impressed. They turned him down. The young man seemed to be so sincere. They asked him if he would go out as a servant. "I am willing to do anything for my Lord," he replied. Subsequently, this young man became a faithful missionary and founder and principal of the Anglo-Chinese College. He who humbles himself shall be exalted. It is as though Christ is saying, "Continue in me. Remain in me (in union with me). Dwell in me. Live in me."

"Is it nothing to you all that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Sometimes as I sit at the Lord's

Supper, I ask myself, "What is the matter with me? How can I sit and contemplate the passion of the Savior and not be melted to tears?"

What does it mean to weep? The Lord looked at Peter and he wept. [Describe the sinful woman who washed the Savior's feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment.] See Luke 7:38. Although the woman lived on the other side of the cross, she was more attuned emotionally than many of us are with all our superior knowledge. Why are we like blocks of ice? Familiarity breeds contempt. "Reproach hath broken my heart."

In our culture it is unmanly to weep. Beloved, it is not unmanly to weep in the shadow of the cross. Oh, that we could with Jeremiah pray, "Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears that I may weep day and night." Jeremiah 9:1. Weep over the sufferings and death, which my sins brought on the sinless Savior. May the immortal words of Dr. Isaac Watts be ours:

"Well might I hide my blushing face, while his dear cross appears; dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and melt my eyes to tears."

May our prayer be, "Lord, deliver me from the curse of a dry-eyed Christianity." How many of you are plunging about and struggling in the quagmire of helplessness and doubt? Each one of us should learn to place ourselves before God every day, as a vessel to be filled with his Holy Spirit.

Take time to read the Word as in His presence. Let the Word create around you and within you a holy atmosphere in which your soul will be refreshed and strengthened for the Lord's work. Andrew Murray

prayed, "May not a single moment of my life be spent outside the light, love and joy of God's presence. And not a moment without the entire surrender of myself as a vessel for him to fill with His Spirit and love."

Mary broke her alabaster jar of perfume and poured it, in its entirety, on the Lord. He never was more honored on earth than on this occasion. How many of us hardly ever break the alabaster jar. We bring it, and keep it, and take it away. There is no outpouring of our love, there is no fragrance in the house, there is no joy in our heart, but worst of all the Lord is left baffled, disappointed.

Most men are known for one conspicuous grace or virtue. Moses was known for his meekness, Job for his patience, and John for his love. But in Jesus Christ you find everything. His character was so perfectly balanced that there was neither excess nor deficiency. After the approval of heaven at Jordan came the assault of hell. After the dove, the devil. God writes with a pen that never blots, speaks with a tongue that never slips, acts with a hand that never fails. The entrance into the kingdom of heaven is nothing, the arrival subscription is everything.

If A Man Die, Shall He Live Again?

Job 14:14 and Luke 16:19-21

This is the age-old question: Is there life after death? Does death end all? In the book of Job we find questions that have occupied the minds of all men since the beginning of time. In Job 14:14, Job cries, “If a Man dies, shall He live again?” Job also asks, “Where can I find Him, that I may come to His seat?” (Job 23:3) And in Job 14:10, Job inquires, “Man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he?” While skeptics say there is no hereafter and that death ends all, scripture says, “For I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the last on earth. And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.” (Job 19:25-26)

On the cross, Jesus confirms that we will be with Him after we die, telling the repentant criminal, “Today you shall be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43) Hebrews 9:27 affirms the certainty of the judgment following our deaths, saying, “and as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” This belief brings us face to face with the truth of the resurrection. In John 5:26-29, we see John recalling Jesus’ resurrection as the basis for the promise of our own resurrections after death. He says, “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to

the resurrection of condemnation.” This shows us that there are two groups that will be resurrected: the just and the unjust. These two groups will either experience eternal security or eternal judgment. In Revelation 20, we also see the judgment of all people before the great white throne. At death, then, what happens to an unbeliever? They will immediately go into Hades to a state of torment and remain in this state until the final judgment, at which time they are resurrected. After the judgment they are cast into Gehenna, the lake of fire, and into outer darkness, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. (See Revelation 20 and 21)

In Luke 16, we find that the Lord Jesus pulls back the curtain of eternity to give us a solemn view of conditions in hell. This story, surprisingly, is not a parable, as we see with Jesus’ specific use of words identifying the real characters of this story: “there was a certain rich man” and “there was a certain beggar.” (Luke 16:19-20) The rich man dies and has a funeral on earth, and is then sent to his torment in Hades. In Hades, we notice, he is conscious, possessing all the faculties he had possessed on Earth, and we also see that he is in great torment. Sadly, he will remain in this state of torment and anguish until the judgment of the great white throne, then banished to Gehenna forever. (See Revelation 20) Let us look at the sudden change in the rich man’s attitude we see while he is in Hades. First we see him praying, crying out to Abraham, “have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” (Luke 16:24) He also suddenly becomes evangelistic and concerned about his five brothers’

eternal fate, urging and praying to Abraham to let Lazarus testify to them, "Lest they also come to this place of torment." (Luke 16:28) We can infer that Hades is potentially full of praying people! Yet both of the rich man's prayers are unanswered. Abraham replies that there is a "great gulf fixed" between them, an impossible chasm separating them, so that no one can pass between the two places. (Luke 16:26) Clearly, we see that the rich man has a clear recollection of his past life. To the unsaved in hell, memory will be the worm that never dies. Sins committed and unrepented of, the opportunities to accept Christ that are obtained but carelessly let go, the refusals to believe the Gospel, and the rejections of the Savior will be forever remembered in hell. We see that not only does memory haunt this rich man, but sight torments him. He sees Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Those in the place of torment will also be able to view heaven, seeing the joy, happiness, peace and contentment of the redeemed in paradise. But memory and sight will add to the pain and torment for all eternity.

So, then, what happens to the believer when he dies? Paul says that he is "absent from the body, present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8) What does this mean? Lazarus is transported to heaven by angels, as we see in Luke 16. When believers die, they are transported into the abode of God, which Paul tells us is indescribable, saying "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) The believers who die before the rapture are with the Lord in this beautiful place, a temporary abode. Then, at the rapture, their bodies will be resurrected and

reunited with their soul and spirit. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 describes, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." At the shout, the dead in Christ will rise from the grave, at the voice, living saints will be changed, and at the sound of the trumpet we shall all rise together to meet the Lord in the air!

Following this overwhelming event, we will be given our rewards at the judgment seat, taken to the Father's house, to the marriage of the Lamb, then to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (See Revelation 19) Then we shall reign with the glorified Lord in an eternal state with fullness of joy, delight, and pleasure in the New Heaven and the New Earth. At this time "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4) We shall see the Lord's face, and there will be no night and no need for lamps, nor the sun, for the Lord shall give us light and we shall reign forever and ever. (See Revelation 21:23 and Revelation 22:4-5)

Revelation 3:20 promises the Master's personal relationship with us and expresses His eagerness to share fellowship. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me." The final message of Revelation 22 resides in the repetition of the phrase, "Behold I come quickly." Three

times we see this at the end of this book for the future of the biblical story. (See Revelation 22:7, 22:12, 22:20) Jesus is coming back, and He tells us repeatedly He is “coming quickly.” Where will you spend eternity? The choice is yours: receive Christ as your Savior and enjoy the glories of heaven or refuse Christ as Savior and languish in torments forever.

Is There a Heaven?

Is there life after death?

This question is as old as the human race. With this question unanswered, we go through life bewildered, uncertain as to our origin and destiny. To establish the fact of death is no problem - every second someone dies.

Job 14:1-2

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.”

2 Samuel 14:14

“For we must needs die, and are as water split on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;”

1 Peter 1:24

“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:”

Hebrews 9:27

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”

Immortality

Job asked the question, "If a man die shall he live again?" Is there life beyond the grave? He adds, "Man dieth and wasteth away; yea man giveth up the ghost and where is he?" Job answers his own question in Job 19:25-27 when he says, "For I know that my redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy any body, yet in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and whom my eyes shall behold."

The Psalmist David in Psalm 23 says, "And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Many civilizations have believed this in a very primitive way. The kings of Egypt and the warriors and chiefs are examples. Basically, this doctrine of the "immortality of the soul and also of the body" is strictly a biblical one.

Introducing the immortality of the "body" at this time may come as a surprise to you. You have considered the soul of man as immortal, but someone asks, "Is the 'body' immortal also?" Let us see what the Scripture says:

- The body of man is referred to as mortal, or subject to death six times in the New Testament - See Romans 6:12, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 (twice), 2 Corinthians 4:11, and 2 Corinthians 5:4.
- The body is referred to as immortal, a condition in which death loses control three times in the New Testament. (This word "immortality" is applied to the Lord Jesus one time in 1 Timothy 6:14-16 - "[Our Lord Jesus Christ] which in His times He shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality[...]."

We learn from this that the body of our Lord Jesus is immortal. The other two occurrences of this word is found in 1 Corinthians 15:53-54.

Two classes of Christians are in view here:

- Those who have died in Christ, whose bodies are suffering corruption.
- Those who are alive at His coming.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. This corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when “this corruptible” (those who have died in the Lord) puts on incorruption and “this mortal” (those still alive at His coming) puts on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying, “Death is swallowed up in victory!” Paul describes this change of the mortal to immortality for us in 1 Thessalonians 4. [Read this]

We have answered the question “If a man die shall he live again?” so far as the Christian believer is concerned, but what about the unbeliever? (And lest anyone should mistake the term, I mean those who have not been “born again”) Is the unbeliever annihilated after death?

The Scripture speaks of three kinds of death:

(1) A spiritual death (2) A physical death (3) A second death The impenitent dead do not take part in the first resurrection. Their spirits remain in “prison” for 1,000 years more. Revelation 20 proclaims the resurrection of the just and then follows the description of the binding and imprisonment of Satan and the thousand years of Christ’s reign. This is followed by the account of the

release of Satan for “a little season,” and his final sentence and doom. The record goes on. Read Rev. 20:11-15. Note the language - “This is the second death” (see Rev. 20:14). Note also Rev. 20:6, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such, the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him.”

In closing, let me give you the biblical description of the two conditions in eternity:

- Heaven: Revelation 21:1-5 and Revelation 22:1-5

- Hell: Luke 16:19-31

As Savior... “Come unto me.” (Matthew 11:28)

As Judge... “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matthew 25:41)

Isaiah 40

The prophet is comparing the greatness of God to idols.

He is the God who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand. He has measured the heavens with the span of His palm – from His thumb to His little finger. He has measured the dust of the earth in a basket. He has weighed the mountains in a scale, the hills in a balance. The nations are like a drop from a bucket. He counts them as the dust of the balance. The nations are as nothing before Him. He counts them less than nothing.

He sits on the circle of the earth. The inhabitants are as grasshoppers. He created the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and the stars. He brings them out one by one. He calls them by their names, because of His great power and mighty strength. This is the One who cares for us.

John 4

When God's remnant people returned to Jerusalem to restore the divine testimony, they were spiritually intelligent enough to realize that their first act of obedience to Jehovah was to give priority to the building of the altar. The altar was their ground of acceptance by God (see Ezra 3:3). This was followed by the building of the Temple (see Ezra 5:16). Later, they built the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3:6).

This was the divinely prescribed order:

- The altar and its worship.
- The Temple with its regulated service.
- The building of the walls, which was their testimony and witness to the world around.

This divine order did not change when the Church commenced at Pentecost. The believers followed it and prospered, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper was the center of their testimony. In this, they acknowledged, first of all, the death of Christ as the ground of their acceptance by God. Secondly, they used the Remembrance Feast, as an opportunity to worship God. In this unique gathering, they acknowledged the blessed truth of the oneness of the Body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Thirdly, they broke out of Jerusalem, and took the Gospel to the regions beyond.

It is not coincidental that the early brethren were led to give priority to the Lord's Supper in their gatherings. This was followed by the building of the "House of God" in the restoration of divine truths, long buried in the

decay of professing Christendom. These spiritual exercises were followed by evangelical and missionary testimony throughout the world. Who can deny that their obedience to divine principles was greatly honored by God?

Some Notes on John 4:20-24

From this incident we learn that, since the days of Jesus Christ, God has set aside all special sanctuaries and places for His worship. "The time has come when ye shall neither in Jerusalem, nor in this mountain, worship the Father." Jesus said to this woman that the time had come when holy priests would engage in the worship of the Father at any time and in any place. This worship would be generated in the spirit of the worshiper and would be in truth...that is, genuine and sincere.

The Jews and Samaritans had reduced worship to outward forms. While their bodies might be bowed to the ground, their spirits were not right with God. The actions were religious pretense. Today, the Father is searching for believers to worship Him. This is the only time this phrase is used: "Father." It is true that we are saved to serve, but the highest truth of all is that we are saved to worship. [Example: Ironsides story]

God, the Father, is seeking the praise, adoration, and worship of His redeemed people. God is a Spirit or God is Spirit. This is one of the most profound statements ever made. God is infinite Spirit, as such He is not subject to the laws of humanity, as the Spirit He is essentially unlimited. He is ever-present. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-sufficient. He is inimitable, incomparable, and inestimable.

This is the One who is seeking our worship - the One who desires and longs for our worship - the One who, in a sense, demands our worship. Therefore, because He is that infinite Spirit, glorious in majesty, glorious in holiness, and dwelling in unsullied and unapproachable light, those who worship Him must worship Him sincerely and honestly in their spirit.

True worship cannot be expressed in external rituals. Sincere worship is that which takes place within a contrite and broken heart. Alfred P. Gibbs puts it this way, "Father we worship thee, through Thy beloved Son, and by Thy Spirit now draw near, before Thy holy throne. For what Thou art we praise, and worship and adore, to Father, Son, and Spirit be, the glory evermore." In essence, worship is being occupied with God the Father, and Christ the Son to the exclusion of all else. Worship, in its purest and highest form, is when we, as holy priests, present Christ in all His worth and excellence to the Father, through the Spirit. We will never worship in this fashion until we get our eyes off of our blessings, our service, and ourselves, and get focused on the Lord.

The Wise Men

They were wise because they recognized the baby, Jesus, as the King of the Jews. Despite the drab surroundings, the humble house and the mother of low degree - despite the absence of royal splendor and magnificence, they perceived in the Child - deity, Emmanuel, God with us - and fell down and worshipped. These men came to give, not to get. They presented to Him a great sacrifice - costly and precious gifts:

Gold: This spoke of His deity, glory, and brilliant perfection.

Frankincense: When crushed, this herb gives out a fragrant aroma. This speaks of His beautiful life and sinless perfection. He was impregnable.

Myrrh: This herb is bitter to the taste and speaks to us of His sufferings in life, culminating in His death on the Cross.

Judges 19-21

Despite the teaching of sociologists, this world is not becoming better and better, but rather growing worse and worse. There is a shocking breakdown of morality, a complete collapse of morals: pornography, homosexuality, rape, child abuse, murder, adultery, and lawlessness. Then, in the professing church, there is a “form of godliness which denies the power and presence of God.” In recent years, there has also been an invasion of demons into our Western culture, which has resulted in disastrous and tragic incidents.

The Lord reminds us, brethren, that “we are in the world, but not of it.” John reminds us that “we should not love the world, neither the things of the world. He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” He also said, “he who doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

The last chapters of Judges have been described as the cesspool of the Bible. The sex crimes committed by the sons of Benjamin caused the pagans around them to blush in shame and disbelief. The spirituality of the nation was at a low ebb. Even the leaders were delinquent.

Malachi, a Levite who was set apart to care for the holy things of God took a second wife. His wife was a concubine. He undoubtedly conformed to the practices of the world around, but was totally displeasing to God. This action was “sin” in God’s eyes and it triggered off a series of sins that affected the whole nation. The Levite sinned and the concubine lost her life. The village of Gibeah, the tribe of Benjamin, the people of Tabish

Gilead, and the Shiloh - yea, all of Israel - suffered, because of the sin of one man.

The events which took place in Gibeah were atrocious and despicable. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The men of the village were obviously homosexuals. They are described as "worthless fellows;" that is, "sons of the devil." They wanted to rape the Levites, but instead, one gave his wife.

Beloved, despite what behavioral scientists are saying, homosexuality is sin in the worst form. It is frightening to see this gross sin rear its ugly head in our communities, schools and churches. Also, to see its adherents becoming braver and more militant? God's judgment will fall on those who practice this sinful perversion as it did on Sodom and Gomorrah. See Romans 1.

What kind of a man was this Levite? And to add to the horror of his action, he was a functioning leader in Israel. His cowardly action led to indescribable humiliation and suffering for his wife. These sons of the devil abused her all night, and when dawn broke, she was found dead at the door. Note the sin of backsliding here. A backslider is capable of committing every sin in the book, except for renouncing Christ. The Levite, though backslidden, was sensitive to the enormity of his own sin and the sin of the nation. He cut his wife's body into twelve pieces and sent a piece to each of the tribes. See Judges 19:29-30.

The people gathered together at Mizpah "as one man" to the Lord. Consider the "Unity." They were shocked and decided to send an army to Gibeah. The sin-hardened,

unrepentant sons of the devil refused all overtures, marshaled an army and declared war on Israel. The whole tribe was affected. On the other hand, when Israel saw the attitude of their brethren, they assembled at Bethel, the house of God, and sought His guidance by dealing with their wayward brethren. "They that wait upon the Lord."

Assured of God's blessing, 400,000 troops marched against Benjamin, who had raised 26,700 men. The outcome of the first day of battle was surprising. Israel, although obviously in the right and in the will of God, were routed and fled, leaving 22,000 men dead on the field of battle. That night they encouraged themselves in the Lord. They wept and sought His face for guidance.

The next day of battle was almost as disastrous as the first. When roll-call was taken, 18,000 men failed to answer. The scene depicted in Judges 20-26 is a sad one. They were bewildered. They did not understand, but they wept and fasted before the Lord all day. They also offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. At this point it seemed that the people were being broken before the Lord. God can only use broken things. The delay in victory was God's way to humble and break His people and bring them to sincere repentance.

At the point the ark is mentioned. Phinehas the priest interceded before God. The answer this time is, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand." The third day's battle began with a few successful skirmishes by the Benjaminites. They were riding the wave of success, forgetting God and relying on their own resources. Part of Israel's forces pretended to retreat, drawing the Benjaminites after them. Then, a carefully

selected ambush force captured the unprotected city. That day 25,100 Benjaminites were slain and Gibeah, that wicked village, was completely destroyed. Was this a victory for Israel? This was God's judgment against sin. Judges 20:35 says, "The Lord struck Benjamin." [Note: God working through David and Goliath, Gideon and 300 men]

Judges 21

The leaders of Israel did not hold a great victory parade at the close of the battle. The nation had been humbled and broken. Instead, they made their way to Bethel and wept. This was not a time for celebration, because one of the tribes had been so severely disciplined that its survival was in question. Israel's repentance was deep and sincere—they offered sacrifices. [Discuss "confession" and "repentance"]

The leadership devised a plan to save Benjamin from annihilation. The six hundred survivors needed wives. Earlier, the men who had gathered at Mizpah were so shocked by the conduct of the Benjaminites, that they vowed they would not allow their daughters to marry a Benjaminite. Recalling that the people of Jabesh-Gilead had not been present at Mizpah, perhaps they sympathized with the Benjaminites. An army was dispatched to destroy them and to bring all the virgins to be wives of the Benjaminites. Four hundred were provided. The remaining Benjaminites obtained their wives by kidnapping them at the feast at Shiloh.

The book closes with a statement that summarizes the period of the Judges. No king, no authority, no order—everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Conditions

prevalent: lawlessness, disobedience, false worship, deception, carnality, immorality.

2 Chronicles 7:14—“If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land.”

Points to ponder:

- God punishes sin.
- The sin of one person affects the whole group.
- Sin is either judged by the individual or it is judged by God.

To prevent sin: “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee.”

Love and Evangelism by the Power of the Holy Spirit

Divine Love in Scripture

Many parts of Scripture teach us how to love as God has loved. Let us look at some examples:

Jeremiah 31:3 says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

John 15:13 teaches, “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.

Paul identifies believers as “enemies” in Romans 5:8-10 saying, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Paul tells us to forgive each other through our love in 1 Peter 4:8 - “have fervent love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

1 John 4:19 importantly teaches us, “We love Him because He first loved us.”

1 John 3:1-3 says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”

Song of Songs 8:7 declares, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man

were to offer his entire wealth for love he would be utterly scorned and despised.”

John 13:1 shares how Jesus loved, saying, “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end, and the highest degree.”

Love in Ephesians 3

Paul exemplifies the type of prayer warrior that commands his audience to love. In his letter to the Ephesians, he describes his prayer: “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” (Ephesians 3:14) In Ephesians 3:17 Paul exhorts us to let Christ “dwell in your hearts.” This means to make Christ’s home, where he actually lives, at home in our hearts. Paul uses the phrase “being rooted and grounded in love.” This concept of being rooted and nourished like a plant can be seen in other scripture passages like Jeremiah 17 and Psalm 1.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 says:

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,

And whose hope is the LORD.

For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,

Which spreads out its roots by the river,

And will not fear when heat comes;

But its leaf will be green,

And will not be anxious in the year of drought,

Nor will cease from yielding fruit.”

Psalm 1:1-3 continues with this illustration as well:

“Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.”

This idea of being rooted and nourished by the water, bearing fruit, and spreading roots, was essential in the new relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the early Christian church of the first century. They were to be rooted in love, which would then direct their relationships with each other. Paul continues to instruct the believers of the church in Ephesians 3:19 “to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that you might be filled with the fullness of God.”

Paul deeply desires for believers to experience the love of Christ, which transcends mere human knowledge and is so far beyond our comprehension! He also wants us to be absolutely fulfilled to the full with God Himself, because human love pales into insignificance when compared with Divine love. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Paul teaches that each believer is compelled to live for God out of the love He has for us as believers: “the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if one

died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Additionally, John 3:16 shows us four dimensions of God's love. The breadth of His love is the entire world, evident in the phrase, "God so loved the world." The length of His love is evident though the giving of His Son: "that He gave His only Son." The depth of God's love is seen in those that hear and believe: "that whosoever believeth in Him." Finally, the height of His love is what offers those eternal life: "they shall have everlasting life."

Let us meditate on our Lord's divine love through the words of the hymns, Loved with Everlasting Love and Grateful Praise:

"Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know,
Spirit, breathing from above,
You have taught me it is so.

O this full and perfect peace!
O this presence so divine!

In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine."

"All worlds thy glorious power can fare.

Thy wisdom all Thy works express, but oh! His love what tongue can tell?

My Jesus has done all things well."

The Power of the Holy Spirit

Paul's request in much of his writing is that God would grant believers, not according to themselves, but according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man. See Ephesians 3:16. Paul teaches that a battle for supremacy exists in believers' lives. Christ is to have lordship and headship over all people and all parts of our lives. The throne of our heart, where intellect, emotions, and our wills compete, is where this battle takes place. The phrase, "In the inner man" signifies such components as intellect, knowledge, and material things, such as wealth. The spiritual part of our being includes our soul and spirit.

Paul exhorts believers in Ephesians 4:21-23 "to put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." But how are we to "put off, and put on?" The inner man is fortified and nurtured by the Spirit and through the fruit of the Spirit that is produced in the inner man. See Galatians 5:16-26.

In John 7:37, Jesus tells his listeners, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." We are exhorted by Paul to be "filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:17) There should be evidence of this being filled with the Spirit, which is fourfold: in speaking, singing, giving thanks, and submitting. As

John 7:37 says, “His heart will flow with rivers of living water.”

The epistle of Ephesians is written to a group of believers who are indubitably rich in Christ, yet are living like beggars because they are ignorant of their wealth in Christ. Let us consider the extreme wealth at our disposal when we are believers in Christ. Each believer is chosen, predestined, adopted, accepted, redeemed, forgiven, granted wisdom, given a great inheritance, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and gifted with eternal life, grace, citizenship, and every spiritual blessing! Then it is evidenced in our lives individually and corporately in the “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16).

The heart in which Christ dwells displays outward proofs that this is so. A believer develops the mind of Christ and becomes more and more Christ-like as he grows in “spiritual blessing.” In Ephesians 3:17 Paul makes two requests: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” and “that you will be rooted and grounded in love.” In Galatians 2:20, Paul requests that Christ, through our faith, would actually enter, settle down, and make the permanent home in our hearts. He proclaims, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

When Paul uses the phrase, “strengthened with power” in Ephesians 3:16, he is speaking of the Holy Spirit’s power. Ephesus was a very wicked city that worshipped pagan gods. In fact, multitudes of people visited every year to pay homage to Diana, the shameless pagan

goddess. It was difficult to survive as a Christian amid the licentiousness, wickedness, and immorality, which was practiced openly under the approval of Diana. Paul knew of this danger; he had lived in the city for three years, and so he prayed earnestly that the believers would be strengthened with the Holy Spirit's power. This is an important truth of which many believers are ignorant!

Many believers do not realize the strength of the power available to them in the Holy Spirit. Let us consider John's gospel as we look at the metamorphosis the Holy Spirit brings about in a believer. First, in John 3:7-8, Jesus teaches the indwelling nature of the Spirit in his encounter with Nicodemus that each believer must be "born of the Spirit." Secondly, in John 4:14, Jesus tells of the upspringing and nourishing nature of the Spirit to the Samaritan women at the well, "But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

The Spirit empowers believers to live in eternity with Jesus, having this everlasting life. In John 7:37, as we have previously looked at, Jesus reminds believers of the out-flowing and fruit-bearing nature of the Spirit, since they should have rivers of living water flowing out of their hearts as a result of the Spirit's ministry in their lives.

Luke 11:13 declares this power readily available to all believers, saying, "How much more will your heavenly father give Holy Spirit power to them that ask Him?" In Matthew 17:14-21, disciples have just descended from the mountain of transfiguration when they meet a man who asks them to heal his son. But they are powerless

and cannot heal him, so the father brings him to Jesus. Kneeling down before Him, the father unburdens his heart, telling the Savior that his demon-possessed son has epileptic seizures and will fall into the fire and water. He mentions that he had asked the disciples to cure him, but they could not. Jesus cries, "Oh faithless and perverse generation!" in his frustration with their inability to know the truth and act with the power bestowed upon them. So Jesus Himself rebukes the demon, it leaves the child and he is healed immediately. The disciples are puzzled, asking, "Why could we not cast him out?" The Lord's answer is straightforward: "because of your unbelief." If they had faith the size of a mustard seed they could have said to "the mountain," which can be identified as the boy's sickness, "be removed!" and the boy would have been delivered and healed. These disciples are severely rebuked for their lack of faith, because Jesus teaches that if you have faith, "nothing shall be impossible for you." However, Jesus warns, "This kind of need does not go out except by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:21) Prayer and fasting, according to this story, are the keys to faith in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Indeed, each believer has at his own disposal the power of the Holy Spirit to call upon. May we as believers follow suit of the father of the sick boy in Mark 9:14-29, saying, "Lord I believe! Help my unbelief." Or as Peter said, "Lord depart from me for I am a sinful man," let us fall down at Jesus' feet and humbly acknowledge our inability and sinfulness, learning from Peter's example. (Luke 5:8)

Evangelism by the Power of the Spirit

Paul reminds Timothy in his closing words of 2 Timothy 4:5, “Be careful in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry.” So what is the work of the evangelist? Despite the pressure and responsibility of shepherding, Timothy is urged by Paul not to neglect to do the work of an evangelist. This powerful admonition given to Timothy in the first century is still as powerful and binding to us today.

We should never be overwhelmed with other pressures in our lives that we neglect the crux of the gospel or ignore the command from Mark and Matthew’s gospels to “Go ye into all the world” and “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 16:15 and Matthew 19:19) Many believers have stepped out of the sphere of soul-winning by claiming they are not evangelists or out of fear to witness. This was Timothy’s problem too! But remember Paul’s words to Timothy about Onesiphorus’ pursuing of Paul in 2 Timothy 1:17. Onesiphorus “sought (him) out zealously.” Listen to the command from the Supreme Commander to “do the work of an evangelist” and “go into all the world,” all done by and through God’s provision and power, not by and through our own.

This evangelism was to be done from Pentecost “to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20, Acts 1 and 2) Let us consider Peter as an evangelist and disciple before and after Pentecost. We see him boasting, “I will die for you” in Matthew 26:31-35, and then shortly after denying Jesus, saying, “I know not the man.” Yet after Pentecost, Peter clearly has made a transition from this transgression, suddenly delivering a powerful sermon

and seeing the conversion of three thousand souls to the early church. So what makes the difference in Peter's power before and after the events of Pentecost? The power of the indwelling spirit transforms Peter into an effective evangelist. Luke 24:49 shows Jesus instructing his disciples to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Immediately before Jesus ascends, He promises his disciples the Holy Spirit's power in Acts 1:8, saying, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Jesus answers Nicodemus by commending him to be born again in the Holy Spirit, saying, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." As we previously examined, both John 4:14 and John 7:37 also teach the nourishing, fruit-bearing aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry in believers' lives.

We are all led and equipped by the Spirit. In the early church of Jerusalem, the believers, empowered by and through the Holy Spirit, sought to follow Christ's command to bring the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. We can see how many parts of the book of Acts correspond to this fourfold ministry. In Acts 2, the early church begins its ministry in Jerusalem, and then begins ministering to the outer local regions of "Judea" and "Samaria" through Acts 8-12. Acts 13-28 then focuses on how the early church disciples the "uttermost parts" of the earth.

There are many examples in Scripture of God's people being led by the Spirit, and not by their own power, courage, wisdom or strength. For example, in 1 Kings 3:7, Solomon praises the Lord for granting him power,

claiming in his humility, "but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in." Moses is also a great example of not having his own strength to lead his people, rather being used by God in His power. In Exodus 4:10-12, he says, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." So the Lord responds, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." These people of God need the Lord's guidance and power just as all believers are humbly without power unless the Spirit lies within them.

Let us remember our zeal for bringing others to saving grace in the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, with the words of the hymn Must I Go and Empty Handed:

"Must I go, and empty handed, Thus my dear Redeemer meet?

Not one day of service give Him, Lay no trophy at His feet?

Must I go, and empty-handed? Must I meet my Savior so?

Not one soul with which to greet Him, Must I empty-handed go?

Not at death I shrink or falter, For my Savior saves me now;

But to meet Him empty handed, Thought of that now clouds my brow.

O the years in sinning wasted, Could I but recall them now,

I would give them to my Savior, To His will I'd gladly
bow.

O ye saints, arouse, be earnest, Up and work while yet
'tis day; Ere the night of death o'ertake thee, Strived for
souls while still you may."

Loving the Lord as your First Love

We are loved, beyond measure, by the greatest force in the world, the Triune God. But how much do we really love Him? Jesus asks Peter this same question before He ascends to heaven, saying, “Peter, do you love me? (John 21:15-19) Song of Solomon 2:3-5 depicts a kind of love similar to the love of Christ. The Shulamite says, “Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.”

In Revelation 2, we read some instructions given to the church at Ephesus. (See Revelation 2:1-7) While the Ephesian church was a model church outwardly, it had become addicted to order and service and in the process had lost its first love for Christ. John records Jesus’ revelation to him, saying, “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” This teaches us that there is nothing more important in the spiritual life of an assembly than to love the Lord with our first love. This means that nothing else can come before or replace our first, whole-hearted love for the Lord Jesus. Jesus identifies the greatest commandment that God had previously given the Israelites in the giving of the Law as: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew

22:37) This means that no other love for family, for our spouse or children, or any of the things in life come before our love for Him.

Let us look at two examples of women in Scripture that portray the expression of a first love for Jesus. In Luke 7:36-50, we see the sinful woman, probably guilty of sexual sin, washing Jesus' feet with her tears and wiping His feet with her hair. Jesus proclaims, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." (Luke 7:44-47) This woman, despite her obvious sin, shows her first love towards Jesus by her humble service towards Him and her repentant heart, which weeps at the sight of a holy Savior.

The second example appears in John 12, when Mary performs a similar act of anointing Jesus' feet with oil and wiping them with her hair. Jesus rebukes Judas' criticism of using the expensive oil rather than trade it for money to be given to the poor. He says, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of my burial. For the poor you have with you always, but me you do not have always." (John 12:7-8) Mary's first love was evident in her willingness to use one of her most costly possessions for her Savior, who would not always be with them on the earth. Her first love honors him with her humble heart and sacrificial act.

Jesus identified Himself as both “the door” and “the way” to salvation and eternal life with Him. (See John 10:9 and 14:6) David, as he talked with Nathan, lamented in 1 Samuel 20:3, “There is but a step between me and eternal death.” Beloved, there is also but a step between eternal life and us. As we consider what our first love is, let us remember and reflect on the words of the hymn by Fanny Crosby, Only a Step: “Only a step to Jesus, then why not take it now? Come and thy sins confessing to Him thy Savior bow. Only a step to Jesus, oh why not come and say: ‘Gladly to Thee my Savior I give myself away.’”

Luke 4:16-32

Faith

The chief characteristic of this present age is materialism. A wave of rationalism and faithlessness is surfacing around and abroad. Faith is being strangled and many wrecks are being cast upon the hard facts of reason. Faith is a long-lost virtue. It is old fashioned and absolute and does not meet the needs of modern life. "Facts, not faith - substance, not shadow - and present, not future" is the cry today. The Esaus today are selling their birthright for a morsel of bread and losing the blessings of eternity; they are selling their souls for a moment of time.

My days are in the yellow leaf.

The flowers and fruits of life are gone.

The worm and the canker and the grief

Are mine alone. - Lord Byron

"Pleasures are like poppies spread [...]" - Burns

Faithlessness is no new failing of the human race. Consider the Old and New Testaments. Do a survey of Luke 4, which speaks of the "Test of Faith." See Luke 4:18-21: Christ is speaking as the dedicated, consecrated, attested, tempted, victorious Christ. He stood before them as the Evangelist, Healer, Savior, and Emancipator. His words were weighty. Every eye was fastened on Him. "Today, is this scripture fulfilled in your hearing?" This was the real test of faith. "Is this not Joseph's son?" No prophet is acceptable in his own country - "FAILURE."

The widow of Zarephath found herself in dire circumstances and in a tight corner: a handful for a meal, a meager meal for two and then death - eternity. Into circumstances like these came the prophet and gave her sufficient resources to share the cakes with him, testimony and death, possibility and claims. They accepted the word of the Prophet and the renewed life He offered. She lived a monument to his faith.

Consider Naaman: The stream of life was poisoned at its source. Underneath the uniform of the man lurked the deadly wound that meant premature death. He had a longing to be healed. Naaman's faith began when he obeyed the word of the little maid. Half the battle was won, yet it was nearly lost. In anger and haughty pride, he commenced his journey home. Only a miracle could save the day...and it happened. Faith dipped four times in the Jordan and his flesh became like that of a little child. There were many lepers in Israel, and many sinners, but none cleansed.

Faith is a firm persuasion or conviction. Paul said, "I know whom I have beloved [...]" The grace of God floods the world from north to south and from east to west. Yet not one soul would taste of its blessings apart from the medians of faith. Men and women are dying all around because of the obstinacy of their wills and the hardness of their hearts. Faith is:

- not DOING, but DEPENDING
- not WORKING, but WAITING
- not GIVING, but RECEIVING

Some examples of faith include:

- The faith of the dying thief.

- The faith that saved the stricken Israelite.
- The faith that cleansed a doomed life.
- The faith that delivered a destitute woman.
- The faith that saved Noah and his family.
- The faith that brought a little maid back to life.

While the super-abounding grace of God is sufficient to cover your sins, it is only faith that can make it effective and a personal reality. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Consider the following:

“By grace are ye saved, through faith.”

Luke 7:9 says, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

“Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

Christ is the great divider of men. To us, who are Christians, this undoubtedly was the greatest time in the world's history. God incarnate walked among men in the person of Jesus Christ.

In Luke 10:23-24, He reminded His disciples, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things which you see. For I tell you [...]” The tragedy of the age was that neither His disciples nor His generation recognized this. How is it that ye do not observe this time? They were weather-wise. They would forecast the weather, discerning the signs in the sky, but they were so blind that they could not see the significance and importance of the momentous time in which they lived.

The incident occurs at the beginning of public ministry. The beginning of the chapter tells us of His temptation in the wilderness. Returning victorious from this, in the

house of the Spirit, He preached in Galilee and in this instance came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. He attended synagogue, as did all good Jews. He stood up, an indication that He would like to read the scriptures that morning. They gave Him the scroll of Isaiah the prophet. He read Isaiah 61:18-19, which contained the prophetic message of the coming of the Messiah. [Read the message here]

It is interesting to note that He stopped reading in the middle of a verse. The next phrase reads—"and the day of vengeance of our God." He closed the book and sat down. "All eyes were fastened on him." The congregation had never heard this scripture read like this before. The atmosphere was charged with a divine power. As they sat there in wonderment, they were astounded and shocked to hear him say, "Today is this scripture fulfilled [...]"

These people were forced into a situation, which caused them to make a decision. They either had to believe Him or refuse to believe Him. As they considered seriously the words and the claim made by the reader, they said, "It is impossible. Is not this Joseph's son?"

Mary, The Lord's Mother

Mathew 1-2, Luke 1-2, and Acts 1:14

Mary, the Lord's mother, is the most honored woman in the world. The first mention of her is found in Matt.

1:16, which says, "Mary, of whom was born Jesus." [Note: it is no longer the word "begot" that is used, but it is "of whom." This is in the feminine singular.] The meaning of Mary is trouble and sorrow - "Mara." True to her name, Mary had many bitter experiences.

Mary was born and raised in the wicked city of Nazareth (see Luke 1:26). From that wicked place, God took the womb of this peasant woman who lived there and used it to present Himself to the world in the person of His Son. Mary was a virgin, but in her virginity she became the most blessed woman in the world, because God chose her to be the mother of the Lord (not the mother of God). Mary was a remarkable woman. She possessed unusual beauty of character. She was the purest of holiest maiden in the nation. Because of this, she was highly favored of God ("She was exalted and endowed with special honor." - See Luke 1:28). She was God's choice to be the mother of His Son.

Gabriel's Visit - Notice that Gabriel did not worship Mary. He did not tell her that she was full of grace, but that she was "highly favored." He also said in Luke 1:18, "The Lord is with you (has been - will be)." God had been preparing Mary for this great event. The maiden who would give birth to Jesus, whose breast would be His pillow, who would care for Him in infancy, and guide Him through boyhood years had to be a sanctified vessel

prepared for the Master's use (see 2 Timothy 2:21). There was only one woman in the nation who could meet the criteria. Her name was Mary.

Although Mary was so pure and was specially honored by God, she was born like any other woman, a sinner. There are many who do not believe this. They subscribe to the false doctrine of the "immaculate conception," which means that though Mary was conceived naturally, she was free from the stain of original sin. These people also maintain that when she died, she was physically translated to heaven. Mary's concept of herself differs greatly from this. At the height of her ecstasy, she exclaimed, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit doth rejoice in God my Savior."

Mary's Sorrow - Simeon's prophecy:

Luke 2:34 "Behold this child is set for the rising and fall of many in Israel—a sign to be spoken against—a sword will pass through your heart also."

Although ecstatic at the birth of the Christ-child, Mary was to experience bitter disappointment and pain that only a mother's heart can feel as she witnessed her Son become "a sign to be spoken against." Mary had listened to the angels' voices announcing her child as the Savior of the world. She had listened to the shepherds telling of the glory they had seen at his birth. She had witnessed the wise men worship her child.

The sword pierced her heart each time she saw Him being abused wrongfully by His many enemies. Mary's soul was pierced:

In the Temple (see Luke 2:34).

In Jerusalem (see Luke 2:49).

In the house where He was preaching (see Mark 3:31-35).

The deepest sword piercing took place when in a mother's agony she stood beneath that old rugged Cross and witnessed the complete degradation, desolation, and death of her Son. The people sat down to watch Him there, while Mary stood by the Cross (see John 19:25). Consider Mary's loneliness - how did Mary feel when on the resurrection morning, the Lord revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene? Why did He not reveal Himself to His mother?

The Last Glimpse of Mary - The last glimpse we get of Mary is when she is gathered with the believers in the upper room (see Acts 1:13-14). At this time, she is mentioned not first on the list, but last on the list of names given. Life had changed for her. Her Son had been crucified, resurrected and was alive for evermore. Now she takes her place with the other believer's waiting for the coming of the Spirit.

The last mention of Mary is a happy one. We see her praying with her family, who evidently came to know the Lord after the resurrection. Read Acts 1:14. We never read of Mary again in the Scriptures.

My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?

Matthew 27:46

In the well-known poem, Cowper's *Grave*, written by renown poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the thirteenth stanza elaborates on the scene of the cross and Jesus' cry: "Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather; And Adam's sins have swept between the righteous Son and Father: Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken!'" Martin Luther actually set out to study this profound cry of Jesus. He studied for a long time, in solitude, without food, and in deep meditation. At last he rose from his chair and was heard to exclaim in amazement, "God forsaken of God; who can understand that?" Beloved, our familiarity with these words has robbed them of their stark tragedy. Truly, "God forsaken of God" is a concept so tragic and mysterious, how can we understand it?

The first three sayings from the Lord on the cross were addressed to men. With this cry, however, Jesus addresses Himself to God. For the first three hours of daylight the Lord's body had been exposed to the burning rays of the pitiless eastern sun, as well as the merciless onslaught of demons and men. Infinitely worse than that, during the three hours of darkness, His soul, by being made sin, experienced the relentless crashing of the waves and billows of God's wrath. But infinitely worse than that, for the first time throughout the ages, He experienced abandonment by God. At the close of the

sixth hour of darkness, He broke the silence with the shuddering cry of desolation: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34)

These words spoken by the Savior constitute the most desperate cry ever uttered in the annals of human history. In this cry we sense a darkness that is inscrutable, a depth that is unfathomable, and a desolation that is incomprehensible. The cry reveals an awful sense of loneliness, a loneliness that never existed as that at Calvary. The hostile crowd was there, crying for His death. The hosts of darkness were there, unmerciful and violent. He has been abandoned by his friends, and was now surrounded by His enemies. There was no help coming from heaven, no voice angelic or divine that responded to the penetrating word, "Why?" Meditation on this forlorn cry made Martin Luther exclaim, "God forsaken of God? Who can understand it?"

The life of the Savior had always been lonely. There was the babe in the manger, the boy in the temple, the praying man in the desert, the agonized in Gethsemane, the defenseless prisoner in the trials. These had all been scenes of solitude. Loneliness was not a new experience for Him, but nothing previous to this was to be compared to the loneliness and desolation of experiencing God's wrath for mankind while on the cross at Calvary.

My God, My God

First, let us look at Jesus' specific words as we examine this cry of Jesus. He says, "My God, My God." This is significant because usually, in Jesus' prayers, He invariably addresses the Lord God as His Father, but

here He addresses His Father as “God.” Previously, for example, while in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” Secondly, Jesus uses a personal pronoun in this statement: “My” God. Although Jesus is Himself God and part of the Trinity, here He also calls God His own God. However, the unity of the Trinity is never broken at this time when he cries out. But the eternal, almighty, righteous, holy, demanding, uncompromising, just, and inflexible God poured out His wrath upon His only Son who was the Sin-bearer and was paying the awesome price of redemption. God being “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” as He saw and felt the dreadful pain that his beloved Son was bearing, forsook Him temporarily until the full price was paid.

Why

Secondly, let us look at the word Jesus asks: “Why?” Never before had this word, the cry of a baffled heart, crossed the Lord’s lips, and it never did again. The dreadful experience that drew this word from His parched lips was unique and unparalleled. In Psalm 22:3, we can see the answer to this wretchedly asked question: “But thou art holy, O Thou who inhabitest the prayers of Israel.” What was it that caused God to forsake His Son? It was holiness turning away from sin. The Lord was forsaken so that we might be forgiven!

Hast

Next, let us look at Jesus’ use of “Hast” or “Didst” in His cry. The exact time of this dreadful cry is not absolutely clear from the accounts of Jesus’ death. It is possible that it was uttered at the close of the hours of darkness.

Some commentators say that the word “hast” could be appropriately rendered “didst.” If this is so, we see the battle-scarred, victorious Christ casting a long shuddering look into the abyss of woe, and saying about the past pain bearing He has suffered, “Why didst Thou forsake Me?”

Thou

Immediately following this verb, the word “Thou” Jesus uses is also significant in His cry, because it is a singling out of His Father, this personal “you” in His cry. While being forsaken was no new experience for the Lord, being forsaken by His loving Father definitely was. Jesus experienced this forsakenness often among His earthly people. His brothers neither believed in Him nor followed Him, His fellow citizens in Nazareth tried to kill him, the nation to which He came did not receive Him, and many of His followers turned away from Him and walked no more with Him. Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, and many forsook Him and fled. In this cry of anguish, He is saying, “I can understand my family, my fellow-citizens, my nation forsaking me; for darkness has no fellowship with light. I can understand my disciples forsaking me, because of the weakness of the flesh, but this is my agonizing problem. Why didst Thou forsake me?” Up until this moment, when He had been forsaken by men He had been able to turn to His Father. But now He was absolutely alone. Who can plumb the depths of such bitter anguish?

Forsaken

Next, let us look at the word and the meaning of “forsaken” used in Jesus’ question. Our human and contemporary meaning of this word means to abandon,

desert, or disown. A parent can forsake a child, or a friend can forsake a friend. While such forsaking can bring deep sorrow, who can assess the meaning of this word when applied to Christ? Here we have “God being forsaken by God” with whom He had enjoyed eternal fellowship. Jesus’ cry was one of anguish, a bitter pain and suffering through His forsakenness with His eternal Father. So wretched was this abandoned state that the earth becomes dark with fear and trembles violently at the power of this desertion of the Father to the Son. Sin’s dreadful load put upon the sinless Christ breaks the communion of Father and Son - for the first time, an eternity of communion is broken. Wave after wave of the white-hot fury of God’s wrath against sin has broken over his spotless soul.

Me

Lastly, let us examine Jesus’ use of the pronoun “me” in His sorrowful cry. With this use of a personal pronoun, again we see that this signifies his own personal grief, wrung from Him in his personal cry. In fact, in this one two-letter word lays the mystery of the cross. There would be no mystery in God forsaking us because we are all wretched and helpless sinners that cannot bring ourselves to the Lord righteous of our own accord. But why would God forsake His Son who knew no sin, did no sin, and in whom had no sin, and the Son in whom he testified that He had poured all His delight? The only beautiful and glorious answer to this question is that Jesus was taking our place! He was being forsaken there on the cross so that we, believers in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, might be forgiven of our sins and promised an eternal home.

Our Wonderful Bible

The oneness or unity of the Bible is a miracle. It is a library of 66 books, written by over 35 different authors in a period of approximately 1,500 years. Represented in the authors is a cross-section of humanity, both educated and uneducated, including: kings, fishermen, public officials, farmers, teachers, and physicians. Included in the subjects are religion, history, law, science, poetry, drama, biography, and prophecy.

Yes, its various parts are harmoniously united as the parts that make up the human body. For 35 authors, with such varied backgrounds, to write on so many subjects over a period of 1,500 years in absolute harmony, is a mathematical impossibility. It could not happen. Then how do we account for the Bible? The only account or explanation is this: some were moved by the Holy Spirit and spoke from God. See 2 Peter 2:21.

Perfect

Perfect

The word "perfect" as the Bible uses it of men, does not refer to sinless perfection. The thought, usually, is completeness in all details or to reach a goal or achieve a purpose. Three stages of perfection are revealed:

(1) Positional perfection, already possessed by every believer in Christ. (Heb. 10:11)

(2) Relative perfection, (i.e. spiritual maturity), especially in the aspect of the will of God (Col. 4:12), love (1 Jn. 4:17-18), holiness (2 Cor. 7:1), patience (James 1:4), and every good work (Heb. 13:21). Maturity is achieved progressively, as in 2 Cor. 7:1, "perfecting holiness" and Gal. 3:3 "are ye now being made perfect?" This maturity is accomplished through gifts of ministry bestowed for the perfecting of the saints (Eph. 4:12).

(3) Ultimate perfection (i.e. perfection in soul, spirit and body, which will be realized at the time of the resurrection of the dead, Phil. 3:11).

For the believer, nothing short of the moral perfection of God is always the absolute standard of conduct.

Personal Devotion Essential to Outreach

Jesus, Jacob, Moses

Go hide thyself - Go show thyself

Suez Canal

[Explain the meaning of the plumier - Explain what it is and what it is not]

“Outreach”: To reach out farther than usual, to extend oneself. The second important word in the phrase is “devotion.” Devotion, in its highest form, means dedication, consecration, loyalty, and faithfulness.

Devotion means to apply oneself - one’s time and energy to one purpose or person. Brethren, when this first love, this agape love, for Christ is missing, then the spiritual power of the individual is greatly impaired. The effectiveness or the non-effectiveness of our outreach is measured by our love for Christ.

The title given in our address this evening expresses, in a very pertinent way, that personal devotion (holiness-homage-godliness) to Christ is essential before there can be an effective outreach into the world. The aforementioned is not the meaning most of us have of devotion. We talk of our devotions as meaning the short time we spend daily in reading and prayer. The real meaning of devotion is much deeper than this.

There are many brethren who are devoted to the Word. They are faithful and loyal to it. There are others who are devoted to the Lord’s service. They are consecrated to it. There are still others who are devoted to prayer.

They are dedicated to the prayer-life. But, there are comparatively few who are devoted to Christ.

Every spiritual believer deplores the lack of fruit in the lives of many in their fellowship. In other groups and in other places souls are being saved. What is the reason for this? We are putting our service for Christ above one love for Christ. In other words, we have become preoccupied with past accomplishments, present works, and future plans, more so than with Christ Himself. We are so busy serving the Lord that there is no time left for loving Him. If God were to describe the spiritual condition of many assemblies, He would write, "Thou hast left thy first love."

From the Scriptures, let us now see that it was only they who spent many hours of intimate fellowship with Christ who were used in reaching out to the world around.

Mary of Bethany: Each time we read of Mary she is at the feet of Jesus. In Luke 10:39 she is sitting, listening, and learning. In Luke 11:32 she is prostrate at His feet, weeping. In John 12, she is bowing, anointing His feet, worshipping. This is the kind of devotion that the Lord honors. He can use a sensitive soul like this. He can make use of one who has sat enthralled in His presence, listening and learning from Him. God will use the person who prostrates himself and mourns and weeps for sinners and erring saints. The Lord will honor the works and life of the one who bows at His feet and pours out his heart in worship. Success in the pulpit depends on travail in the closet.

In Matthew 26:13, the Lord said of Mary; "Truly I say unto you, wherever this Gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of

in memory of her.” This outpouring of Mary’s love has been spoken of throughout the world for almost 2,000 years and Christ has been magnified as saints in all generations have sought to emulate her example of worship.

How many of us know the sublimity, the excellence and the grandeurs of sitting-listening, learning, weeping, anointing, and worshipping the Lord alone in our homes and in our hearts? This attitude and the devotion to Christ, this dedication and sensitivity is what it is going to take to open the windows of heaven and call down the blessing. Unfortunately, most of us only know a tearless, passionless, and soulless ministry.

David Livingston wept for years for Africa and with God’s help opened up its bleeding heart, stopped slavery and won many to Christ. John Welch, an evangelist of last century, soaked his pillows as he pleaded for the dying souls of men. Andrew Bonar, one of the godliest men Scotland ever produced, wept with godly compassion as he saw his fellow Scots reject the Christ of the Gospel.

Do we mourn as we consider the anguished and distressed condition of North America?

Do we weep over the lost around us?

Do we grieve from a tortured heart over the many who have turned their backs on Christ?

Let me say, at this point, that there is a place of greater power than being at the feet of Jesus. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved in a special way. But more uniquely, he was the one who leaned on the Savior’s breast; of no other person was this ever said. John

gained and maintained this place of intimacy through personal devotion to Jesus Christ. He possessed a love which demoted everyone and everything to its rightful place. John maintained his first love for Christ till the day he died in exile.

The result of this personal dedication of himself - his time and energy to Christ - was the unsurpassed excellence of his writings. Millions, upon millions of people have been won to Christ through his Gospel. Multitudes of God's people have been sustained through his epistles. The world has yet to experience the shocking, terrifying and horrendous events of the Apocalypse. It was to John that was given the unique privilege of revealing Jesus as the Son of God. He also knew Him to be God (see John 1:1).

Let us now consider the cost of this personal devotion to Christ.

Consider the Lord. Before Moses was ready to deliver Israel from Egypt, he had to pay a price. There was his renunciation of the world. He forsook Egypt. Then there was his seclusion from the world: 40 years in the wilderness. During this time of separation, dedication, and consecration, the Lord broke him, molded him, and made him into a vessel prepared for the Master's use.

Moses reckoned that the recompense of the reward was greater riches than the pleasures and treasures of Egypt. Beloved, if there had not been on Moses' part; wholehearted devotion to God, the surrender of self-interests the dedication of his life, he could not have qualified as God's man to deliver Israel.

To be fruitful in our service we must spend long periods of time with the Lord, we must forsake all and follow

Him. [Describe how Moses got his shining face]. Paul is another example that personal devotion and sacrifice is essential to fruitful outreach. "Paul was a chosen vessel, to bear the Lord's name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Before Paul could reach out to the world with the Gospel, the Lord had to work in his life. To accomplish this he was led by the Lord into the Arabian Desert, where He revealed Himself to him and prepared him for his future service. In the solitude of the desert Paul communed with God, like the Psalmist his soul thirsted for the Lord, he longed to know the Lord. His whole being cried out for the living God, "As the deer panteth after the water brook." The Lord rewarded Paul's love and devotion by pouring Himself into him.

There were tremendous repercussions in Paul's life. Self was crucified, prestige was reckoned as garbage, human intelligence was jettisoned—he suffered the loss of all earthly attributes and possessions in order to win Christ and gain the excellencies of the knowledge of Jesus Christ (see Philippians 3). The result of Paul's devotion - dedication - and consecration was the revelation of the heart of God—the establishing of the missionary pattern for future generations—and a fruitful ministry among both Jews and Gentiles.

Many of God's effective servants while travailing in the presence of God have found themselves being broken and crushed under the mighty hand of God. This is a very necessary experience; before God can use us, He must break us. He must hone the precious, but rough, stone. He must hide us, cleanse, purge, and purify us to make us a polished shaft or arrow. God can use no other.

“A broken and a contrite heart, God will accept.” God can only use broken things. For example, Jesus took the little lads lunch bread and broke the bread; then and only then could it feed the crowd. Mary broke the alabaster box containing the precious ointment; only then was the Lord glorified, and its fragrance filled the whole house.

Jesus said, “This is my body which is broken for you.” Because His body was broken at Calvary there is salvation for lost men and women.

George Whitefield, one of the most successful evangelists of last century said “I have spent whole days and weeks prostrate on the ground in silent and vocal prayer.”

Jacob spent a whole night alone with God. Gideon’s men were the broken vessels.

There are two more instances which stress the truth that devotion to Christ and love for Christ are essential to reaching out in fruitful service: (1) The message to the Church at Ephesus, and (2) “I have somewhat against this, thou hast left thy first love.” This last verse discloses the rest of church and individual failure—heart departure from Christ. This church had lost its first love for Christ. They were sharing the love which they had reserved for Christ, with others, and with other things. Beloved, when first love for Christ is lacking, then the spiritual power of the individual life is gone.

Things may appear outwardly to be in good order, but the omniscient eye of God sees the real state of the heart. Describe the eye that burns like a furnace and penetrates into the deepest recesses of the heart. “The eye, which with a look can break the heart.”

The Ephesians still had affection for Christ. They liked Him very much. This condition was severely censured by God. Though they were doctrinally sound and functioning in a scriptural fashion, though they had judged evil and were actively engaged in the Lord's work. They were ineffective and were in danger of having the lamp stand removed.

This is the state most of us are in today. We need to repent, but we don't. This has resulted in God removing the lamp stand from our lives. The cooling of agape love is, despite the flurry of activity, the forerunner of apathy - an ingrown lack of vision and ineffectual outreach. Many today, are sinning as the Ephesians did, by putting their service for Christ above that love for Him.

Brethren, how many of us here love Christ with a self-denying love? Or with a love that abandons all for Him? The Lord asked Peter, "Lovest thou Me?" In today's language that would mean: "Do you love Me with all your heart?" or "Do you love Me more than anyone or anything in the world?" Beloved, devotion and love for Christ is more important than anything on earth. It is more important than the love of the Word, service, or prayer.

How would we fail tonight if the Lord were here in person and asked us personally, "Do you love Me more than anyone or anything in the world?" Well, He is here and is asking each of you if you really love Him. He is saying, "Do you love me more than your profession? Career? Ambition? Do you love Me more than your acquaintances, your friends, your father, mother, children and wife?"

It is only when we can say unreservedly, "Yes Lord, I love you with agape love. I love you with my whole heart. I love you more than anyone or anything in the world," that the Lord can flow through us in N.T. power to the world around. Our lack of agape love, our lack of devotion, dedication, and consecration to the Lord accounts for our lack of fruit in our outreach to the lost and erring.

Points of Interest in Jude

The believer's position in Christ:

- Sanctified by God
- Set apart and dear to Him
- Preserved in Jesus Christ
- Called

Jude 1:3-6 gives the reason for the writing of this book. It says, "Earnestly contend for the faith." Why should we do this? "Because some men have sneaked into the church unnoticed." They are ungodly. They abuse the grace of God (See Rom 6) and they deny or disown our only Master & Lord Jesus Christ. As it was then, so it is now.

The Sin and Destiny of Godless Men

In Jude 1:5-7, we have some historical instances of apostasy:

- Israel and their unbelief.
- Fallen angels and their rebellion/disobedience (see Jude 1:6).
- Sodom & Gomorrah and moral defilement/uncleanness (see Jude 1:7).

These examples give us a clear definition of apostasy.

Jude 1:8 gives a description of apostate teachers. These modern men are like the apostates of history. They pollute human nature, set authority at naught, and set at naught heavenly beings.

Jude 1:9-10 gives a warning against speaking evil of those in authority.

Jude 1:11 shows the way of Cain as self righteous and willful. It also mentions the error of Balaam, which was greed, and the rebellion of Korah, which was presumption.

Jude 1:12 gives further description of these godless men. They are rainless clouds, fruitless trees, raging waves, and stars that follow no orbit.

Jude 1:13-15 shows that there will be an end to these men.

Jude 1:16 describes these false teachers as being dissatisfied with life. They are guided by their own passions (libertines). They are orators who show respect unto some for the sake of advantage (flattering). (Remember the words of James)

The Perseverance of Believers

In Jude 1:17, Jude urges his readers to remember the words spoken and written by the apostles.

Jude 1:18 says the apostles affirm that there will be mockers in the last days who will obey their own ungodly lusts.

Jude 1:19 says that they will cause divisions. They will act as natural men, not possessing the Spirit.

Jude 1:20-23 reveals the Christian's conduct in light of this: Make the most holy faith the foundation of life, continue to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and keep within the love of God, where He can bless you, while awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you into the fullness of eternal life.

Our attitude to those caught up in this error:

Jude 1:22 says, "And on some have mercy, who are in doubt."

Jude 1:23 says, "Save others, snatching them out of the fire."

Jude 1:24-25 concludes with the benediction.

Qualification and Commitment

Qualification

The following is a description of the qualifications possessed by the men whom God used:

Moses

Moses renounced Egypt and the world and separated himself. "Hide thyself with God before showing thyself. The closet decided the success on the platform." He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughters, choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season. He esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith, he forsook Egypt (see Hebrews 11:24-27). The man whom God used to display His power in the Exodus was the man who spent forty years in the wilderness. To be a disciple one must take up his cross and follow. God demands and expects the same characteristics from those whom He will use today.

The Priesthood

Note the character and qualification of the priest's love (see Leviticus 8). Consider the physical qualifications in Leviticus 21. These would equate with moral and spiritual qualifications today. None with any blemish could serve or offer the bread of God (see 2 Timothy 2). One with a broken foot and broken hand could not serve God. Neither can anyone serve today whose walk is questionable, and whose service is impaired with sin. A dwarf was not allowed to serve. A dwarf is one who has

not developed properly. Despite this admonition, there are many who are dwarfs spiritually, though giants intellectually, who are seeking to serve God. Examples are those with light, but no life - form, but no power.

Consider what God does with those men who meet His moral requirements in Leviticus 8. First of all, they were cleansed (see Leviticus 8:6). They were washed with water. Secondly, they were clothed (see Leviticus 8:7-9, 13). They were suitably attired for God's service. The cleansing and the clothing took care of their outward appearance. Thirdly, there was sacrifice and the application of the blood to the tip of the priest's right ear, upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot. Fourthly, their hands were filled (see Leviticus 8:27-29). Finally, they were anointed with oil (see Leviticus 8:30).

This is a beautiful picture of the present process, which God uses to prepare His servants for His service. First, there is the cleansing by blood and the washing by water. Then, there is the anointing with blood, which was consecration of the total man. Thirdly, there is the anointing with oil, corresponding to the filling of the Spirit. Fourthly, there is the filling of the hands, which is service for God. Fifthly, there is a life of separation. God can really use only men with such qualifications.

Daniel

Another example of this principle is seen in the character of Daniel and the three Hebrew children (see Daniel 1). There was no blemish in any of these. They also purposed in their heart not to defile themselves with the king's food. The result of their total

abandonment to the will of God was that God used them mightily in His service. [Describe Daniel's service]

Other Examples

See the example of Paul in Philippians 3:7-14. See also how John leaned on the Savior's breasts. Note the result in his writings. Consider also the men whom God used to build the Tabernacle (see Exodus 31). There were others who had similar qualifications; these were the men God used to build His earthly house. God is still particular as to who should build His church (see Acts 6). Beloved, this principle has never been rescinded and God demands the same high standard from those who would serve Him today.

"I have called.

I have filled him with the Spirit of God.

Filled him with wisdom.

Filled him with understanding.

Filled him with all knowledge."

Commitment

See Romans 6:13 and Romans 12:12. According to Webster's dictionary and others, the meaning of commitment is, "a handing over; it is a yielding—a surrender; it is the giving of a binding pledge." The full implication of this commitment is experienced by a choice, and then a decision. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." "Yield yourselves to God." The commitment of Mary's life is a yielded life that is surrendered, relinquished, crucified, and delivered up. Romans 6:13 says, "Yield yourselves to God." On the pathway to complete surrender, we must first learn the

principle of being dead to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Secondly, the yielded believer has volitionally withdrawn the members of his body from the service of sin. See Hebrews 12:1-3. Thirdly, the committed believer has yielded himself to God. This yielding is a once for all decision. It is a calculated and deliberate choice, a handing over of oneself in an intelligent and decisive manner.

As we surrender, we swing wide the door of our life to receive and distribute the outpouring of God's presence and power. Romans 6:13 presents the believer with a challenge and leaves him with a choice. You may commit your life to Him now. In this audience there are those who have committed themselves and those who have not. Think for a moment of the possibilities of such a commitment.

Isaiah said, "Here am I send me."

Jesus said, "As the Father hath sent Me, so send I you."

Paul said, "What wilt Thou have me to do?"

Jesus also said, "Not My will but Thine be done."

The committed life is the life that God wants all of His children to have. It is an abundant life, which is of superior quality - a life that is not constricted, but overflowing. Therefore, when one yields or commits one's life, it is by deliberate choice to Christ as Lord and Master. The committed life is a dedicated life (see Romans 12:1-2). Our commitment is seen in our dedication.

Consecration is a filling of the hands with service unto the Lord. This can be seen in David's call to the nation. The Levites, at 25 years, began serving an

apprenticeship. At 30 years, they were devoted entirely to the Lord's service. The Lord is our perfect example. As the perfect Servant, He served God, even to death on the Cross. (See John 4:32, 34; John 17:4; The Psalms and Hebrews, "I come to do Thy Will.") In Romans 12:1, Paul urges each believer to commit his body to the Lord, in an unbridled, unblemished, and unbiased sacrifice to serve Him. Beloved, again, this is a volitional surrender. Consider how Ruth interacted with Naomi. This commitment is of the total man. It involves the intellect, the emotion, and the will. It involves the spirit, soul, and body. Consider the following lyrics of a well-known song:

"Take my life,
Take my hands,
Take my feet,
Take my voice,
Take my lips,
Take my silver and my gold,
Take my love my God I pour,
At Thy feet its treasure store,
Take myself and I will be
Ever only all for Thee."

The Apostle Paul

Paul is a good example of commitment. On the Damascus road he yielded his life to the Lord and said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" On subsequent occasions he describes himself as a "bond slave of Jesus Christ." As a slave, he had no rights; he belonged to the Lord in spirit, soul, and body. His ear had been bore

through with God's awe. He was branded for Christ. "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (see Galatians 6:17). His total commitment to Jesus Christ took him to a Roman prison, but he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ, never of Rome. His prison experiences were part of God's perfect will for him. With firm conviction that the circumstance that sought to overwhelm him was the will of God for him, he lived abundantly and victoriously. He used his circumstances to serve God and preach the Gospel (see Philippians 1:13).

Let us now look at the New Testament qualifications of the servants of God. Acts 6:3 says to look at men of good report; men filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Beloved, these are the standards God demands from His servants. Seven men were chosen at this critical period; each one met the divine standard. The first martyr is given special mention (see Acts 6:5). Before there could be this blessed spiritual condition, there had to be the art of full surrender, a complete abandonment of all personal and selfish interests. We cannot say, "Permit me first to go and bury my father." Nor can we say, "I have bought a piece of ground. I have bought five yoke of oxen. I have married a wife."

The result of the ministry of spiritually qualified, equipped and empowered men was two-fold (1) The Word of God increased and it became precious (see Acts 6:7). The believers read it, believed and obeyed. Both Church history and Old Testament history showed that every revival began with a return to the Word. (2) The number of disciples multiplied, and a great number of the priests believed. This is what triggered the great persecutions that took the lives of many church leaders

and many of God's dear people. The Church in Jerusalem entrusted Barnabas to investigate the happenings at Antioch. He had certain qualifications (see Acts 11:24). He was a righteous man. He was filled with faith and the Holy Spirit. This was the man God used to carry the Gospel into the uttermost parts. To be filled with the Spirit is a prime essential for any true servant of God.

The Lord's statement to His disciples and, subsequently, to those who would serve Him in the 20th century was revealed in Acts 1:8. It says, "Tarry, wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father." See Acts 1-4. Acts 1:8 says, "When He is come upon you, ye shall receive power. Then ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This is God's command and this is God's order. First, there is the filling of the Spirit and then the witnessing in the power of the Spirit. [Describe the change in the apostles and believers after they received the filling of the Spirit]

Quietness in the Presence of God

Quietness in the presence of God is essential for faithfulness in service. Paul was in the Arabian desert for three years. God revealed to him many precious truths, among which was the gospel. See Galatians. What is the gospel? See 1 Corinthians 15. A physical death, burial, and resurrection.

Psalm 103:1-5

Next to the 23rd Psalm, the 103rd is probably the most familiar in the entire Psalter. The thoughtful reading of these magnificent verses is enough to awaken the dormant heart to give praise, adoration, and worship to God. While David is obviously speaking to God, in a unique way he is also speaking to himself. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." He also is pointing the souls of every individual, including the hosts of heaven to "Worship the Lord."

This Psalm is a perfect expression of worship. No prayer is mentioned. As you read the Psalm you feel that David, in some sublime way, is being carried out of himself and unto the throne of God, to worship in the beauty of holiness. Since David's time, myriads of God's dear people have risen above their circumstances, entered through the veil, and worshipped God in spirit and in truth. This is a psalm of worship. Originally it was set to music and sung by the appointed singers. Today we sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with all our heart unto the Lord as an expression of our worship.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me
bless his holy name." "Our Father which art in heaven,

hallowed by Thy name." Venerated, revered, adored, worship be Thy name. "Bless the Lord" - glorify, extol, praise, exalt, honor. See Ephesians 1:3. This is the highest occupation of the believer. Some Christians reserve worship for Sunday morning. How wrong this is. We should worship the Lord everyday. The reason why our worship is sometimes shallow and disjointed on Sunday morning is because we do not worship throughout the week.

Note that this Psalm is occupied with the Lord. The chief occupation of a believer should be the contemplative adoration and praise of God. Psalm 27 says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord." Man's chief end is "to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Westminster Shorter Catechism Q & A1.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits." It is so easy to forget. That is one of the reasons that the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper- it is a remembrance feast, lest we forget. David gives five reasons why he should "bless the Lord."

(1) "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities" Note that it is the Lord who does all these things. He states that God forgives all sin. Not some, not many, but all. 1 John 1:9 says that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

(2) "Who healeth all thy diseases."

(3) "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction."

(4) "Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

(5) "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles." Was David talking

of his physical body or his physical mouth? David knew what it was like to grow old; but he had a youthful soul, even in old age, because the Lord satisfied his mouth with good things.

In order to illustrate this he mentioned the eagle that had its youth renewed. The eagle is a wonderful bird. It is the only bird that soars in a straight line. It is the only bird that can look at the glory of the sun and not be blinded by it; it does not even blink an eye. The eagle soars to great heights. In this it presents a wonderful picture of the redeemed soul.

The believer can go straight into the presence of God. He can look at the glory of the Son of God and not be blinded by the glory, in fact he rejoices in gazing on the dignity, majesty, and the solemnity of his glorified Savior. He is thrilled at the magnificence, splendor and the resplendence that surrounds him as he occupies the highest place in heaven.

Men have tried to find out the reason why the eagle lives so long. Among the things they have discovered is the fact that the eagle is able to masticate its food in old age. Some have also observed that when the eagle gets old its beak grows long, making it difficult to open its mouth. To obviate this difficulty, it takes its prey between its beak and dashes it against the rocks, breaking it into small pieces. What the eagle is doing is automatically breaking off its beak. It again becomes short and it finds that it can open its mouth like a young bird again. When the soul that waits upon the Lord is fed by the Word of God it will be sustained and its youth will constantly be renewed like the eagle's. See Isaiah 40:31.

Service and Communion

Luke 10:38-42

Martha, Mary and Lazarus lived here. Their home was ever open to the Lord. He was welcome there. What about your home? Is he a visitor? Or is he a resident?

Luke 10:38

The certain village was Bethany. The certain woman was Martha.

Luke 10:39

We are introduced to the second member of the family, Mary. She is introduced as the one “who sat at Jesus’ feet and heard his word.” In the three instances she is mentioned in Scripture she is at the Savior’s feet (Luke 10, John 11 & 12). See also Acts 22:3. Why did she adopt this posture? Learning, weeping, worshipping. She was a contemplative worshipper. To her, the Lord was unspeakably precious. She also was a learner, and her chief joy was to sit at His feet and take in the deep and intimate truths he revealed of himself and his redemptive work. There is nothing more important for spiritual growth than for the child of God to spend time at the feet of Jesus. In this way we will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

Luke 10:40

Martha did not understand Mary’s attitude. She was “cumbered with much serving.” Martha was too busy, over-occupied, and distracted with temporal things. In her confusion, she appealed to Jesus saying, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to prepare this

meal alone? Direct her to help me.” This is the cry of an overburdened and distressed heart.

Luke 10:41

The Lord answered her request, but not in the way she had hoped. “[Martha, Martha, you are apprehensive and worried about getting the meal ready for me and my disciples.]”

Luke 10:42

Mary has chosen the best and most important part; you must not tear her away from it. Food was necessary, and continues to be very necessary for the natural man, so we thank God for the Marthas. The good part that Mary enjoyed was her communion and worship with Him as she listened to His Word. In John 12 it is evident that she knew more about His Word than any of the disciples.

As she sat at His feet, she listened, learned, and worshipped. As she looked at the Lord with an unveiled face, she reflected on the glory of the Lord and was transformed into his own image from one degree of splendor to another, by the Spirit of the Lord.” See 2 Corinthians 3:18. Service is necessary, but service without communion is unfruitful.

We try to please Him with much serving, but I’m afraid that He will say to many of us: “You have spent so much time serving, but I would rather have had you at my feet. You were not there when I wanted to share many secrets with you.” May we learn the blessedness of communion with Him. Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His Word. Martha was distracted by her preparations for the Royal guest.

Luke 10:42

Our Lord prizes our affection above our service. Service can be tainted with pride. Occupation with Himself is the one thing needful, that good part that will not be taken away. The Lord wants to convert us from Marthas into Marys. The divine order here is that our first need is to sit at His feet and learn His will. Then, having learned His will, to go forth in the Spirit's power and edify and build up His ransomed Church.

Symbolically, this offering speaks of the moral perfection of the life of the Lord: Fine flour - Untainted by evil - No leaven - Fragrant to God - Frankincense - Filled with the Holy Spirit - Oil. In Luke 10:35 we have the Holy Spirit of God producing by divine power and creative energy, the body of the Lord Jesus in the virgin womb. At this time there was an actual conception that involved an absolute impregnation. The Lord Jesus was of the Virgin's substance, as to his humanity. His true Deity was to be united in such a way as to make one Person with two natures - God and man, human and divine.

Six Statements of Suffering

There are at least six statements which present a different facet of our Savior's suffering in the garden. The strongest words in the Greek language are used to describe this anguish.

(1) He became "exceedingly sorrowful." He was in the winepress.

(2) "He began to be sorely amazed." He was stunned - astonished. As He saw the ingredients of the terrible cup that was being prepared for Him, He was dazed and overwhelmed.

(3) "He began to be very heavy." Sorely troubled.

(4) "He was exceedingly sorrowful unto death." It was an unfathomable depth of anguish and sorrow.

(5) "He was in agony" or conflict, "and He prayed more earnestly." "He prayed with strong crying and tears." The powers of darkness closed in upon Him.

(6) His sweat was, as it were, like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Instead of His blood rushing to help His breaking heart, it forced its way through His pores.

Study on John 14:6

“I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.”

The Gospel of John is built around two groups of miracles: (1) The realm of words, and (2) The realm of works. John’s Gospel was not written to give a chronological exposition of the life of Jesus Christ, as the synoptics do. John’s purpose in writing was to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. John 19:31 says, “But these things are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name.” To fulfill this purpose, John chose seven miracles in the realm of words and seven in the realm of works.

The miracles in the realm of works are as follows:

1. The changing of water into wine (John 2:1-12)
2. The healing of the nobleman’s son (John 4:46-56)
3. The healing of the impotent man (John 5:1-16)
4. The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14)
5. Jesus walking on the water (John 6:15-21)
6. Jesus healing the man born blind (John 9)
7. Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11)

The miracles in the realm of words are as follows:

1. I am the Bread of Life (John 6)
2. I am the Light of the world (John 9)
3. I am the Door (John 10)

4. I am the Good Shepherd (John 10)
5. I am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11)
6. I am the Way (John 14)
7. I am the True Vine (John 15)

Calvary was less than a week away. The Lord was seeking to prepare the disciples for His departure from this scene. An event and crisis for which they were totally unprepared.

The question that Thomas asked in John 14:5, "Lord, we do not know where Thou goest; so how can we know the way?", was really Peter's question of John 13:36, "Lord where goest Thou?" Ignorance or unbelief had prompted these questions. The Lord had told them of His impending death, burial, and resurrection on at least three occasions. [Stress the great truth of the Gospel]

There are many perplexing questions which occupy the mind of man. Among the greatest of these is the question of the right approach or way to God. The Lord mentions two ways—The broad and narrow way. The shroud of confusion envelops many today in a mantle of darkness as they consider the devious ways that man's unbridled imagination has developed. [Mention a few: Cain - no sense of sin or need of atonement, mainline religions, cults - Agnosticism - Infant baptism]

Despite what the ingenuity of man has developed, and despite the slavish enthusiasm by which false propaganda is distributed, the Bible says that Jesus Christ is the only way to God and heaven.

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

“There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.”

“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved.”

In spite of this clear teaching many are still confused. On what are you depending for your salvation? “What can wash away my sin?” On whom are you trusting for your eternal destiny? “There’s only hope in trusting Jesus.” Professing to be and acting like a Christian will not save you. Consider Matthew 7:21-23, “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God. Not even some who will say—Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in Thy name, we have cast out demons, and we have done many wonderful works. Then I will say to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.’”

“Who then can be saved?” Those who are in the kingdom are those who do the will of My Father in heaven. It is the will of God that you should not perish, but that you should come to repentance. It is God’s will that you should believe and “receive Christ” as your Savior. In return for your faith—God will give you eternal life—an incorruptible inheritance that fadeth not away. “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.”

“Jesus is standing in Pilate’s hall:

“What shall I then do with Jesus who is called the Christ?”

“Oh what shall the answers be?”

“What will you do with Jesus—Oh what will the answers be.”

“I’ll just take Him home with me.”

The only hope of Christianity is in the rehabilitating of Paul’s theology. It is back, back, back to the incarnate Christ, the atoning blood, the glorious resurrection, or it is on, on, on to atheism and despair.

The word “believe” occurs in John’s Gospel, in its various forms 98 times. The word “life” occurs 55 times. John wrote—“These things are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name.” The fact is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. To be saved we must believe this fundamental truth, and in believing we will receive eternal life.

John declares in John 1:4, “In Christ was life, and the life was the light of men.” John establishes at the beginning of his Gospel that eternal life is in the Son of God. In John 3:14-16, he says, “And 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 teaches us here that eternal life is imparted to us through faith in the atoning work of the Son of God and that it is everlasting.

In John 5:24, he continues: “Verily, verily, I say unto you: He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life.” John declares at this point the glorious truth, that possession of eternal life through faith in the Son of God gives exemption from judgment. There has been a passing over from death in sin unto life in Christ. [Describe the penal judgment from which we have been delivered]

We are reminded in John 17:24 that the climax is reached when the Lord prays, "Father I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." So then the eternal life which the believer possesses through the Son of God is to be consummated in a heavenly glorification. Who can measure what is involved in such immensities? Yet how simple is the way into this eternal life.

"Oh how unlike the complex works of man
Heavens easy, artless unencumbered plan!

No meritricious graces to beguile

No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;

From ostentation as from weakness free,

Majestic in its simplicity.

Inscribed above the portal, from afar

Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,

Legible only by the light they give,

Stand the soul-quickenings words

Believe and live."

Taking Care of One's Self While Caring for the Flock

References Taken from the Book of Luke

The Prayer of our Risen Lord (Luke 24:50-53)

As Christ left His disciples, He lifted up His hands in priestly fashion and blessed them. He was carried up into heaven with uplifted hands. The Savior's attitude here reveals His relationship to His people in this age. It is an attitude of the fullness of His grace. The ascended Lord is blessing us, in His church, with all spiritual blessings.

The Struggle of Moses' Spiritual Survival - There were occasions when Israel rejected Moses' counsel, leadership, and authority. Even his own family rebelled against him. Consider the following examples:

Aaron's weak defection over the golden calf (see Exodus 32).

Miriam and Aaron's jealousy of his position as God's leader.

The criticism of his marriage (see Numbers 12).

Under pressure he cracked once (see Numbers 20:10). It is a wonder he did not break more often. What was his secret? He was a man of enduring faith in the invisible God (Heb. 11:27). He communed long and often with God. The Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend.

Finally, Moses admitted his limitations. "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because the burdens are too

heavy for me.” The Lord said: “Gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be elders of the people. I will take the Spirit which is upon thee and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee.”

Prayer Before Choosing the Twelve Disciples (Luke 6:12)

- This was a crisis of supreme importance. Christ continued all night in prayer. In this all night session, the Lord asked for infallible direction as to which He should choose to be His disciples. The choice was unprecedented in the world’s reckoning because they were poor, uneducated, and ignorant by the world’s standard - men most unlikely to succeed.

Consider the following: The quarrel between Barnabas and Paul over Mark. Man’s choice: Saul - But they were God’s men—men of God’s choosing. Consider also Samuel with Jesse’s son.

Prayer and The Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-29) - As our Lord prayed, the fashion of His countenance was changed, transfigured while praying —what a truth to ponder. Prayer can transfigure a person’s countenance and character. Prayer can fit him for every emergency. “Be not conformed to the world, be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” In the quietness Christ revealed His glory and power.

Lord, teach us to pray! Consider the art of prayer—the Lord knew how to pray. Prayer was the fountain of the Lord’s ministry—and it should be ours. We would be saved from many of the scars of life if we lived in perpetual communion with God. We should be changed into Christ’s glorious image and filled with His power.

Prayer for Peter's Preservation (Luke 22:31-32) - This is an example of intercessory prayer. The Lord prayed for Peter's protection in the hour of Satan's assault. Murry McChayne said, "If I could hear Jesus praying for me, I would not fear a thousand demons." Beloved, the Lord is praying for us; for "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." [Consider Moses praying in the mountain with Aaron and Hur and Joshua fighting]

Prayer in the Garden (Luke 22:39-46) - Here we find Jesus in an agony of prayer. This prayer is incomparable in its intensity (strong crying and tears). His sweat appeared as great drops of blood. This prayer fortified Him and enabled Him to go through with the work of redemption.

The Perpetual Ministry of Jesus Christ

As the Good Shepherd, He died for us.

As Bishop, He watches unceasingly over our souls (see Hebrews 4:15), carefully, continuously, and effectively.

As Priest (in this priestly work), He is the pattern for every elder.

Doing this kind of work for God can bring untold joy. I have no greater joy than to see my children walk in truth. On the other hand, it can ruin a godly man's spiritual perspective, especially when family and friends are involved. It can make a younger man age overnight. It can bring premature gray hairs as well as ulcers. Some good men have been lost to the assembly because of the abuse they have received while serving God and the Church.

How Can We Avoid Such Tragedies?

Let us look at how the Lord coped with the stresses while doing God's work: In Luke's Gospel the writer gives the picture of the perfect humanity of the Lord. It is not surprising that he reveals more of the prayer life of the Lord, than the other Synoptic Gospels. The parables in Luke show the Lord's concern for lost humanity (Recovering-Reclaiming-Restoring). This gospel of compassion manifests the Lord's sympathy for the broken-hearted, the sick, the mistreated, and the bereaved. Seven times, prior to the resurrection, we find the Lord at prayer (see Isaiah 40:31). Prayer preceded the great crises of our Lord's ministry.

Jesus Prayed at His Baptism (Luke 3:21-22) - No doubt His prayer had reference to His time in the wilderness. This communion with God brought Him forth triumphant, and Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit (see Luke 4:14 and Ephesians 6:12 - The Armor of God).

Jesus Prayed in the Wilderness (Luke 5:16) - The Lord withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. At this time, He was riding the wave of popularity. Hero-worshippers surrounded him. He saw Satan in the crowds. At a later date He said, "Woe unto you when men shall speak well of you." He escaped the perils of popularity by withdrawing into the wilderness to be alone with God in prayer. The tense of the phrase "withdrew Himself into the wilderness" suggests a habitual withdrawing. Our only escape from the pride of life is the desert and its prayer watch.

Tending the Flock (Isaiah 40:28-31)

The Good Samaritan exposed himself to extreme danger while helping an unfortunate fellow traveler. [Describe]

Then, finally, he brought him to the Inn, and “took care of him.” This same word occurs in 1 Timothy 3:5. The elder firstly has to take care of his own house, then to take care of the church of God.

See Isaiah 40:4, “As a good-shepherd he has to feed the flock, gather the lambs in his arms, carry them in his bosom. Gently lead those with young.” A true elder should take care of the wounded, comfort the distressed, and help those who fall into the hands of the enemy. Paul’s relationship to the Thessalonian church illustrates the character and work of a Scriptural elder. He was a mother to them - and a father, a brother, and a nurse. As such he loved them - He disciplined. He stood by them. He took care of them. He poured out his soul for them because he loved them.

When Paul addressed the elders of Ephesus, he exhorted them to function in two distinct spheres:

They were to “oversee” the church - to supervise the church. This is a tremendous responsibility. Couched within this sphere is the difficult area of authority. The assembly is not a democracy. It is a theocracy. With authority there comes discipline, in this area circumstances arise which are difficult to handle. For perilous times, see 2 Timothy 3:1.

They were to feed the church - they were to tend, pastor, and shepherd. Elders being apt to teach should feed the local church from the Word. Tending the sheep takes them into all areas of life. They descend into the valley seeking green pastures and still waters. They ascend into the lonely mountains seeking those who have gone astray. The Lord as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls is our example.

The Lord's Supper

Keeping the Ordinance (1 Corinthians 11:23-34) - Before and when we assemble to remember the Lord, there are four looks we should take. There must be preparation before there can be participation in a worthy way.

1. The Look-In

"Let a man examine himself (test...prove...approve)." See 1 Corinthians 11:28-29. There must be soul searching, introspection, and confession. This examination does not mean that we should stay away from the Lord's Supper. We should examine ourselves, get right with God, and get right with our brethren, and then partake. If we "examine" and "judge," God will not judge us. There will be a judgment (see 1 Corinthians 11:31). [There is the thought of confession and repentance].

Paul warns of the grave danger of partaking of the Lord's Supper in a way that is unworthy of Him (i.e. partaking while one's sin has not been confessed). Those who do are guilty of profaning and sinning against the body and blood of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:27). In 1 Corinthians 11:28, He asks each one who intends to participate to thoroughly examine himself and only when he has done so should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:29 indicates that those who participate indiscriminately will be judged by God and 1 Corinthians 11:30 gives us the nature of the judgment: weak, sickly death. Note the grave sin of not discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29).

Our self-examination will bring us to scrutinize certain areas of our lives:

1. We should examine our companions of the week.

Have they been the companions of them that fear Thee? (See Psalm 119:63) Or, were they numbered among those who are walking in the counsel of the ungodly - standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful? Psalm 1:3 "Come out from among them" (see 2 Corinthians 6:17).

2. We should examine our habits.

Do we love the world more than Christ? Colossians 3:2 says, "Seek those things above, not the things of the earth." Love not the world or the things of the world. See 1 John 2:15.

3. We should examine our thoughts.

Romans 12:2 speaks of the "Renewing of your mind." Proverbs 23:7 says for "as a man thinketh, so is he." Psalm 45 says, "Our hearts should be 'overflowing with a good matter.'" Psalm 63:6 and Psalm 104:34 say that we should "meditate upon Him day and night." Colossians 3:2 says that our "affections should be set on things above."

4. We should examine our motives.

Philippians 1:10 speaks of sincerity. On one occasion there were many who came to the feast, which Jesus would attend, but they came to see Lazarus when Jesus had risen from the dead. However, there were others who came and were very much in the minority with a single motive. "Sir, we would see Jesus" (see John 12:12-22). This self-examination, when executed properly, will not cause us to be absent from the Supper ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28). Instead we will be there, with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and

bodies washed in pure water, partaking for the glory of God (see Hebrews 10:22).

2. The Look Up: Divine Authority

“For I have received of the Lord, that which I delivered unto you (see 1 Corinthians 11:23). This is our authority for the Supper. It was instituted by the Lord and it was revealed to Paul by the Lord. Paul was not indebted to any man for his instructions regarding the breaking of bread ordinance. See Galatians 1:11-12 (“The Gospel”) and 1 Thessalonians 4:15 (“The coming”). His information was received, directly as a revelation from the ascended Christ. Moses received the pattern for the Tabernacle. David received the pattern for the Temple. Paul received the pattern for the Church.

He who requested the observance while on earth (see Luke 22:19-20), repeated the request from heaven. As 1 Corinthians 11:23 says, “For I have received of the Lord.” Peter, nor James, nor John mention the Supper in their writings. To Paul, it was the subject of a special revelation: “Look Up.”

The Lord expects His children to obey His request. This request is not an option, but an obligation. There are many who lay great emphasis on evangelism, but disregard the Lord's Supper. “Go ye” and “This do.” This feast must continue each Lord's Day, “until He come.”

3. The Look Back

1 Corinthians 11:26 says, “Ye do show the Lord's death.” At the Supper the Lord's death should occupy our minds greatly, but not exclusively. Luke 22:19-20 says, “This do in remembrance of Me.” We gather together to “remember the Lord” in all His glories and attributes,

but the central theme should be His death and resurrection.

We should never leave the Remembrance Feast with Christ still on the Cross or in the Tomb - but glorified at God's right hand. The contemplation of the suffering of Christ is of tremendous importance in our worship.

These are in three distinct areas:

- The soul sufferings in the Garden (see Mark 14 and Luke 22)
- The physical sufferings during the hours of daylight (The Cross)
- The spiritual sufferings during the hours of darkness (The Cross)

The physical sufferings (the beatings) are revealed in Isaiah 30:6, which says, "Back to the smiters - face to them that plucked off the hairs - hid not my face from shame but spitting." Isaiah 52:14 says, "Visage so marred more than any man - His form marred more than the son of men." John 19:5 says, "Behold the Man." Isaiah 53:5 says, "He was wounded for our transgressions." Consider the spiritual sufferings. [The grape in the winepress - The bread in the oven].

Psalm 69:1 "Save Me, of God, for the waters are come into My soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, where the floods overflow Me."

Isaiah 42:7 "All Thy waves and billows of Thy wrath are gone over Me."

Psalm 42:7 "My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Isaiah 53:5 "He was bruised for my iniquities."

When we gather around the Lord to remember Him, we should at least grasp a part of the divine mystery of the atonement and the reconciliation. We should consider the Lord as the Burnt Offering, the Sin Offering, the Trespass Offering, the Meal Offering, and the Peace Offering. "Oh make me understand it; help me to take it in."

4. The Look On

"Till He come" - 1 Corinthians 11:26. We should each eat the Supper in anticipation of the Lord's return. We are to be as those "who wait for the Lord." One day in the not too distant future the symbols will give place to substance, faith to sight. Every time we meet we say to an unbelieving world - to hostile powers around us and to the reinforcement of our mutual faith, "Maranatha! The Lord is coming." [Describe 1 Thessalonians 4]. The benefits we will derive at His coming: We shall be with the Lord...all our tears will be wiped away—no more death—no sorrow—no crying or pain; we shall see the Lord's face and we shall reign forever with Him.

Brethren, the feast on earth is not the first banquet. There yet remains the marriage supper of the Lamb (see Revelation 19:9) and then to enjoy the Lord forever and forever. These are some of the thoughts that should fill our minds and thrill our hearts as we gather around the Lord to break bread and partake of the cup.

"Feast after feast thus comes and passes by

Yet passing points to the glad feast above;

Giving sweet foretaste of the festal joy;

The Lamb's great bridal feast of bliss and love."

The Battle of the Kings

Genesis 14:1-12

Introduction and Overview

The marauding kings mentioned in Genesis 14:1 came from a region beyond Damascus. They swooped down upon the country east of Jordan toward the Salt Sea. There, they defeated the rebellious kings mentioned in Genesis 14:2. The battle took place in the vicinity of the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea, at the water's surface, is 1,292 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. Some parts of the Dead Sea are 1,200 feet deep, making it the lowest body of water in the world. The water is five times stronger in saline content than ordinary seawater.

The conflict is described in Genesis 14:8-12. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, and their allies, were directly involved. The battle took place in the valley of Siddim, a valley full of slime pits (Bitumen pits). As the allies' army was trying to escape the enemy's attack, they fell into these holes and were destroyed. It was an hour of disaster for the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. Both cities were plundered, and the invaders left with much loot and many prisoners. Lot was among the prisoners, along with his family and possessions.

In Genesis 14:13-16, Abraham enters the picture. News of the defeat reached Abraham in Hebron, the place of fellowship. Upon hearing the news of the defeat and of Lot's capture, Abraham mobilized an army of 318 men who had answered the call. Abraham's men took the enemy by surprise at Dan, a town on the northern

boundary of Canaan. After engaging the enemy of Dan, they pursued them to Hobah, a city 100 miles away. Abraham and his men defeated the enemy and recovered all that had been taken, including Lot and his family.

Lot and Abraham - Compared and Contrasted

Let us now focus our attention on those two contrasting characters: Abraham and Lot. Abraham was a man of faith and a man of God. He was a pilgrim and a stranger who lived in a tent. Lot was motivated to enter Sodom for both personal and family reasons. He finally obtained his goal by becoming a judge in the city. Though Sodom was a city full of idolatry, he did not go into the city to testify against this horrendous sin. Instead, his family most likely became accustomed to worshipping at the world's shrines. We must ask the question, "What testimony had he in the city?" Absolutely none. Settling in Sodom was instead the death-blow to his testimony.

In this spiritually unhealthy condition, Lot found out, as many others since have found out, that the way of transgressions is hard. See Proverbs 13:15. Some examples of this solemn truth can be seen through the experiences of Moab, Ruth, and Elimelech. This truth is further testified to in the New Testament. In 1 John 2:15-17, John commands that we not love the world. In the same passage, he also reveals the repercussions of forsaking God. In addition, in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul reveals the blessings of following God.

In contrast to Lot, Abraham, the man of God, was truly separate from the world. Genuine separation from the world can only be attained through deep communion with God. Because he was truly separate from the world,

he was able to render assistance to one who had become entangled in it. He disapproved of what Lot was doing, but he still counted him a brother. See Galatians 6:1, "Brother Saul."

Genesis 14:17 and Genesis 14:21 describe Abraham's meeting with the king of Sodom. The king of Sodom, who must have escaped the enemy, came out to Abraham to express his thanks. When the king said, "Give me the prisoners; you take the spoil," note Abraham's answer in Genesis 14:22-24.

Abraham refused to be enriched by a worldly monarch; he took nothing that belonged to the Gentiles. He refused to be associated with the world, and he refused to compromise with it. Through him we learn that we must beware of advances by the enemy. The only way to receive the full blessing from God, to win the lost, and to deliver a fallen saint from the world, is to be completely separated from it.

Further examples of this separation can be seen in Aaron and his sons, the Levites, and Israel, all of whom were told, "come out." Barnabas and Saul's lives further reveal that the path of separation is the path of power. The world, in all its forms, is the instrument of Satan to weaken the hands and win the affections of God's dear people. We are told, "love not the world." In the time of temptation may we remember this command.

As Abraham is a picture of true separation, he is also a picture of true faith. By looking at Abraham, we find there are three things that faith does: (1) it purifies the heart, (2) it works by love, and (3) it overcomes the world. Each of these attributes is clearly seen in Abraham: His heart was purified from Sodom's

pollution. He manifested genuine love to his brother, Lot. Finally, he was victorious over the enemy kings. Faith gives the victory, and faith overcomes the world (see 1 John 5:4).

Abraham and Melchizedek

Abraham's meeting with the mysterious king is described in Genesis 14:10-20. The king was Melchizedek, a king who is somewhat of a mystery. He briefly appears on the papers of human history and then disappears just as quickly. Centuries later, he is mentioned by the Psalmist David in Psalm 140:4. Then after almost a millennium, he resurfaces in the Hebrew epistle.

The writer here gives us some historical facts about this king. He was the king of righteousness, the king of Salem and the king of peace. He was the priest of the Most High God, and he combined the offices of priest and king. He was without a father, mother, or genealogy, having neither beginning nor end of life. Melchizedek was a great man.

The Jews believe that Abraham was the greatest of all the patriarchs. But here we see that Abraham, the lesser, gave a tenth part of the spoils to Melchizedek, who was greater. It is also significant to note that Melchizedek blessed Abraham (see Genesis 14:10-20). When Abraham was tired and weary, Melchizedek ministered to Abraham. He gave him bread to strengthen him and wine to cheer him. Then he blessed him in the name of the Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth. A man who was blessed by the Most High God did not need to take anything from the world. If the Possessor of the heaven and earth himself was

Melchizedek's portion, he did not need the goods of Sodom. From him we learn that when we take things from the world, the enemy of the Lord, we reveal that we are not satisfied with our portion in Him.

The inspired writer to the Hebrews makes Melchizedek a type of the Lord Jesus: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7:11). As a priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek met the needs of Abraham and his weary men. As our Great High Priest, the Lord can meet the needs of all His children.

The Aaronic priesthood was temporary. It terminated in death. The Lord Jesus' priesthood is forever, "He abideth a priest for ever." The everlasting character of the Lord's priesthood is typified in the fact that Melchizedek is described as having the father and mother without the genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. Likewise, our Lord Jesus has a continual and unchanging priesthood. Therefore, as Hebrews 7:25 says, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

The Body of Christ

Ephesians 4:7-16

Ephesians 4:7 - The truth of the unity of the body of Christ has a twin truth, namely the diversity of its members. Each member has a particular role assigned. No two members are alike, and no two have the same function. The part to be played by each one is assigned according to the measure of the gift of Christ, that is, He does as He sees fit. As each member fulfills his appointed work, the body of Christ grows both spiritually and numerically. The grace mentioned here would be the unlimited strength and wisdom, commensurate with the gift received.

Ephesians 4:8 - In order to assist each believer to find his gift and use it, the risen Lord has given special gifts to the church that have the ability to encourage and inspire (see Eph. 4:11). These particular gifts should not be confused with the gifts mentioned in the previous verse. Every believer has some gift (see Eph. 4:7), but not everyone has the gifts named in Eph. 4:11. These are special gifts designed for the growth of the body.

The Giver of those special gifts of ministry is the risen, ascended, glorified Lord Jesus. The picture here is that of a victorious king ascending the mountains of the Lord in triumphal procession, followed by a long train of captives. As he ascends He bestows gifts on some of those who line the processional route.

Ephesians 4:9-10 - This glorious One who ascended is the same One who descended into the lower parts of the earth. We know this is exactly what happened. The Lord

Jesus descended to Bethlehem's manger, then to the death of the Cross and to the depth of the grave. "The lower parts of the earth" have sometimes been taken to refer to Hades or hell. But the interpretation would not fit the context here. His ascension necessitated a previous decent to earth, but not to hell. In addition to this, the Scripture indicates that Christ's spirit went to heaven, not to hell when He died. The New English Bible translates this verse, "Now the word ascended implies that He also descended to the lowest level, down to the very earth."

The One who descended from heaven is the same One who conquered sin, Satan, Demons, and death, and who ascended above the atmosphere and stellar heaven that He might fill all things. He fills all things in the sense that He is the source of all blessing, and the supreme sovereign over all. There is not a place between the depth of the Cross and the heights of glory that He has not filled. The central thought of verses 8-10 is that the Giver of the contextual gifts is the ascended Christ. There were no such gifts before He went back to heaven.

Ephesians 4:11 - The names of the gifts are now given. To our surprise we find that they are men, not with natural endowed talents, but men spiritually able (see 1 Corinthians 12). "He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets; and some to be evangelists; and some to be pastors and some to be teachers." The first apostles were men who were commissioned by the Lord to preach the Word and to plant churches. They were men who had seen Christ in resurrection (see Acts 1:22). They had power to perform miracles (see 2 Corinthians 12:12). Together with New Testament prophets their

ministry was concerned with the foundation of the Church (see Ephesians 2:20). We must not confirm the thoughts of apostles to the twelve disciples or apostles. There were others, and Paul is the classic example. In 1 Thessalonians 2:6, Paul links Silas, Silvanus, and Timothy as apostles with himself.

Prophets

Prophets were the spokesmen and mouthpieces of God. They received direct revelations from the Lord, and passed them on to the Church. What they spoke by the Holy Spirit was the Word of God. In the primary sense we no longer have apostles and prophets. Their ministry ended when the foundation of the Church was laid and when the NT scriptures were completed. These were not Old Testament prophets; they were New Testament prophets given by Christ to the Church after His ascension.

Evangelists

An evangelist is one who preaches the Gospel. They are divinely equipped to win the lost for Christ. They have special, supernatural ability to diagnose a sinner condition, to probe the conscience, to answer objections, to encourage decisions for Christ, and then to help the new convert to feel assurance through the Word. Evangelists should go out from the local church, preach to the world, then lead their converts to a local church where they will be fed and encouraged.

Pastors

Pastors are men who serve as under-shepherds of the sheep. They guide and feed the flock. This is a ministry of wise counsel, correction, encouragement, and

consolation. The work of a pastor is closely related to that of an elder. The principle difference is that a pastor is a gift to the Church from the glorified Christ, whereas the elder is not. The New Testament pictures several pastors in a local group (see Acts 20:17, 28). In 1 Peter 5:1, Scripture portrays, rather than one pastor of presidency, multiple elders.

Teachers

Teachers are men who are divinely equipped and empowered to explain what the Bible says, to interpret what it means and then to apply it to the hearts and consciences of the saints. One evangelist can preach the gospel from a passage out of context. The teacher shows how the passage fits into the context.

There are some who believe that pastors and teachers are listed together in this verse. Some conclude that only one gift is mentioned, that of pastor-teachers. But a man may be a teacher without having the heart of a pastor. A pastor may be able to use the Word without having the distinctive gift of teaching.

Finally, we should be careful to distinguish between divine gifts and natural talents. No, unsaved person, however talented, can be an evangelist, pastor or teacher in the New Testament sense. Neither can a Christian, unless he has received any of these particular gifts. The gifts of the Spirit are supernatural. They allow a man to do what would be humanly impossible for him.

Ephesians 4:12 - We now come to the function and purpose of the gifts; "They are for the perfection of the saints unto the work of ministry, for the purpose of edifying the body of Christ." This is the process: The pastors and teachers encourage and equip the saints.

The saints then serve in the assembly and build up the body in the process. This ministry is not a special occupation limited to men of professional training. The work of ministry simply means service. It includes every form of spiritual service. This teaches us that every believer should be in the ministry.

The gifts of being an evangelist, pastor, and teacher are given to perfect and equip all believers to serve the Lord, and in so doing build up the body of Christ. These gifted men should not serve in such a way as to make people perpetually dependent upon them. Instead they should work toward the day when the local company would be able to carry on by themselves. Limitation of Christian service to a select class of men, hinders the development of God's people, stunts the growth of the church, and stifles the cause of world evangelism.

Ephesians 4:13 - How long will the growth process continue? The answer is until we all come to unity, maturity, and conformity.

Unity: When the Lord calls His church home to heaven, we will all have arrived at the unity of the Lord. We will also reach the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God.

Maturity: It will be full and complete maturity. At the rapture we will reach full growth or maturity. As individuals and as the body of Christ we will achieve perfection of spiritual development.

Conformity: In that glorious day when we see our blessed Lord, we will experience unity of faith, unity of knowledge, we will reach perfection, and finally, we will be a perfect replica of Christ our Lord.

The universal church will be a full-grown body, perfectly suited to its glorious Head. It will display the fullness of Christ in the Church itself, the fullness of Himself who fills all in all. The measure of the stature of the church means its complete development, the fulfillment of God's plan for its growth.

Ephesians 4:14 - When the gifts operate in their God-appointed manner, and the saints are active in service for the Lord, three dangers are avoided: immaturity, instability, and gullibility.

Immaturity: One thing a believer should avoid like a plague is remaining in a state of spiritual infancy. Believers who never become involved in aggressive service for Christ can never emerge from spiritual childhood. They remain undeveloped through lack of exercise.

Instability: These individuals are tossed to and fro, and are carried about with every wind of doctrine. Teachers should teach to bind the saints, to build them up, to establish them in divine truths. He should preach to strengthen, fortify, and establish the saints in the faith.

Gullibility: Children are gullible and easily deceived. Immature believers, spiritual babes in Christ stand in the serious danger of being deceived. Their senses are not exercised to discern between good and evil (see Hebrews 5:13-14). They are impressed with the great and apparent sincerity of the cultist. Because he quotes scripture and uses religious phraseology, they assume that he must be a Christian. If they themselves were grounded in the Word, they would discern the craft, the cunning, and the insidious subtlety of the deceptive words.

May God, by His Spirit through the Word, build us up into mature, strong, spiritual believers.

Ephesians 4:15 - The last two verses in the paragraph describe the proper process of growth in the body of Christ. First of all, there is the necessity of doctrinal loyalty and adherence. "Holding the truth," means there can be no compromise in the fundamentals of the faith. Second, there must be a right spirit that is, "Holding the truth in love." Truth is the element in which we are to live, move and have our very being. But truth must be irreparably joined to LOVE. The impact of the message can be destroyed by the discordant spirit of the messenger.

The growth of the Body is assured as the evangelist brings in the lost, the pastors shepherd the flock, and the teacher teaches the deep truths of God. These gifted men equip the saints—the saints then engage in active service, and they "grow up into Christ in all things." In all things, in every area of our lives, we become more like Him. As the Head has His way in the Church, His body will give a more accurate picture of Him to the world.

Ephesians 4:16 - The Lord Jesus is not only the goal of growth, He is the source of growth as well. From Him the whole body maketh increase of the body. The marvelous integration of the members of the body is described in the phrase "fitly joined together." This is a tremendous truth; it means that every member is exactly designed for his own place and function. Each one is perfectly joined to every other member so as to make a complete living organism.

The importance and indispensability of every member is not indicated. "Compacted by that which every joint supplieth." The human body consists primarily of bones, organs and flesh. The bones are joined together by joints and ligaments. Each joint and ligament fulfills a role in the growth and usefulness of the body. So it is in the body of Christ. Every member is needed; even the most humble believer is necessary. As each believer fulfills his God-given role, the body grows harmoniously.

The body makes increase of the body. This means that the body itself stimulates the growth as the members feed on the Word, spend time in prayer, in worship, and witness for Christ. The Church, like the human body, is self-developing. In addition to the growth in size, there is a building of itself in love. There is a mutual concern for one another. As the believers abide in Christ, and fulfill their proper function in the church, they grow closer to one another in love and unity.

The Christian Home

The Importance of the Home

One of the ten reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire, given by the secular historian, Gibbons, was the break up of the family unit. The family unit is one of the most important institutions of our civilization. The bulwark of the nation is the united family. If the solidity and sanctity of the home disappears, then the nation disintegrates. The same is also true in regard to the assembly.

Children raised by godly parents will be the backbone of the future assembly. Our future leaders will come from homes like these. God, in His Trinitarian nature, should be known intimately in the Christian home. He should be revered and worshipped. The Lord Jesus should be the head of the household, not a guest.

In this kind of home each family member works together. The love of God is experienced and shared by each member. The Word of God is read and obeyed. Prayer and praise to God is heard. Such a home becomes a Bethany, the nearest thing to heaven on earth.

At this point I want to address four pertinent questions. They are:

1. How can we lead our family by example? In reframing this question, I would say that you can only lead your family by example.
2. How can we lead by teaching?
3. How can we lead through prayer?

4. How can we lead in family devotions?

Parents should view themselves as priests. They are called upon to present God to their children. They do this principally through example. They love God with all their hearts, their soul, and might. Then they show that love to their children. They demonstrate a living, vibrant relationship with the Lord.

Children appreciate sincerity. They despise a phony or a hypocrite, who sits for hours watching T.V. and then spends a few hurried minutes in family worship. Dad and Mom's constant prayer should be, "Lord, make me real." We should teach our children through the Word, using material to suit their age group and their attention span. "And that from a child thou hast known the Scriptures."

Read Deuteronomy 11:18-21. These are the conditions God would like to see in every home. He desires that the Scriptures be laid up in every parent's heart and in evidence in their lives. He would desire that the Scriptures are placed in strategic places, readily available to the curious young mind. "Train up a child in the way."

Parents, as priests, should represent (and present) their children before God. There is no substitute for effectual, fervent prayer. Prayerlessness should not be the case. Pray with and for your children and encourage them to pray with you. Husbands should pray for their wives, and wives for their husbands.

Some things to avoid:

- A set of dry rules and regulations.
- A stern and uncompromising moralism.

- A dreary round of formal religious duties, performed with no excitement and no real joy.

Every home should have a family altar. A look into a humble Jewish home on the Passover night would reveal an unusual sight; the family would be standing around a rough table. With staff in hand and well shod feet....they feast on the roast lamb. This is a true picture of the ideal Christian home. It should consist of the whole family, young and old, feeding upon Christ, the Lamb of God. The Jewish father portioned out the roast lamb to the household. The Christian father should share the person of Christ with his family. If the father is derelict in his duty, the mother should take over.

The Lord Jesus' name should be a household word. He should be the center and circumference of the family activities. The family who meets God regularly in prayer stays together. Parents who pray with their children and teach them the Word and, in the process, exude the joy and ecstasy of Christ are making lasting impressions and forming the character of their children. The future men and women of God come from homes that share and participate in family devotions. "Take this child and nurse it for Me."

In contrast we cannot be careless about these things. Take the following as examples:

- Lot, the backslider, lost his fortune, his family, and almost his faith in Sodom.

- The four tragedies in the patriarch Isaac's home - (1) Rebekah's partiality to Jacob. Isaac loved Esau. (2) Jacob's covetousness. He obtained Esau's birthright for a mess of pottage. (3) Esau's lack of self-control, and (4) Isaac's family breaking up.

- Eli, the priest, put his two sons before God (see 1 Samuel 2:29-30). His heart and neck were broken for his sin. 1 Samuel 2:30 says, "Them that honor Me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Our priorities should be first God, then our spouse, and then our children.

The Christian Home (Ephesians 5)

An interesting truth emerges as we study the New Testament regarding men who were brought to Christ. The home became their first sphere of testimony:

- The demoniac man, recently healed was told by the Lord "To go home." (Mark 5:19)
- When Peter left his fishing he took the Lord home. (Mark 1:29)
- The Philippian jailer, after his conversion, turned over his home to the Lord. (Acts 16)

An open home for the Lord and His people is the stamp of reality of our faith in Christ. (Lydia - Acts 16). The greatest honor that a family can have is to have the Lord dwelling in their home.

Our Conduct in the Home

Ephesians 5:2 "Walk in love, as Christ has loved us."

First: Love. This is the first requirement of an ideal Christian home. That same love that thrilled you and prompted you to ask your partner to marry you, should be constantly displayed in the home. Our love for each other should be similar to the love Christ has for us. It is into such a home that Jesus will come, making it a veritable heaven upon earth.

Things to Avoid

Paul is very realistic in his code of conduct for the home. No foolish talking nor jesting, these things are not fitting to a Christian home (Ephesians 5:4). We should not

criticize another person, nor speak of the work at the Chapel in a condemnatory way before our children.

The secret of a good marriage is when both parents are under the control of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Be filled with the Spirit." If we are filled with the Holy Spirit certain things will emerge in our home. Ephesians 5:19 talks about speaking to one another in psalms and singing and making melody with all your heart.

- Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks for all things.

- Ephesians 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

- Ephesians 5:22 Wives submit yourselves unto your own husband as unto the Lord.

Abraham Lincoln wrote:

The woman was not taken from Adam's feet, we see

So we must not abuse her -- the meaning seems to be.

The woman was not taken from Adam's head, we know

To show that she must not rule him -- 'Tis evidently so.

The woman -- she was taken from under Adam's arm

So she must be protected -- from injuries and harm.

Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands love your wives," even as Christ. We, husbands, should love our wives as Christ loved the church and if necessary give our life for her.

The result of a marriage in the Lord is that two persons become one (Ephesians 5:31). One in person - in spirit - in purpose - one in the Lord, just as Christ and the Church are one (Ephesians 5:32)

Paul continues with Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers do not provoke your children," and Ephesians 6:1, Children obey your parents in the Lord. In closing Paul outlines the solemn duties of the spiritual wife and mother:

She should be sober minded (i.e. serious).

She should love her husband and love her children.

She should be sensible, discreet, a homemaker, and kind and obedient to her own husband.

A home based on these principles will never falter nor fail - it will stand the test of time and the storms of life. From such a home will come men and women of God.

The Compassionate Jesus Cares for His People

God cared for Israel in the wilderness, and He always met the needs of the multitudes. Jesus also provided and cared for the people listening to him and the people He met in His earthly ministry. In the miracle of the loaves and the fish, Jesus multiplied the amount of food so that He could feed all who were present hearing His teaching. (See Matthew 15) He also met the needs of Peter and Himself when they owed the temple taxes. He tells Peter, "Cast in a hook and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money, take that and give it to them for me and you." (Matthew 17:27) Jesus can always meet our need. In Matthew 6:25-29, Jesus teaches, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing?"

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Jesus indeed cares for all of creation, even caring for each sparrow and creature on earth. (See Matthew 10:29-31) He has even numbered the hairs of our head! We should remember and acknowledge that He takes care of all His people today. In Isaiah 40:11, we

see Jesus compared to a good shepherd that takes care of His sheep. It says, "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young." God also promises us that "when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned." (Isaiah 43:2)

The Lord shows his infinite compassion for the sorrowing as well. Even in our sorrow, we know that because of our hope in Christ, "weeping may endure for night, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5) Jesus transforms the valley of weeping into the valley of springs. (See Psalm 84:6) In Isaiah 61:3, we are told that the Spirit of the Lord comforts those who are grieving and sorrowful, consoling "those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." The words of the poet Robert Browning Hamilton teach us that these sorrowful and suffering experiences God places us in at various times can be the optimal situation for growing and learning. He wrote, "I walked a mile with pleasure; she chatted all the way. But left me none the wiser for all she had to say. I walked a mile with sorrow and ne're a word said she; but oh, the things I learned from her when sorrow walked with me."

Most importantly, we know that Jesus can empathize and truly understand our pains and trials because of His very own earthly life in which He walked with us and suffered for us! We can see Him as our great High Priest, having atoned for our sins and interceded for us. Hebrews 2:17-18 describes this: "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a

merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Many people today might ask themselves, “Does Jesus care?” When we look at the way He had compassion on His people, and the Scriptures that testify to His care of even the smallest details, we know that He indeed does care infinitely for our needs and sorrows. In Hebrew 4:15-16, we are told, “we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Not only does Jesus know and understand our lives and weaknesses in our humanity, but He also loves us still, and came here to live on Earth as we are living now! In Isaiah 40:31, we are told, “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Let us go back and look at the example with Peter and Jesus’ incident with the temple tax that was owed. The Lord knew which exact fish had the coin in its mouth, and He knew the location of that exact fish. He also knew it would be the first fish Peter would catch at that exact moment. This incident demonstrates Christ’s omniscience in all of creation. In Luke 5:5-8, we see Christ also knowing that His disciples would catch multitudes of fish at an exact moment and location on His command. Again, in John 21:6, we see a similar incident with Jesus commanding His disciples to cast their fishing nets off the right side of their boat, which

yields a great number of fish. He knew the exact location, time and circumstance in which the disciples would be able to catch these fish, and provided for them in their need. In much the same way, God holds the key to our lives and orders our every step.

In Psalm 139:1-4, we see that the Lord indeed knows and ordains our every move and each detail of our lives: "O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; you understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, you know it altogether." He programs our life, and He knows every path we take and all the things we do before we do them. As an example of this in Scripture, look at Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well in Samaria. He knows that she has had five husbands and that the man she lives with is not her husband. (See John 4:17) He knows her entire situation without seeing it firsthand, because He is the omniscient God. Even the color of our hair, skin, eyes, facial features, natural abilities, and all that pertains to our mental and physical state that existed in our embryo in germ form - the Lord Himself intimately knows this.

If we think about the Christian faith, we know that the heart of it is the Bible itself, and the heart of the Bible is what happened on the cross and thereafter. The heart of the cross is actually the very heart of God! God knows and understands all of what we have and will experience in our lives through His Son on the cross, continually showing compassion to the faithful. Let us rejoice in what happened there on the cross, remembering the words of the hymn, Hallelujah for the Cross: "The cross

it standeth fast, hallelujah. Defying every blast. The
winds of hell have blown. The world its hate hath shown.
Yet, it is not overthrown. Hallelujah for the cross!"

The Deity of Christ

Christ is called God...

By the apostle John in John 1:1 - "And the Word was God."

By Thomas in John 20:18 - "My Lord and my God."

By God, the Father, in Hebrews 1:8 - "Thy throne, O god, is forever and ever"

The Lord himself claimed to be God in that he was with the Father before creation.

John 17:8 "Now glorify me together with thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

He received worship, and only God is to be worshipped.

Matthew 14:35 - "Those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'you are certainly God's son.'"

He forgives sins.

Mark 2:5-11 "Only God can forgive sin"

He is the creator and maker of all things.

Colossians 1:16 "For by him all things were created in heaven, on earth, visible, invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities, all things were created by him and for him."

He is the sustainer of all things.

Hebrews 1:3 "He upholds all things by the word of his power."

He walked on the blue water of Galilee. The winds and the water obeyed His command. He healed the sick, raised the dead, and gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. He cast out demons and made the lame to walk. He turned water into wine, and fed five thousand with a little boy's lunch.

The Fullness of the Holy Spirit

The fullness of the Holy Spirit is a continuous appropriation of a continuous supply from Jesus Christ Himself. It is a moment-by-moment faith in a moment-by-moment cleansing. The moment I begin to believe, that moment I begin to receive, and as long as I go on believing, I go on receiving. Paul promises this ongoing transformation occurring in our lives as a result of the Spirit's ministry, saying, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Let us look at some examples in the Scriptures where we see the Holy Spirit at work. First, in Luke 1:34, we see the immaculate conception of the Lord Jesus in the womb of Mary, who is incredulous at the announcement by the angel. The angel has just told her that she will bear a son. She says, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" The angel replies that the Holy Spirit "will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) Then the angel recalls the situation of Elizabeth, whose story appears in the beginning of Luke 1. Elizabeth has been barren for some time, and yet the Lord provides them with a son who comes to be known as John the Baptist. (See Luke 1:7) The angel promises Mary, "With God, nothing is impossible!" (Luke 1:37) Hearing this, Mary accepts the word from the angel, knowing that it comes from the Lord. She says, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." This

consecration through the Holy Spirit's work results in the birthing of the Christ, our Lord Jesus.

A second instance occurs in Luke as well, when Jesus speaks of the Spirit in Luke 11:13. Jesus says, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" In the verses preceding this, Jesus is postulating a hypothetical situation where, if a child asks his father for bread or fish or eggs, the father will certainly not give him a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion in response to his request. In the original language, Luke 11:13 does not say that God will give the Holy Spirit, but rather He will give a Holy Spirit - without the definite article. Scholars say that when the article 'the' is present, it refers to the Holy Spirit Himself, or His Person. However, when the article 'the' is absent, it supposedly refers to His power. So we see from this incident and word usage that the asking and receiving of the Spirit and its powerful work in a believer's life are far more important than these worldly goods.

Let us look at other instances in Scripture where the Holy Spirit's power is at work. In 2 Samuel 18, we read the story of Joab, the commander of David's army, David's son Absalom, an Ethiopian Cushite and Ahimaaz, a messenger, the son of Zadok the high priest. Absalom has been killed, and the Cushite is sent to bear the news to David, while Ahimaaz follows him and outruns him with the same news for David. Ahimaaz is clearly known for his swiftness of foot. Upon arrival, David asks him, "Is Absalom safe?" He replies, "I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was." (2 Samuel 18:29) The Cushite, an Ethiopian had been commanded, to "go tell

the king what you have seen,” which is Absalom’s death. When he arrives, David asks again the same question: “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The Cushite answers, “May the enemies of my lord the king be as that young man.” This message through the Holy Spirit’s working so moved the king that he retreats into an isolated place and laments over his son’s death. He cries, “O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 18:33)

In Acts, we see that Paul is anointed by the Spirit before he enters his ministry by Ananias (See Acts 9:17) Six times in Acts the disciples are filled with the Spirit. Peter, after he gives his famous sermon in Acts 2, sees three thousand spirit-filled souls come to believe. (Acts 2:31) Let us look at the Scriptures for the effects or marks of being filled with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 3, we see a lame man healed by Peter and John. Through the power of the Holy Spirit given to them. (See Acts 3:1-10) Then in Acts 4, we see that the disciples pray to the Lord for power – power to heal, to perform signs and wonders, and for boldness. After their prayer, the place was shaken, and the disciples were filled with the Spirit. (See Acts 4:27-35) Then in Acts 5:42, we see the disciples “ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” daily in the temple, despite being arrested, put on trial, and subject to persecution for doing so. These were men that were truly filled with the Holy Spirit, with zeal and passion for teaching the Word of God!

God promises to give the power to live a Spirit-filled, God-honoring, Christ-exalting, and fruitful life. He will give us power in our private and public life; in the prayer room and the pulpit. If we look at the example of

the disciples, before the disciples could become true witnesses they had to wait for the promise of the Father, which was the Holy Spirit. Before this occurred, before they would be endowed with power to live and witness for Christ, the disciples were to wait in Jerusalem until they received the power of the Holy Spirit. (See Acts 1:8) Jesus instructs them, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49) From this we know that the power of the Holy Spirit is important and indispensable in the believer's life, because it is a real spiritual force. John's Gospel continually recognizes this through mentioning the Holy Spirit's work. He mentions the indwelling, the upspringing, and the outflowing of the Spirit. (See John 3:5-8 and 4:14) In John 7:37-39, he says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

We should also consider Paul's teaching about the filling of the Spirit in Ephesians 5. Paul's method described here is being emptied first, then being filled, rather than filled first and then emptied. This is important given the context here. Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus commanding them to stop doing certain things, and start doing others. This means they should be emptied first of those wrong things, and be filled next with those 'right' things, like the Spirit! Then the "fruits of the Spirit" will come naturally once they are filled with the Spirit. He presents these fruits in Galatians 5: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) Paul also instructs us that the power of the Spirit will help

believers “walk in Him” and so defeat the desires of the flesh. (See Galatians 5:16-18) We see this power of the Holy Spirit to help believers walk in Him in the Old Testament as well. For example, when the Spirit comes upon Moses in Exodus 7, the plagues come upon Egypt and he possesses the power to destroy men’s lives. (See Exodus 7:14-25) Elijah displays the power of the Spirit when he asks that fire come down from heaven if he is a man of God, and indeed fire comes down from heaven and consumes the king’s fifty men – quite a shocking episode! (See 2 Kings 1:10-13) Again with Joshua, there is apparent power of the Holy Spirit, who appears to him as the “commander of the Lord’s army” when he marches around Jericho and the city falls into his hands without military conquest. (See Joshua 5:13-15 and Joshua 6)

By contrast, when the Spirit comes upon the Son of Man, He gives His life for the sins of the world. And when the Spirit comes into a believer, He makes Christ dearer, Heaven nearer, and the Word of God clearer! Let us remember the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 1, who cries out to the Lord for the living water of the Holy Spirit that we have previously mentioned. He exclaims, “Blessed is the man...He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:1-3)

The Glories of Christ

The Lord Jesus, Our Savior, was the only faultless, flawless, and spotless one who ever lived on this earth. He was unblemished, untarnished, unmarred, undefiled, and unimpeachable. Our impeccable Savior never had to recall a word, nor retrace a step. Even the very best of men we read about in the Scriptures, such as Moses, Elijah, David, Solomon, Peter, and Paul were sinful, flawed, and fault-filled. Moses, the chosen leader of God's people, could not match our Great High Priest, who introduced a better covenant sealed and secured by His precious blood. He is the infinite, unchangeable, imperishable and immortal Christ. Song of Solomon presents a beautiful representative description of our Savior, saying, "He is white and ruddy—the chief among ten thousand—the altogether lovely one—My beloved, my friend." (Song of Solomon 5:10, 16)

Let us consider some of the matchless, peerless, unsurpassed glories of Christ evident from the Scriptures. In Hebrews 3:1-3 we begin to see a description of the sevenfold glories of Christ. First, we are told that He is the final revelation of all things and the Son of God: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." Next, it is revealed that He is the heir and creator of all things: "whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds." Then we learn that He is the glory of God and the one who cleanses all sin: "who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by

the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins.” Lastly, we are told that Jesus is superior to even the angels, and that He “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

The author of Hebrews then recalls several familiar Old Testament passages regarding these infinite glories of Christ, which exalt Him higher than the angels. He praises the Lord, remembering:

“For to which of the angels did He ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten You?” Or “I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?” When He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “ Let all the angels of God worship Him.”...But to the Son He says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.” And, “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak you will fold them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not fail.” (Hebrews 1:5-12)

Let us bask in the unchangeable, timeless glory of Christ, to whom we are united through His death and resurrection!

The Glories of the Resurrection -

Ephesians 1

The death of the Lord Jesus is the chief demonstration of the love of God. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the chief demonstration of the power of God.

Ephesians 1:19

In the resurrection we see power—God’s power—God’s great power and God’s exceeding great power. The power that raised Christ from the dead and enthroned Him at God’s right hand was the greatest exhibition of divine power that the world has ever known. The reason for this seems to be that the infernal hosts were massed to frustrate God’s plans by keeping Christ in the tomb, and by preventing His ascension once He was raised. God triumphed; and Christ’s resurrection and ascension were a shattering defeat to Satan and his hosts.

Ephesians 1:20

Christ was raised from the grave of mortality to the throne of eternal God - from the darkness of the tomb to unapproachable light - from this small world to the metropolis of the universe. Following our Lord’s ascension, God made Him to sit at His right hand—a place of privilege (Hebrews 1:13)—of power (Matthew 26:64)—of distinction (Hebrews 1:3)—of delight (Psalms 16:1)—and of dominion (1 Peter 3:22).

Ephesians 1:21

Christ’s glorification is described as: “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also

in that which is to come.” There are different ranks of angelic beings, some evil, some good. They have different degrees of power. No matter their rank—authority—power—or dominion—Christ is far above them all. This is not only true of this age, but also in the coming age—the Millennium—then He will be King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Great Mystery of Suffering

When we as believers endure long hours and dark nights of suffering and loneliness, we do not go through them alone. Isaiah said, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God." (Isaiah 41:10) Jesus said, "I will be with you always, even unto the end of the age."

There is a story of the timid prisoner. It goes like this:

There was a hole - the inmates dreaded this cell. It was cold, dark, soundless, damp and still. The door clanked shut and he sank to the floor in despair. Suddenly, he heard footsteps. Then a voice said softly, "I am the prison chaplain. I knew you could not stand the loneliness alone, so I've come to be with you. I will be here as long as you are." Knowing he was not alone, the tomb of darkness and loneliness became a place of rest.

Beloved, when we walk the dark and solitary roads of anguish and heartache, Jesus Christ is at your side. You may be lonely but you are never alone. "No danger can come near a believer that God is not nearer." Read Psalm 23.

Consider Goliath. He was over nine feet tall. He wore a bronze helmet and a two hundred pound coat of mail. The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam. The tip of the spear weighed twenty-five pounds. His armor bearer walked before him carrying a huge shield. Now consider David. David's armor? Five smooth stones in a shepherd's bag, a sling, and a shepherd's staff. Goliath came into the conflict in the name of Dagon. David came

in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. The result was that God directed the stone.

Consider the verses in Scripture that speak of the eagle's wings:

Exodus 19:4 "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagles wings."

Psalm 103 "Satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that their youth is renewed like the eagles."

Isaiah 40:31 "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles."

God is looking for men of sterling character through whom he can show his glory and power. In these days of compromise the church needs men of steel, men versed in the Word, blameless men, Spirit-filled men, men with tender hearts, men who are examples to the flock.

When Job learned of the loss of his family and possessions he tore his clothes, shaved his head, fell down upon the ground and worshipped God (sorrow, submission, and surrender). Listen to the cry of a broken, but obedient saint - "Naked I came into the world, naked shall I leave the world."

"The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away, praise and worship be to the name of the Lord." Why could he say this? The eternal God had directed his magnificent and all-sustaining grace to flow toward him to strengthen him. Job was more than a conqueror. In all of his adversities he won an overwhelming victory with God's help. For his obedience and faithfulness the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10). James wrote, "You have heard of the endurance of Job, and

have seen how the Lord blessed him in the end. The Lord is full of pity, compassion, tenderness and mercy.”

There is a lesson in all of this for us today. Hebrews 12:11 says, “No chastening or trial for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous.” “The peaceable fruits of righteousness.” Weary pilgrims, as you journey forward and upward, surrounded by impossible human circumstances, the Lord is able to sustain you, and pour into your beleaguered heart the balm of Gilead, he will also give you beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. “I’m but a stranger here.”

Many of God’s dear children have confessed to having learned more about God and his will in the crucible of affliction than in the sunshine of happiness and success. C.H. Spurgeon said, “The good that I have received from my sorrows, disappointments, pain, and griefs is incalculable.” Consider also the examples of Joseph, Moses, Peter, and Jacob. Trials and testings are God’s training school.

The Headship of Christ

Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18, Colossians 2:14

Christ is:

Head of the corner (see Acts 4:11).

Head over every man (see 1 Corinthians 11:3).

Head over the Church, the Bride (see Ephesians 5:22-33).

Christ loved the Church - How can we as believers testify to this fact?

We must accept no human leader as head of the church. We must not recognize any temporal head of the body of Christ. Examples: Lordship of Christ, stars, messengers, letters to the seven churches (see Revelation 1:20). The headship of Christ is acknowledged when we allow Him to control the church's activities and allow Him to make its decisions. He must superintend every department. See Acts 11 and 13. The head speaks of authority and leadership. It is the seat of intellect.

Can the Lord guide the local church?

The Lord never fails to make His will and purpose known to those who patiently and diligently wait for Him. This may require deep prolonged spiritual exercise. It will slow down all activity sufficiently to allow New Testament principles to be carried out with New Testament power.

In James 4:2-3, James writes on prayer saying, "You have not because you ask not." There is no power, no progress, and no fruit. James 1:5-6 says, "If any of you

lack wisdom (having no power, no progress, and no fruit), let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally (freely), and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." The local church should be enveloped in prayer. Those local churches who do not walk the path of dependence, prayer and patient waiting upon God will never have the privilege of seeing the great Head of the Church leading and guiding that local assembly.

One of the greatest sins among God's people today is that of vehemently affirming the headship of Christ with their lips, yet denying it in principle by their actions. This error is seen in Christendom. In some instances it can be observed in assemblies. A man, or a group of men, without an official title can rule ruthlessly over a company of God's people to their spiritual detriment. The Spirit's work is quenched and ends in spiritual stagnation.

John warned of such a one in 3 John 1:9-10. Diotrephes was a brother who loved preeminence - the place reserved for Christ. With malicious words he spoke against John. He also would not receive God's servants and forbade the others in the assembly from doing so, even casting them out of the fellowship. Such conduct is a flat denial of the truth of the headship of Christ. Colossians 1:18 says, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

The Reception Policy

All believers are members of the body (see Acts 2:47). The moment a person is saved, he is added to the Church as a member of the body of Christ. This

membership transcends all bounds of race, color, nationality, temperaments, culture, social standing, language and denomination. 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 is the classic passage to illustrate the unity of the body. The truth of the oneness of the body of Christ is a precious one; it is also very scriptural (see Ephesians 4).

Acts 2:47 "And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved."

John 17:20-23 "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through Thy word. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: there is one body."

We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit (see Ephesians 4:3).

The Local Church's Part

How can we as a local church best witness to this?

We should receive all those whom Christ has received (see Romans 15:7). Receive one another as Christ has received the believer. Christ has already received a believer into the body. When a local church receives a believer into fellowship, it merely gives expression to this fact. Having said this, however, I would hasten to add that there are other requirements necessary, if we are to follow scriptural paths:

1. A person must be holy in life.

1 Corinthians 5:11 says, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a

railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." The Lord's Supper extends into the social sphere. Compare this verse with 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, which says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." If any of these sins were allowed in the assembly, it would misrepresent the holy character of the church.

Therefore, believers who are guilty of these sins should not be admitted into fellowship. If we knowingly receive any such, we are guilty of grievous sin.

2. A person must be sound in doctrine.

2 John 1:10 says, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." The person received into fellowship must subscribe whole-heartedly to the truths concerning the person and work of Christ, including His deity, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His substitutionary death, His burial, resurrection, ascension, and His coming again.

Although the doctrines of the one who is anti-dispensationalist, falling-away, and believes in baptismal-regeneration would not necessarily bar one from fellowship, they would restrict their activities, as it would be fatal to allow these things to be taught. We conclude then that a local church should receive into fellowship all born again believers who are:

- Holy in life
- Not under discipline by some other assembly
- Sound in doctrine

Life is the basis of fellowship, not light. Each assembly may interpret this a little differently, so let me give you a resume of the local policy.

Visitors

A visitor is received as a visitor: (1) either by letter of commendation or the testimony of a responsible believer or (2) because of his own testimony. On the strength of either of these, he is welcomed to break bread for a limited period. Should this person decide to remain with the local church, the elders would arrange an interview, and if necessary determine if he is sound in doctrine, holy in life, and inquire as to the matter of baptism. The elders, being satisfied with his statement of faith, would then welcome him publicly into the fellowship.

The Lord's Supper

There is a more delicate question that arises out of this, namely, "How do children stand relative to the Lord's Supper?" Let us take the hypothetical case of a young person who has made a profession and friends in the assembly, with good intent, bring that young person to the breaking of bread. Should he break bread? Before reaching a final decision, let us find out what the Word teaches. Consider 1 Corinthians 11.

The error or sin at Corinth is generally taken to be the unworthiness of the participant of the Lord's Supper. What is stressed in this passage is the fact that the sin in the life of the believer at Corinth should have barred many from participating in the supper, but it did not. We shudder to contemplate the unholy spectacle of drunken hands taking bread and cup. Also in 1 Corinthians 5:11, to those guilty of immorality or excessive greed, or an

idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber, Paul adds “with such an one no not to eat.” See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

“For this cause,” says Paul, “many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (see 1 Cor. 11:30). We can understand the horror of this serious and sinful situation to a degree. But what many of us fail to see is that the great sin was “not discerning the Lord's body” (see 1 Cor. 11:29). A person not guilty of any of the aforementioned sins can be guilty of “not discerning the Lord's body.” We conclude then that an adult carnal Christian can partake of the supper, and be so spiritually blind as not to see the Lord's body in the elements.

Such a one should not participate (see 1 Cor. 11:28). The individual, in 1 Cor. 11:31, is told to examine himself and to judge himself. By the same token, it is possible for a young person, immature in so many ways, either through ignorance or perhaps innocence, depending on age and background to partake of the Lord's Supper and be guilty of the sin of “not discerning the Lord's body.” This “not discerning the Lord's body” is a very serious matter and God is going to hold someone responsible, whether it be the parents, friends, or the elders of the assembly.

Let me now express in few words the guidelines:

1. A young person, perhaps born again, if invited by friends in the assembly to attend the Lord's Supper, with good intent, should be made aware that they are coming as “observers” rather than participants.
2. Regarding children of believers in fellowship, it is, first of all, the duty of the parents to instruct the child over a long period, relative to the implications of

partaking of the Lord's Supper, and before commencing to break bread they should be seen by the elders.

3. Closely related to participation in the Lord's Supper, I believe there arises the question of "fellowship" and "baptism."

4. Consider Acts 2:41-42. If a child is not ready for these then there is grave doubt as to their readiness to partake of the Lord's Supper. [Let me explain the motive behind this very serious and delicate talk: Christ, the Head of the Church, has revealed certain things; we must comply. We do not wish to exclude anyone from any Christian privilege. But we have such a love for our young folks that we want to shield them from errors that will doubtless bring repercussions.]

The Human Heart with the Lid Off

In the past week, with the events of September 11, 2001, we have seen man at his worst: savage, brutal, unprincipled, and fierce. There is tremendous hurt and grief over missing loved ones and deaths. There are massively broken hearts and crushed, despairing spirits. Let us look at the source from which this sinfulness, heinousness, viciousness, and depravity have emerged. First, Jeremiah 17:9 shows us that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?” Secondly, we see Paul describing the unregenerate heart in 2 Timothy 3:1-4, saying that in the “last days... men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” Paul knows this kind of man is governed by unconstrained passions, savageness, and fierceness. Paul, who knew what the unregenerate heart was capable of, mentions twenty-four sins in Romans 1:28-31. The Lord, who knows all men intimately and completely, and does not need anyone to testify for man because He knows of what man is made, reveals another thirteen sins of which the human heart is capable. (See Mark 7:21-23)

These sins and many more were manifested in the events of September 11 in New York, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania. I believe that the perpetrators of this heinous crime were possibly demon-possessed. From this crime’s inception, the scheme was satanic. This

horrible time of mourning, grief, and tragedy could be reflected in what we read about in Revelation 20 as a future vision. This involves Satan nearing the end of His age of grace, before he is cast into the lake of fire. He knows that his time is short, so he creates perilous times that are difficult to handle for the people of the earth. In addition, as a matter of interest, we should consider the source from which these dastardly crimes of September 11 came. Abraham, seeking to aid God's plan for a son, committed adultery with Hagar, Sarah's servant, recorded in Genesis 16. From this illicit union there was born a son whom they called Ishmael. Ishmael is the father of the Islamic faith. God told Abraham that Ishmael and his descendents would be "wild men" and that their "hand would be against every man." (See Genesis 16:12) God also mentioned that he would become a great nation, and "multiply exceedingly." (Genesis 16:10) We can see that today this has definitively come true, as the Islamic peoples now have enormous populations. With this event, we also see evidence of their hands being against men as well.

In these perilous times there is only one resource we can turn to, and this is prayer. In biblical stories of the conquest of the land, we see that "Joshua prayed" to the Lord in desperation. (See Joshua 10) Here, the nation was fighting for its existence and vying for the land. All hope of survival had gone as they stood daunted by such frightening enemies. Suddenly, the Lord sent huge hailstones from the sky, and more enemies were slain by these hailstones than by the sword. Furthermore, the sun stood still for about one day, allowing Israel to completely destroy the enemy like they were commanded to do by the Lord. The summary of this

incident is short in length despite its dramatic events. We are told, "There was no day like it before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened to 'the voice of man.'" (Joshua 10:14) Beloved, we see with this story and in many events that nothing is impossible with God! All things are possible with Him, the great and almighty Master and King. Another example is a personal one from World War II during the days of Dunkirk in which British troops had withdrawn to the port of Dunkirk, surrounded by the German forces and cut off from the French army. In desperation, the French nation had opened its churches for prayer. As we prayed, a thick fog enveloped the beaches and the stormy English Channel grew cold. The German Air Force was crippled because of bad visibility. This hiatus enabled countless numbers of ships, large and small, to race across the miles of water and rescue over three hundred thousand stranded and helpless soldiers! The next day the nation went back to the open churches and prayed and sang heartily and passionately, O God Our Help in Ages Past!

God indeed answers our prayers in great and miraculous ways. For a nation or an individual, remember the words of Psalm 46:

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at the break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our

fortress. Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

After the events of September 11 happened, we know the nation was in a state of grief, sorrow, tears, and broken heartedness. Yet when we saw the worst of men revealed through these events, here we see God at His best: loving, kind, forgiving, and sacrificial. Let us remember our great resource in prayer to our Mighty God who knows the needs of all of us and searches the hearts of men.

The Importance of the Resurrection

Easter 1975

Read Matthew 28:1-10.

The truth of the resurrection of Christ is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. In 1 Corinthians 15:14 Paul says, "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then our preaching is vain and your faith is vain also." Inseparably linked with the resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of all those who have died in Christ. Furthermore, Paul says that if Christ is not raised from the dead, then there is no hope for believers who have died—they have perished. Moreover, he asserts that if Christ was not resurrected, preachers are false prophets and our faith is in vain.

The resurrection of Christ is just as important to our Christian faith and hope as the death of Christ on the Cross. Romans 14:25 says, "Jesus was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." To be saved, we must believe in the resurrection of Christ as well as His death. Romans 10:9 says, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

There are three questions that I would like you to consider:

How can sinful man be reconciled to a thrice-holy God? How can the infinite chasm separating deity from humanity be bridged? What ladder shall be able to rest upon earth and yet reach into heaven itself?

There is only one answer to these questions. The initial step in the work of human redemption must be the incarnation of Christ's deity, followed by His death, resurrection, and ascension.

The Incarnation of Christ

By the incarnation of Christ, we mean His coming into the world as a man. John tells us in the first verse of his Gospel, that "Christ was God." In John 1:14 he says, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." History recounts the birth of our Lord: The Holy Spirit conceived him. Luke 1:35 says, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you." He was born of a Virgin. Matthew 1:23 says, "Behold the virgin shall be with child "Immanuel." His human birth defies reason, and the place of His birth arouses sympathy and sorrow. "Great is the mystery of godliness - God was manifest in flesh."

The Death of Christ

Christ came in human form in order to:

Reveal the Father. See John 14:9 - "He that has seen me has seen the Father."

Put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. See Hebrews 9:26 - "But now, once in the end of the age hath he appeared [...]".

Christ was really born to die. Jesus Himself said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believes, [...]". If the birth of Christ defies reason, then there are three mysteries in the death of Christ that the human mind cannot penetrate. Think of the mysterious darkness that enshrouded the cross. Out of the darkness came but one utterance, so awfully deep that no saint

has ever sounded its depths. “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

The Resurrection of Christ

When Paul spoke of the resurrection of Jesus, he stirred up violent opposition. See Acts 17:32. Some mocked, while others said we will hear you again on this matter. The resurrection of Christ was a mind-baffling event. No finite being can explain the resurrection; it was divine from first to last. The One who could give to three individuals, and give power to Elisha and Peter to raise people from the dead, could also raise Himself.

His resurrection was predicted by the Psalmist in Psalm 16 who said, “You will not leave My soul in hell, nor permit Your Holy One to see corruption.” On the resurrection morning, His soul was brought back from Hades (the unseen world). His body, though dead for three days, did not see corruption. This was unusual. It was sin that brought corruption and since there was no sin in Christ, His body could not corrupt.

A woman came to Jesus’ tomb and found it empty—so did Peter and John. The empty tomb is mute evidence that Christ rose. A Mohammedan guide, showing a Christian the reputed site of the tomb of Jesus, said with a cynical smile, “We who follow Mohammed can visit our sacred city and worship the bones of our prophet, but you have nothing but an empty tomb.”

The grave clothes are another proof of the resurrection—they were left behind in perfect order. The angel said, “He is not here, He is risen.” Amen. Modernism leaves the body in the tomb. Modernism says that He did not rise from the tomb—nor did He ascend into heaven—nor

is He in heaven as the glorified Man—nor is He coming again. Stephen saw Him. Saul of Tarsus saw Him. John saw Him. And this monstrosity claims the name of Christianity. The two great pillars upon which Christianity rests are the Virgin birth and the physical resurrection of Christ after He had expired on the Cross as the substitute for sinners. The nailed scarred hands were moved. He ascended.

The resurrection was in the plan of God. Jesus foretold it several times during His earthly ministry. If the Cross was the climax to the life of Jesus, then the resurrection was a super climax. Although it was shown that Jesus laid down His life and took it up again, the resurrection is also attributed to the Father in Hebrews 13:20, the Son, in John 2:19-21, and to the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:11.

This was the supreme miracle of the ages. God enacted the greatest miracles or mysteries, which became the absolutes of our faith, in divine seclusion. No human eye witnessed the conception of Jesus. No human eye witnessed the ultimate sufferings of Christ. No human eye witnessed the resurrection. But, thank God, He is risen, the tomb is empty—an angel sat on the stone.

He showed Himself alive to His disciples, and to over 500 brethren at one time. No unsaved person saw the Lord in resurrection life (see Acts 10:40-41). "Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." Forty days after His resurrection He was received up into heaven. He is a Prince and a Savior

able to save to the uttermost, all who will come to God by Him.

He is coming again:

“This same Jesus whom you have seen go into heaven shall so come in like manners.”

“The heavens shall glow in splendor, but brighter far than they, the saints shall shine in glory as Christ shall turn array, but the beauty of the Savior will dazzle every eye, [...]”

The Tragedy: The disciples did not believe the women when they reported the resurrection. Thomas said, “I will not believe except [...]”

[Make an appeal here]

The Laodicean Church

Introduction

Laodicea was a wealthy city. Its fabulous wealth was centered on the excellence of its wool. It was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 62 and was built again by the wealthy citizens without help from the state. It is reasonable to believe that the affluence and self-sufficiency of the inhabitants led to the smugness, self-satisfaction and “lukewarmness” of the church in spiritual things. The spiritual condition of this assembly had given Paul great concern for the last thirty years. In Colossians 2:1, he writes, “For I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea.” He is speaking of intense agony here.

There were various causes that contributed to this church’s ruin. The chief one was pride, namely pride of accomplishment and achievement. Then there was material wealth, which brought on a condition of overconfidence and self-sufficiency. They gloried in these things. The combination of these questionable assets created conditions which were abhorrent to God.

The spiritual condition of this church is described as lukewarm. This means that it was deficient in its love for Christ, and defective in its service for Christ. It loved the world as much as it loved Christ. It was half-hearted and self-sufficient, indifferent to the claims of Christ. They were both deaf and blind to the claims, glory and presence of Christ. He stood among them as the Lord of Glory—the Amen—the Faithful and True Witness—the Ruler of the Creation of God—the altogether lovely One—the Chief among ten thousand—the One whom angels

gladly serve. What an awe-inspiring sight; enough to overwhelm and subdue the hardest heart.

This church, however, shrugged its shoulders and gave Him a listless, half-hearted, uncommitted love. The Lord's response to this attitude was, "I wish you were either cold or hot." He is essentially saying, "Give me nothing or give me everything. Your lukewarm love sickens me and I am about to vomit you out of my mouth." This local church was utterly abhorrent to Christ in their indifferent, dispassionate, superficial and self-sufficient state. There is no word of commendation given to this church.

Revelation 3:14

In Revelation 3:14, notice the way the King James Version renders the Lord's introductory words, "To the angel of the church of the Laodiceans..." This church was not Christ's; it belonged to them. Christ was on the outside.

The Lord presents Himself as the Faithful and True Witness: As the faithful witness He is the unchanging, unwavering, and unswerving One. As the true witness He is steadfast, reliable, and true to His Word. As sovereign Lord He sees through all the sham and shallowness of our life. He sees beyond all the facades, pretenses, and outward show. His eyes penetrate these disguises and tear away exterior orthodoxy. The Lord Jesus, as the faithful and true witness, sees and knows the actual conditions in the assembly, despite the fervent activity.

The Lord introduces Himself as the beginning of the creation of God: The Lord is the origin and the ruler of creation. He flung the stars into space and keeps them

in their orbit. See Isaiah 40 and Genesis 8:22. He controls everything, and by Him all things hold together. Note at this point the description of the Lord in Revelation 1 and consider its effect on John. In these incomparable attributes the Lord stands before this wretched church, penetrates its camouflage, and exposes it completely in the white light of His inscrutable presence.

Revelation 3:15-16

At the beginning of Revelation 3:15 we have the Lord's message to this erring church. What a startling message, "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." This church had been reduced to room temperature. It was a compromising, fraternizing church. It was cold to spiritual things, but hot to the world and the flesh. Despite its show and frenzied activity, the Lord knew the unspiritual condition and said, "I know your works and I know your true spiritual condition, and unless you change your ways, I will spit or spew you out of my mouth." There would have been some hope for the Laodiceans if they had been stone cold, but to be lukewarm and sit on the fence and steer a middle course in smug self-sufficiency was a condition without hope.

Revelation 3:17

In Revelation 3:17 we see that the tragedy of this church is that it was ignorant of its true spiritual condition. It was dangerously ill with the sickness of complacency, and self satisfaction, but was unaware of it. This was a popular, prosperous, and proud church, but it was a powerless church. Laodicea had influence, numbers, and gifts. It could boast of its attainments, intellect, and had

other attractive qualities. It was proud of these things. To have these things at the expense of true love for Jesus Christ is an abomination and if not repented of will end in judgment.

Listen to the cry of these insensitive believers, "We are rich, we are wealthy, we have need of nothing." The Lord replies to their boasting, "Thou knowest not." Oh, the tragedy of insensitivity. This assembly was anesthetized. [Notice at this point what the Lord said. Describe the One who is speaking.] Notice Revelation 1:12-18, where we find the statement, "You are wretched and miserable, poor, blind, and naked." Let us analyze these words:

Wretched - They were inferior to God's standards; they were disqualified spiritually. Their fervent activity was worthless and valueless. They were Spiritless, and spiritually dead.

Miserable - Despite their affluence they were poverty-stricken, spiritually ruined, and had no use for God.

They were poor - They were destitute of true riches. They were barren, stagnant, and unproductive.

Blind - They were blind to their wretched state and blind to the Lord's glory. They had lost their vision and were dying and were unaware of it.

Naked - Despite their fine clothes, they were destitute of divine righteousness. Their revolting naked condition was sickening to the Lord.

Revelation 3:18

Revelation 3:18 says, "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire [...]" This church despite its affluence was devoid of everything of spiritual worth. Neither

riches nor fleshly efforts can buy spiritual worth. Spiritual riches can only be had by repentance and yielded-ness to God. "I counsel you to buy of me white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that your shameful nakedness may be covered." They were urged to buy white clothes, which represent the true righteousness of God. "I counsel you to buy of me eye salve to anoint your eyes that you may see." This church needed spiritual vision. They were bereft of spiritual discernment. Their eyes needed to be anointed with the eye salve of heaven to restore their spiritual vision.

Revelation 3:19

After reading Revelation 3:19, we ask, "How can a local church recapture its spiritual values, its spiritual virtues, and its spiritual vision?" The answer is in a single word, "REPENT." To repent is the last thing a sinner wants to do. It is the last thing a saint wants to do. We would rather do anything than repent. Despite their unresponsiveness, the Lord loved them, and because He loved them He rebuked them saying, "Those whom I love I discipline." When rebuke fails, then He chastens. All His overtures are rejected and He is forced to leave them.

Revelation 3:20

This appeal is to the individual. Internal conditions have forced Him out of the church. We see Him standing, knocking, and speaking. What a display of love and grace. This verse can be used in the Gospel. In this materialistic church there would be unsaved members. What a beautiful picture this gives of the Lord standing outside, pleading with men and women to come to Him. There is also a strong appeal to the worldly believer, the

carnal believer, to open up their heart to the Lord and allow Him to come in.

Holman Hunt has captured the strong appeal both to the sinner and the saint in his painting: "Jesus, the Light of the world." For those who hear and open their hearts and allow the Lord to come in, there are manifold blessings, the Lord says, "I will come into him and sup with him and he with me." It is comforting to know that if we come out or we are cast out by the unspiritual that there is One who will receive us, and fellowship with us, and eat with us. Consider the blind man of John 9.

Revelation 3:21

[Consider the promise that is given to the one who overcomes.] The reward to the one who overcomes is that he will sit on the Lord's throne with Him. The throne is the sign of royal dominion and authority. The Lord did not reach His throne because of who He was. He is there because of His life of patience and obedience, and because of His glorious death for the Father's glory. The conqueror's path lies before us. We are to come out and be separate. The Lord's example is our encouragement. His footprints are our guide marks. The reward is a glorious one. We will be associated with Christ in His kingdom. The Laodicean conqueror is promised a share of Christ's glory. Surely this is a rich reward for the brief, though rough, struggle in overcoming the Laodicean element that is all around us.

The Mortality of Man - The Eternity of God

If we think about our own humanity compared to God's own lordship over all things, we know that He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. In contrast to the agelessness of God, there is brevity to a human life. If we look at Psalm 90, written by Moses, it discusses the brevity of time and the sureness of eternity. Moses compares human lives to grass, saying, "In the morning they are like grass which grows up: in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers." (Psalm 90:5b-6) This life is sown, grown, blown, mown, and then gone from the earth. Other parts of the scriptures contain a similar concept. Job also says that life is like a weaver's shuttle that comes and goes incredibly fast. He says, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle...Oh, remember that my life is a breath!" (Job 7:6-7) David speaks of this fleetingness of life and also exclaims in Psalm 144:4, saying, "Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow." Bildad, one of Job's comforters, similarly claims that, "we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow." (Job 8:9) Both Job and Isaiah use the illustration of a leaf to describe human life as fragile, frail and fading. Isaiah says, "we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." (Isaiah 64:6b) Job, referring to his frail and suffering self, asks, "Will you torment a windblown leaf? Will you chase after dry chaff? (Job 13:25) The classic hymn *Life at Its Best* speaks to this aspect of human life as well: "Life at best is very brief, like the

falling of a leaf, like the binding of a sheaf, Be in time! Fleeting days are telling fast that the die will soon be cast, and the fatal line be passed, Be in time! Life at best is very brief."

We know our lives are fleeting, and that we all will pass away from this earthly life eventually. Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 3:1-2a, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die." The author of Hebrews teaches us, "It is appointed for men to die once..." (Hebrews 9:27) James similarly teaches, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (James 4:14) Despite this fleetingness of life, however, we have promise and hope in the resurrection of Christ, for "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 4:14) There will be a resurrection of believers, and the last enemy to be destroyed will be death, who is swallowed up in victory. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, "O Death, where is your sting...The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We do know that life is somewhat of a mystery to most. What are we here for and why? What is the purpose of life? As Christians, we know that life is really a time of preparation for eternity and meeting God at last. Both saints and sinners alike will meet God in eternity. When we are swept away in the sleep of death, when we finish our years with a moan or a sigh, life does not end, but rather it really is just beginning! The believer passes into a new dimension. When the Spirit leaves the body of a believer it bursts through the portal of death into a

new and exciting heavenly life, where the believer will be at home with the Lord. Not only will we meet our Savior here, but also we will be able to meet all of our loved ones and other saints in the Christian faith from history! Paul expresses the desire that all believers should share in “going home” to our Lord: “I would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord... For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” (2 Corinthians 5:8 and Philippians 4:23)

Fanny Crosby, the famous prolific hymn writer, wrote in one of her hymns, *My Savior First of All*, “O the soul-thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face, and the luster of His kindly beaming eye; How my full heart will praise Him for the mercy, love and grace, that prepare for me a mansion in the sky.” While we cannot visualize the glories of heaven, we are assured that they far exceed the thoughts of our mortal minds. Paul, who visited these heavenly glories, quotes Isaiah saying, “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9) We know that we are assured to be with the Lord ultimately, regardless of what heaven will be or look like. John reports in Revelation 14:13, “Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor...” Daniel 12:3 also gives us confidence that we are precious in the Lord’s sight even when we die, and that His saints will be resplendent in eternal glory. It says, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and

those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

Our earth could be named the “sobbing planet,” because it is filled with heart broken cries of pain and agony, suffering, wretchedness, broken heartedness, grief, moans of the dying, and tears and sobs of the bereaved. Yet in heaven we have the promise of the Lord coming to make all things new. John the apostle was given a revelation of the ideal conditions of heaven, describing them in Revelation 21:4: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Later, John describes this new city when the Lord comes, saying, “the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.” Beloved, let us look forward to this day when not only is there no more death, or growing old, or pain or sorrow, but the Lamb will be all the glory of Immanuel’s eternal reign in His kingdom!

The Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent God

The Omniscient God: Psalm 139:1-6

In Psalm 139, David cries, “O Lord Thou hast searched me, and Thou knowest me.” Among the many lessons of this Psalm, the one that stands out is the amazing fact that the Lord searches us and knows our minds, our emotions, and our wills completely. He knows us through and through. Nothing escapes His all-seeing eye; not one microscopic detail eludes His awesome, all-knowing mind. Our lives, both private and public, are an open book to Him.

The Lord knows the hearts of men and the nature of all people. This is seen in John 2:23-25, where it is reported that “Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” In Luke 5:22 we find another example of Jesus knowing the thoughts of the Pharisees and scribes who were thinking about him. “When Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts?’” Jesus taught that He knew all that is said, done, and thought by men. He was most concerned about the hearts of men, rather than the mere appearance of being holy. In Luke 18, Jesus told a parable about a certain Pharisee, a keeper of the law, who prays and fasts in public and thanks God that he is “not like other men.” However, the tax collector in the same parable does not appear outwardly repentant by “raising his eyes to heaven,” yet genuinely

acknowledges his sin, beating his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

According to Psalm 139, God knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He understands our thoughts before they are formed into words. He surrounds our path during the day and watches us while we sleep. He is the God who neither slumbers nor sleeps! To sum up the Psalmist's thoughts, he says "God hemmed me in, behind and before, and laid your hand upon me."

What might this mean to us? First, God has enveloped and surrounded us in His nest. Secondly, God will continue to encompass and shield us for the future. Thirdly, presently God's hand is upon us. As Peter calls for in 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." In God's kingdom, not even a sparrow falls unnoticed! Even the hairs of our head are numbered. (See Matthew 10:29-31) For this reason, Paul assures the Philippian church in Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing." Even Hagar, while she flees from her mistress Sarai out of her distress from bearing Abraham a son, is amazed by the Lord's knowledge and remembrance of her in His provision for her. She calls upon the Lord as "the God who sees." (See Genesis 16:13) In the hymn Standing Somewhere in the Shadows, the chorus praises, "Standing somewhere you'll find Jesus; he's the only one who cares and understands. Standing somewhere in the shadows, you will find him and you'll know him by the nail prints in his hand."

The Omnipresent God: Psalm 139:7-12

The Psalmist not only knows God as the all-knowing and all-mighty God, but as the ever-present God. The

Psalmist is convinced that nothing could hide or separate us from God. In Psalm 139:7, he asks, "Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Where can I flee from Thy Presence?" David describes God as being present in five extreme spheres. First, he speaks of the height of God's presence, saying, "If I ascend up into the heavens, Thou art there." Then he tells of the depth of His presence, saying, "If I make my bed in the depths, Thou art there." Next, David describes the eastern extreme of God's presence, claiming, "If I rise o'er the wings of the morning, Thou art there." Then, David illustrates the westernmost part of God's presence, declaring, "If I settle on the far side of the sea, Thy hand shall lead me, Thy right hand shall hold me." Lastly, he shows that the utter darkness of God's presence does not exist, saying, "If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You." (Psalm 139:8-12)

In several other places in Scripture, we can see how different people in the biblical story are aware of God's presence with them after attempting to hide themselves or flee from God. In Genesis 3:8-10, we see Adam hiding from God after he sins by eating from the tree. In Jonah 1:1-4, Jonah flees from God, trying to avoid going where God has called him to go. In Revelation 6:12-16, we see the great leaders of the world hiding themselves from God in a cave, attempting to avoid God's wrath. However, the presence of the Lord is inescapable as we see from David's words in Psalm 139. David is indeed speaking from experience. When he tells Saul of his shepherding experiences, he claims he had slain a lion

and bear, alone, while protecting his sheep, because the Lord delivered them into His hand. (1 Samuel 17:34-37) When he unexpectedly encounters Goliath in battle with the Philistines, David defeats him not because of his own strength, but because God was with him! David says, "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand." (1 Samuel 17:45) When David flees from Saul, being hunted as a partridge, God is also with him and provides for him to stay alive. (1 Samuel 26:17-25) Again, when David is in King Saul's palace, the Lord protects him from death through his relationship with Jonathan and his wife's warning in 1 Samuel 19. In Psalm 23, we also see David praising the Lord for saving him and being present with him in the "valley of the shadow of death."

How does this truth of God's omnipresence apply to us personally then? If we look at Isaiah 43:1-7, the prophet speaks of God's constant attention to us: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Paul insists that nothing can stand between a believer and the love of Christ in Romans 8:38-39: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God also promises us, as the people of God, in Deuteronomy 31:6-8, "I will

never leave you nor forsake you.” In Psalm 34, believers are again promised, “The angel of the Lord encamps round about those that fear Him.”

The Omnipotent God: Psalm 139:13-18

In Psalm 139:13-18, David speaks with delicate skill about the mystery of conception, birth and life. He sees men as God’s crowning achievement. First, He creates Adam and Eve, and then declares that our conception and development in the womb and finally our birth is a veritable miracle. David indeed gives God all the credit for our creation when he writes: “Thou didst knit me together in my mother’s womb. I am intricately and wonderfully made. I was visible to Thee in my mother’s womb. Thou didst see my unformed body. Thou didst determined the length of my life, even before I was born.” God’s tender care does not cease once a person is launched into the world. His thoughts towards us are “numbered as the grains of sand upon the seashore.” (Psalm 139:17-18)

God is all knowing, He is everywhere, and He is all-powerful. There are five and a half billion people in the world, yet God is intimately acquainted with each one. He knows all about each one of us, where each one is, and indeed knows where you are. He even knows the eternal story of every grain of sand. He is also present everywhere with His people. He is in the hospital rooms with the sick, in the “valley of the shadow of death,” in the depth of bereavement, the camps of cholera breakouts, in the many wars waged on earth, even in the atrocities of such wars – He is there, no matter what the circumstance, and not one person is able to hide from Him. God is absolutely inescapable and all-powerful in

His sovereignty. As an anonymous philosopher's statement summarizes, "God's center is everywhere, His circumference is nowhere."

The Pillar of Cloud

When the Lord led the people of Israel out of Egypt, he went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. (See Exodus 13:21-22) When the chariots of Egypt met up with the Israelites at the Red Sea, the cloud changed into position and stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians in such a way that the Egyptians were unable to come after the Israelites. (See Exodus 14:19-20) The Lord divided the waters of the Red Sea, and when Pharaoh's soldiers tried to follow, the Lord looked through the pillar of cloud and "troubled the army of the Egyptians." (Exodus 14:24) This cloud was the leading factor in the lives of the Israelites. It led them to Sinai. It was present when Israel tragically put herself under the Law, when the Israelites made and worshipped the golden calf, when the original tables of stone were broken by Moses, and during the building of the Tabernacle. When the tabernacle was finished, the "cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exodus 40:34)

When we read these passages about the presence of the cloud, we can understand it as the presence of the Lord, but the pillar of cloud was also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit, the Lord manifests himself to, in, on, and with the church, God's people, during her journey through the world during the present age. Jesus promises His followers, "And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows

Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17) In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus sends out his disciples, promising them the Holy Spirit’s presence in their lives, saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” We can compare the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the church to what the cloudy pillar represented to the people of Israel. It was the medium of God’s presence with them, and the seal showing that they were His. So likewise is the Spirit to the people of God now. While the pillar of fire was the light of the people of Israel, so the Holy Spirit is our light as we walk through our lives as Christians. As Paul warns in Romans 13:12, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” The church must have spiritual light that comes from the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is here and present with us for that very purpose - to give that light through the Word. Paul shares his insight into the power of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 2:4: “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

With the Israelites, the cloud became the guide of the Israelites throughout the perplexities of their journey, guiding them both by day and by night. In this same way, the Spirit guides and leads us now. In John 16:13, Jesus tells us, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth,

has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

Similarly, the cloud that guided the Israelites also regulated all their movements, deciding where and when they would encamp, and when and where they would travel. See Numbers 9:17-23.

On the one hand, we see with the presence of the pillar that there is evident supremacy, authority and power in God’s leading of the Israelites. Yet on the other hand, the Israelites also were compelled to obedience and had a responsibility for discipline in following God’s guidance through the pillar and Moses’ leadership. There was no room for liberal thought and independence in this community, as the people had no choice as to when and where they would march or stop, whether they should march at sunrise, or break camp at the midnight hour. They had no choice at all in any these matters - when it moved, they moved, when it stopped, they stopped. They were not consulted whether they should stay in one place for a day, month or year. The cloud regulated everything, and their lives and survival depended on it, so the Israelites recognized its authority. There was unity, harmony and precision among the people because they acknowledged their dependence on the cloud.

Accompanying the movement of the cloud there was the word from God as commanded to Moses. The cloud and the Word, therefore, operated together, much like the Holy Spirit and the Word work together in the church’s life today. The Holy Spirit regulates the movements of the church just as the cloud regulated the Israelites’ movements. He is here to operate, not through

sentiment, feeling, or the judgment of man, but through the written Word and its illumination to God's people as He guides them. He also directs the church in the selection of its elders and deacons, giving energy and zeal, without which there can be no spiritual efficiency. He is present here in this age to be the supreme power in the Church. Jesus says continually, "Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord." (Zechariah 4:6)

We must wait for the Spirit's leading, just as Jesus' followers waited at Pentecost. The Israelites waited for the movement of the cloud, and we must wait for the leading and movement of the Spirit too. Individuals and assemblies have suffered much by not waiting on the Spirit and thinking they can act on their own in their own wisdom and power, without seeking the guidance of the Spirit. In our impatience, we fail to wait on the Spirit's guidance, and then embrace the flesh, which leads to defeat, overthrow and disaster. While the cloud was the evidence of the Lord's presence with the Israelites and separated them from the nations around, so should the Holy Spirit's presence within us and the fruit of the Spirit set us apart from others around us. (See Exodus 33:14-16.) The presence of the Lord with the people was not only the seal that they were His, but it indicated that they were a separated people. Just as the pillar of cloud separated God's people from the Egyptians pursuing them, if you have His presence in a real way through the Holy Spirit, it will separate you from those who do not have Him. (See Exodus 14:19-20)

We are also the only beings in which the Holy Spirit dwells. He does not dwell in natural men, nor in angels, but only in those who have been redeemed by the blood

of the cross, whom the Son of God has given His life and nature. (See 1 Corinthians 2:14) He dwells in us in order to seal us; He is our pledge and guarantee of a glorious immortality in the Lord. Just as the cloud never left the children of Israel during their wilderness journey, the Holy Spirit will not leave us either. Before the resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon men and used them for specific tasks, leaving them shortly thereafter without taking up permanent abode in them. For example, David was used by the Spirit to be a man after God's own heart, leading the people of Israel as their king. He speaks of the Spirit in Psalm 51:11, exclaiming, "Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." No believer can pray this prayer expecting God to take the Spirit from us, because the Holy Spirit will never leave the believer and the true regenerated church. He will be her guide until the Lord comes and establishes His reign on earth. Even though we may grieve Him, quench Him, and resent Him, He will never leave us. We are called to not give the Spirit any reason to "grieve" for us, as Paul warns in Ephesians 4:30, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." The Spirit and the written Word shall be our cloudy, fiery pillar until the journey is over, the day dawns and the shadows flee away!

The Pure in Heart

The pure in heart are those who put God first in everything and those who put God's glory above all else. The pure in heart have a single objective - the glory of God and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. This pureness of heart is manifested in a life in which motives are unmixed, thoughts are holy and conscience is clear.

The heart, biblically speaking, is the center of the personality and embraces the total man. It includes the emotions, the intellect, and the will. The soul is the seat of my emotional nature—the seat of my natural instincts. The spirit is the highest part of my being to which God makes Himself known. The body is the vehicle through which I express my emotions, whether soulish or spiritual. Those who in totality of being are "pure" - that is cleansed, purged, and emptied of all sin – they, and they only, see God.

Godliness

Godliness is God-likeness, Christ-likeness, holiness, devoutness and piety. This godliness is set in the background of:

A quiet, peaceable, and honest life (1 Timothy 2:2)

Humility (1 Timothy 2:10)

Peace (1 Timothy 4:7)

Being profitable unto all things (1 Timothy 4:8)

Following God (1 Timothy 6:11)

A holy life (2 Peter 3:11)

Clean hands are hands that are innocent, blameless, and guiltless.

Eternal Life

Passages that speak of eternal security for the believer include:

John 6:37 - "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

John 6:39 - "And this is the will of Him that sent Me. That I should lose none of all He has given Me."

John 6:47 - "I will tell you the truth, if you believe in Me, you have everlasting life."

John 6:51 - "I am the living bread which came down from heaven if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."

John 11:25-26 - "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believes in Me shall never die."

John 3:15-16 - "That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." "For God so loved [...]"

Ephesians 1:12-14 and Ephesians 4:30 say that we are, "Sealed by the Holy Spirit" and "Sealed unto the day of redemption."

The Names of the Lord

The official title given to the Lord when viewed in relation to the local church is "Lord Jesus Christ." The name of Jesus was given to Him at His birth (see Matthew 1:21). This name describes the saving work He came to do. By His death on the Cross as Sin-bearer, He

justified the giving of that name to Him. It is a name that excels all other names (see Philippians 2:9). God has exalted Him to a place of honor at His right hand (see Acts 2:32-33). God has made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (see Acts 2:36).

Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Messiah." It means "Anointed." The Lord Jesus is God's Anointed One, the One approved by God. The term "Lord" carries with it the thought of "supreme in authority." He is Jesus whose name excels all other names. He is Christ the anointed and approved One. He is Lord the One supreme in authority.

This is the One who is in the midst of His gathered people. It is the mark of a scriptural assembly to recognize the Lord's supreme authority. As individuals we must make Him Lord of our lives. This must be accomplished before He can be Head in the assembly. Peter says, "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord" (see 1 Peter 3:15). The recognition of Christ's lordship and headship involves submission to His Word as the sole authority of the assembly in all matters of doctrine, discipline, and practice.

Baptism

From the earliest days of the Christian Church the authority for baptizing believers has been derived from the command of Christ in Matthew 28:29. Baptism is an act of obedience and should be the immediate and spontaneous accompaniment of true faith. Baptism symbolically expresses a series of facts:

Immersion (death)

Submersion (burial)

Emergence (resurrection)

When we descend into the baptismal water, it means that we have died to sin with Christ. When the water closes over our heads, it means that we have been buried with Him, giving proof that our death to sin was real, just like His death. Then, as Christ was raised from the dead by the majestic exercise of God's power, so we, too, must live as those in whom a new principle of life has been implanted. Only believers should be baptized. Baptism is a sacrament. The scriptural mode of baptism is by immersion.

The Head Covering (1 Corinthians 11)

In this chapter there are three symbols and three predominant truths. The truths are: headship, head covering, and head-remembering. The three symbols are: the veil, the bread and the wine. The teaching of the chapter indicates that a believer will never enjoy Head-remembering unless they understand something about head covering. They will never practice head covering until they know something about headship.

1 Corinthians deals with the head covering for Christian women within the context of public ministry (see 1 Cor. 11:5). The chapter also deals with man's uncovering. Paul teaches that men are to pray and prophesy bareheaded as opposed to women who are to pray and prophesy with their heads covered (1 Cor. 11:4). 1 Corinthians 11:5 cannot be understood as meaning that women are to pray and prophesy in mixed gatherings of believers. Paul deals with the place of women in the church in two other Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Women are to keep silent in the

church. There are other occasions when sisters can exercise the oral ministry of prayer and testimony.

The chapter presupposes that a man sits in the meeting uncovered and does not take off his hat (except for when he rises to pray or prophesy). Conversely, a woman is to come to the assembly meeting veiled, and not simply when she participates. Paul's concern in this chapter is obviously the wearing of the veil. Is the woman's hair the veil? In 1 Cor. 11:5-6, the Apostle shows the difference between the hair and the head covering. There are some who vehemently argue that the hair is the covering. If this is so, 1 Cor. 11:4-6 would become an absurdity.

Let us substitute the word hair for the word covering in these verses and see how it would read:

"Every man who has hair on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who does not have hair while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head. For if a woman does not have hair, let her also have her hair cut off."

Another theologian has said, "If the covering referred to is the hair, then any man praying or prophesying with hair on his head dishonoreth his head, which is Christ. Therefore, only a baldheaded man could pray or preach."

We have already mentioned that there are three symbols in the chapter: the veil, the bread, and the wine. There are many who have discarded the veil as symbolic of headship. To be consistent, these same people should also discard the bread and the wine as symbols of the body and blood of the Lord. All of us would say that such an action is unthinkable. We could never discard the

bread and the wine. By the same token we must not, in fact, we cannot discard the head covering. The covered head of the man would disgrace Christ, the Head. The uncovered head of the woman disgraces her husband and the Lord (utterly puts them to shame).

Furthermore, the woman's head should be covered "because of the angels." The angels had the painful experience of witnessing Eve usurp Adam's headship and its consequent human tragedy. Now, in the end times, just when the church is about to be raptured from the world, some of Eve's descendants are making the angels witness the rejection of God's order all over again. Women are to cover their heads, because of the angels, who know divine order and the truth of headship. See 1 Cor. 11:16, which says, "If anyone wants to argue about this remember we have no other custom, neither has the churches of God."

The Pure in Heart, Part 2

Introduction

Let us first look at what is meant by the word heart. The heart is the center of the personality. It includes the intellect, emotions, and will. It is the center of man's being. It is the fountain from which everything comes. It is the total man. The Bible says, "Blessed are the pure in heart." Happy are those who are pure, not merely on the surface, but in the center of their being and the source of every activity.

A pure heart is a heart without folds; it is an open heart where nothing is hidden. The Psalmist prayed, "Unite my heart to reverence Thy name." In essence he said, "Make my heart one." Make it single. Take out the pleats and the folds, let it be whole; be sincere, pure, and entirely free from hypocrisy. The one who is pure in heart follows the following command, "Love the Lord your God with all your soul; with all your heart, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

"Without holiness no man can see God." If there is unconfessed sin in our life, we cannot see God. 1 John 1 speaks of this as broken fellowship. If we are knowingly practicing sin in our life, we cannot see God. If our hands and heart are defiled, we cannot approach Him, nor stand in His presence (see Psalm 24). Before we can see God by faith and commune intimately with Him, we must be unworldly, unspotted and unstained. Only the pure in heart will see God.

There is a vision possible to the eye of faith. There is also a seeing, in the sense of intimately knowing Him -

having a deep sense that He is near. One day we will be without spot or wrinkle, but by the Spirit's help, we should strive to be like that now. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Paul was not superman. His physical presence was weak and unimpressive. He was small in stature and his body was scarred by beatings and exposure; he may have been almost blind as well. His personal appearance may have been objectionable. His speech was contemptible, inferior, and he admitted himself that he was unskilled in speech, that he was not an orator. Paul was a normal man, just like Elijah, but God chose him to be one of the foolish, weak, and despised ones. He chose him to be His messenger and turn the world upside down. This should be an encouragement to all of us. If he can use such a one, can he not use you? After all, what was it that made Paul great?

The Cross of Christ in Matthew

Matthew 10:38 - One aspect of the cross is that Jesus demands the supreme place in our hearts. We are to love Him more than our father, mother, sister, or brother. To take up the cross is to acknowledge our identification with Him as the rejected One. A man carrying a cross is a man devoted to death.

Matthew 16:34 - The Lord again takes up the theme of bearing the cross and following Him. It implies deliberate, voluntary action. To deny Himself was to take up the cross. It is costly to carry the cross; we proclaim that we are crucified with Christ and that we are dead to the world, the flesh, and the devil. The spiritual believer believes this great life-changing truth and dies daily to all that is worldly or fleshly. Unless we are prepared to

recognize the truth of our death with the Christ of Calvary and daily crucify our old man, we are not worthy to be Christ's followers. From a life like this, the Christ of God will flow in rivers of living water.

Striving for Purity

The pure in heart are those with unadulterated motives, holy thoughts, and a clear conscience before God and man. God's standard of holiness is non-negotiable. It is not holy, holier, and holiest. God measures a person by His own unchangeable, unalterable, and absolute holiness. In God's estimation a person is either holy (pure) or unholy (impure).

Paul prayed that the Philippians would be holy and couched his prayer in some choice words. In Philippians 1:10 we read, "That you may be SINCERE and without offense till the day of Jesus Christ." The word sincere is very interesting. In the original language it means to be judged in the sunlight. The English word sincere is derived from the Latin *sine cera*, which means without wax.

In the days when art flourished in ancient Greece, it was a common practice to repair an expensive vase or ornament that had been damaged with invisible wax. If the buyer was knowledgeable, he would not pay until he had taken the vase into the direct rays of the sun. Then, after a while, he would examine it carefully to see if the melted wax had uncovered any flaw. If the vase passed the test of the sunlight, it was pronounced *sine cera*, that is without wax - in other words, it was genuine.

Are your heart and life pure? *Sine cera* - without wax? Without offense - that is, without flaw? At this moment

the eyes of the Lord Jesus, which John describes as blazing flames of fire, are searching, scrutinizing, and analyzing your heart (life). The dark chambers are being exposed by the unsullied light of the Lord's face, which shines with the brilliance of the noonday sun. In the brilliance of His overwhelming and inescapable presence, the invisible wax, the clever facade melting, the real you, with all its imperfections is slowly being exposed.

Nothing can be hidden from the Omniscient God, the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Nothing can escape those relentless eyes of fire. [Describe Peter's experience] If you are feeling uncomfortable, you should thank God, because you are on your way to purifying your life and becoming a person after God's heart. Confess and repent of your sin. When this is done, your life will be pure and you will experience perfect happiness, joy unspeakable, and peace that surpasses human comprehension. The Bible says, "If we confess our sin [...]" and "The blood cleanseth from all sin."

Why should we strive for this purity? (1) We become like the Lord Jesus, and therefore glorify God as we become conformed to the likeness of His Son. (2) God's power is only operational in purity. Scripture shows that there is power in purity. In the assemblies of God's people today, we lack power. Our administrators, usually successful business men, see to it that the programs run smoothly, like a well oiled machine. Despite the seeming efficiency, we have little or no Holy Spirit power.

Could the reason be that underneath the facade, covered over skillfully with "invisible wax," there are flaws, imperfections, impurities, un-judged, and un-

confessed sins? Could this be the reason for the lack of power?

Examples of Purity

Let us now look at an illustration of how God's power flourishes in the sphere of purity (see 2 Chronicles 26).

“Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.”

Is your life, in its present state, acceptable to God? Have you ever wondered why your life is joyless and powerless? One of the reasons is that your heart is not pure. There is joy and power in purity.

Consider Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26 - “Uzziah did right in the sight of God.” His heart was right with God. “He sought God in the days of Zechariah the prophet.” “As long as he sought God, He made him to prosper.”

Uzziah's prosperity: “And God helped him.” His name spread abroad, he was loved by his friends, and feared by his enemies. “He was marvelously helped of God till he was strong.” Israel had prosperity and power.

Uzziah's downfall: But when he was strong, his heart (pride) was lifted up to his destruction. His heart was not right with God. He sinned against the Lord. The seriousness of sin is revealed through the way that God smote him with leprosy. The consequences of sin were revealed when Uzziah died a leper, cut off from the house of the Lord. When sin entered into his life, and his heart became impure, he lost his power. Consider also the examples of Solomon, Annanias and Saphira.

What about your life? See Psalm 119:9, 11.

Consequently, is it joyless and powerless? Is your life pure? Or are you being dominated and contaminated by sin? What about your life away from the eyes of men?

Your life can never be away from the eyes of God. Is your devotional and prayer life in order?

In a survey of theological students, it was found that only a few had a daily devotional life. These men will be powerless preachers. "Teach us to pray." "Men ought always to pray." Travail in the closet is power in the pulpit. Before we criticize, let us look into our own life and see how we are before God. No man rises above his prayer life. No man lives beyond his vision. Are you a brother and sister of prayer? (Examples: Rachel - John Knox)

John Vassar, the great soul-winner of Boston, Massachusetts, knocked on the door of a woman's house and asked her if she knew Christ as her Savior. She replied, "It's none of your business," and slammed the door in his face. He stood on the doorstep and wept and she, looking out of her window, saw him weeping. The next Sunday she was in church. She said it was those tears that touched her heart.

Brothers and sisters, where are our tears? Do we have tears for the lost? The reason why our eyes are dry is because our hearts are dry. We have little real compassion for the lost. Psalm 126 says, "They that go forth weeping [...]" Happy, joyful, and powerful are those who are pure in life, without wax, without offense, and without a flaw, for they shall see God.

Internal Purity

Blessed are the pure in heart. The heart is the total man; it is the mind, the emotions, and the will. It is the seat of all desire, affection, perception, intention, and is the fountain-head of all thought and purpose. This purity

that the Lord talks about here is not only external purity, but also internal purity. Bunyan, in his book "The Holy War," describes the "eye gate" and "ear gate" as being the guardians of "man's soul." Your soul is one of God's most precious possessions. Think of the price He paid to redeem it.

The Lord said to preserve its purity in Matthew 5:28-30. "If your right eye causes you to sin pluck it out and throw it from you. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it from you." God demands that we should be pure internally as well as externally. It is possible to be very respectable outwardly, but to be filthy inwardly as the mind wanders down the paths of impurity, stirring lusts and passions.

Romans 6 says, "Withdraw your members from being the servants of sin." "Those that bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean." Note the instructions given to the priests in Leviticus. Inevitably, we link the verse, "Blessed are the pure in heart," with the majestic words of Psalm 24:

"Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift his soul unto vanity, nor swears deceitfully."

Hands speak of outward acts - holy hands, blameless hands, guiltless hands. The heart speaks of the inner life.

O for hands that are not stained with sin.

O for a heart that is pure and clean.

O for a soul that is devoid of pride.

O for a tongue that has not sworn deceitfully.

O for a mouth in which there is no guile.

Such a man or woman will see God.

The pure in heart are those who put God first and who put God's glory above all else. John said, "I must decrease, He must increase." Paul said, "For me to live is Christ." The perfect pure heart is the heart that can sing, "O fix our earnest gaze so wholly Lord on Thee." "Turn your eyes upon Jesus." It is God's desire that His children be pure and holy in heart and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit.

To encourage us to become pure in heart, He would urge us to think of the things that are true, pure, lovely, and of good report. Paul reminds us that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it ought to be kept clean, for "without holiness, no man can see God." See Hebrews 12. (Examples: Castaway, Zephaniah) This, however, is not easy. Paul had his problems. See 1 Corinthians 9 - The Corinthians were not discerning of the Lord's body.

Consider the following quotes from Romans 7:

Rom. 7:18 - "for I know that in me dwells no good thing." Rom. 7:19 - "The good that I would do I do not; but the evil that I would not do, that I do." Rom. 7:24 - "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this vile body of death? I thank God I am delivered through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Let me at this time give you the character of the pure or sanctified man:

1. He will love his brother: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

2. He will serve his brother: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be his servant."

3. He will be patient with his brother: "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men."

4. He will be an example to his brethren: "In speech, in life, in love, in faith and purity."

5. He will forgive his brother: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God forgives you."

6. He will not judge his brother: "Let us stop passing judgment on one another—who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls." Jesus said, "Do not judge, or you will be judged."

7. He will pray for his brother: "Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you."

The pure in heart shall see God.

In a city in Scandinavia is a famous statue of our Lord. A visitor looking disappointed was seen standing before it. He expressed to the attendant his disappointment. "I can't see the face of Christ," he complained. The attendant replied, "Sir, if you want to see His face, you must kneel at His feet." The visitor knelt at His feet and saw His face. Brothers and sisters, we must kneel at the feet of the blessed Christ of God with a pure heart, with no un-confessed sin in our life; then indeed, we will see Him in all His beauty and glory, and crown Him Lord of all. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

The Resurrection Story

The Certainty of the Resurrection

- The O.T. prophets predicted it.
- The Lord's own testimony three times.
- The story of Jonah.
- After the resurrection the angels declared it, Paul preached it, and the Lord proclaimed it.

The Message: Foundations of the Christian Faith

The Lord's resurrection and our resurrection are inseparably linked. Because the Lord rose from the grave, our faith is strong; our sins have been put away. Those who have died in Christ will be raised from the dead to eternal glory. This is the hope of the believer. Is it your hope?

As senior citizens we must prepare for the future (vacations, retirement, etc.). Have you prepared for eternity? How can one prepare to meet God? Confess your sins. They may be few or many. (See Romans 10:9) Ask for forgiveness and take Christ as your Savior and God will give you everlasting life. "Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The Times of the Gentiles

Luke 21-24, Daniel 2:31-42, Daniel 7:1-8 and Daniel 7:15-23

The expression, “Times of the Gentiles” covers the period during which Jerusalem is under Gentile domination. The Lord said, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” We believe that “the times of the Gentiles” began with the captivity of Israel during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and will continue until our Lord returns in triumph. Then the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our God and His Christ. And He shall reign over the earth for 1,000 years. The “Times of the Gentiles” have already covered a period of 2,600 years and is presented pictorially in the book of Daniel, first, in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image (see Daniel 2) and again, in Daniel’s vision of the four great beasts (see Daniel 7). [Describe the dream and vision]

The Dream (Daniel 2)

The king saw a great image:

The head of gold

The breasts and arms of silver

The belly and thighs of bronze

The legs of iron

The feet of iron and clay

This is the interpretation:

The head of gold = Nebuchadnezzar (See Daniel 2:36-38).

The breasts and arms of silver = Medo-Persian Empire
(See Daniel 2:39).

The belly and thighs of bronze = Grecian Empire (See
Daniel 2:39).

The legs of iron and feet of iron and clay = Roman
Empire in its two stages (See Daniel 2:40-48).

This dream draws one's attention to the outward form of
these world empires.

The vision of Daniel reveals their true character.

The dream is what man sees from his standpoint.

The vision is what God sees from His viewpoint.

It is not an attractive, resplendent image.

It involves four voracious beasts, which devour and kill
(warlike and rapacious).

The Vision (Daniel 7:1-8)

Daniel 7 is the greatest prophetic chapter in the Bible.
The following describes the vision we read about in this
chapter:

He saw: "four great beasts come up out of the sea,
different from one another."

(1) A Lion...eagles' wings...its wings were plucked...it
was lifted up from the earth...made to stand on the feet
of a man...a man's heart was given to it. - This is a
concise description of the rise and fall of the Babylonian
Empire. This empire was lion-like in character: strong,
powerful, regal, and king of beasts. Eagles' wings depict
strength and swiftness. This describes the kingdom's
regeneration. This empire was made to stand upon the

feet of a man and a man's heart was given to it. This was the divine description of the head of gold.

At the time of writing, Nebuchadnezzar's power was at its zenith. No one could see its end. Note the Divine foreknowledge – by inspiration and revelation, Daniel foretold its downfall. Some years later the empire collapsed (see Daniel 5). [Stress divine inspiration – Prophecy] (2) Next Daniel saw a Bear...it was raised up on one side, it had three ribs in its mouth...Arise and devour much flesh. - The Medo-Persian Empire was bear-like (breasts and arms of silver). This empire is depicted as being ferocious – unwieldy. There also seems to be an imbalance of power. This is seen in its raising one paw higher than the other. Of the Medo-Persian empires, Persia was the more predominant power. After a ruthless reign of 200 years, the bear-like power of the Medo-Persians was broken by the conquest of Alexander the Great of Greece.

(3) After this, Daniel saw a leopard with four wings and four heads (the belly and thighs of bronze). - The leopard speaks of strength, stealth and rapidity. These characteristics were seen in the rapid conquests of Alexander. He sat down and cried, because there were no more worlds to conquer. He directed that at his death his hands should be placed across his chest, palms outward. "Why?" he was asked, "To let all who look at me in death see that the man who conquered the world went out empty-handed." He died in his early thirties – and his empire was divided between his four generals (four heads). All this is a matter of history now, but the prophecy was made 500 years before it happened. [Stress the faultless prophetic record of the Scriptures here] (4) Finally, in his vision, Daniel saw a fourth beast;

it was very strong, so dreadful and terrible that it could not be symbolized by the likeness of any known beast. – [Read Daniel 7:7 here] This spoke of the Roman Empire so differently from the three empires that preceded it. Its characteristics were: tremendous force, determination, and ruthlessness. It stamped the residue with its feet; it had ten toes, ten horns, and legs of iron. This kingdom was at the height of power during the life of Christ. It disintegrated in 467 A.D. The cause of its fall was:

- The undermining of the sanctity of the home
- Higher and higher taxes
- A mad craze for pleasure
- The building of armaments when the real enemy was within
- The decay of Christianity

When John the apostle wrote the revelation he was a prisoner of Rome. These three world empires had passed away into history. By divine revelation John saw, as he looked down the corridor of time, not only the fall, but also the revival of this Roman Empire. Read Revelation 13:1-3. This empire, in its final form, will emerge as the feet of iron and clay. Believers will not see this kingdom in its final form (they will be translated before this). It will reach its zenith during the tribulation period under the Beast and the False Prophet.

Yet Future (Daniel 2:40-44)

The Revived Roman Empire

The final form of Gentile world power is represented in the feet of iron and clay with ten toes." The ten toes represent ten kingdoms (three of which will be subdued). They are separate entities, yet seem to be under "one head." He is described in Daniel 7 as "the little horn" and in Revelation 13 as "the beast." "He had the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things." [Note: The Antichrist (Gentile) – The False prophet (Jew)] The iron and clay mixed would represent two forms of government: "Autocracy" and "Democracy." Since the mixture of iron and clay is an unnatural one, it would seem to suggest that the federation is not brought about by force, but by mutual consent, so that each member of the alliance retains its own identity.

Consider the following: N.A.T.O is a stopgap. The reason for its formation follows:

- A common enemy – Communism
- The economic history – U.S.A.
- A shift of power from USA to Rome
- Churchill urged the United States of Europe – The unity between France and Germany

[Describe the common market of Europe] This, in essence, will be the revived Roman Empire taking shape, but yet future. An alliance of ten nations, but ruled by one head or dictator. This is a "sign of the times." Other signs: The tree...trees (see Luke 21:29-33).

The End of the Gentile World Power (Daniel 2:35)

Daniel saw a stone, cut without hands, falling on the feet of the image, grinding them to powder. This stone became a great mountain that filled the whole earth. The stone speaks of the Lord Jesus. He will come in glory and power. And He will utterly destroy the last vestige of Gentile authority at Armageddon. Then He will establish His kingdom, which will be worldwide, and He shall literally fill the whole earth [The Millennium].

[Describe the coming of the Son of Man]

See Revelation 19 and Matthew 25 (The judgment of the living nations - sheep and goats - "I will put hooks in their jaws.") Jerusalem is the prize in view (see Ezekiel 38:4).

Armageddon

The following will gather for these great battles:

[Describe]

The ten-kingdom federation of nations from Europe under the Beast, the revived Roman Empire.

The great Northern Confederacy of Russia and her allies.

The kings of the south.

The kings of the East - the Asiatic peoples will be there.

Dr. Walter Holstein, former president of the European Economic Community said recently, that in about 1980 we might fully expect the great fusion of all economic, military, and political communities together into the United States of Europe (Rapture first). American news

magazine had a feature entitled "Europe Dreams of Unity Revive."

"The Common market could expand into a ten nation economic entity, whose might would far surpass the Soviet Union."

The Transfiguration

Understanding the Transfiguration:

How was Christ transfigured before them?

1. In the glory of his person (Matthew 17:2).

It was a metamorphosis - a change from within. The glory of his eternal Sonship shone through the veil of flesh so that the disciples might see who he really was - both God and Man in one Person (see John 1:14 and John 1:18).

2. In the splendor of his countenance (Matthew 17:2).

“His face did shine as the sun.” When the face of Moses shone after conversing with God, it was borrowed radiance. However, Christ's glory and splendor, like the sun's, was underived. That which was already there shone forth in unexcelled splendor. Consider Acts 26:13, “At midday, Oh king I saw in the way a light from heaven above, the brightness of the sun shining around me.”

3. In the brightness of his garments (Matthew 17:2).

Matthew describes his garments as being white as light. Mark describes them as being exceedingly white as snow.

Details of the Transfiguration:

1. His face did shine as the sun.

Revelation 1:16 says, “His countenance was as the sun which shineth in its strength.” We read once more of that resplendent countenance. Revelation 20:11 says, “Before whose face the heavens and the earth fled away.” At this time, the blaze of deity will so stream

from His face as He sits as judge in order that the earth and heavens will flee away, unable to bear such dreaded majesty.

2. His raiment was as white as light.

Pure light of the sun is not just one color, but rather is the perfect blend of the sevenfold beauty of the colors of the rainbow. So it is with the person of Christ who embraces every excellence of deity, holiness, love, majesty, grace, wisdom, truth, and power.

3. Moses and Elijah were talking with Christ.

They were at home in His presence. Our loved ones are "absent from the body, but at home with the Lord."

4. Behold a bright cloud overshadowed Him.

This was no mountain mist, but the Shekinah glory.

The heavens shall glow with splendor

But brighter far than they

The saints shall shine in glory,

As Christ shall them array.

The beauty of the Saviour

Shall dazzle every eye,

In the crowning-day that's coming

By-and-by!

5. This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

In the Old Testament, when the cloud appeared in the tabernacle and in the temple, the priests could not minister because the glory of God completely filled the place. This was the same glory that enshrouded the

Lord. The voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear Him."

These words were spoken of our Lord twice - first at His baptism, then again at His transfiguration. The first commendation was at the beginning of His public ministry. The second commendation came in the third year of ministry, approximately eight or nine months before His death. As the Father looked forward, not only to the Cross, but also beyond it to the Throne, He was pleased with His Son. Can we do less?

6. The Conversation.

The conversation revolved around the subject of his death (see Luke 9:30-31). They spoke of his death and its accomplishments. They spoke of the coming kingdom, both physical and spiritual.

7. Peter's Proposal.

"Let us make three tabernacles..." (Matthew 17:4). Peter wanted to stay in such glorious company, but he erred in putting the prophets on the same plain as Christ. Heavens' reaction, "behold a bright cloud overshadowed them," and a voice spoke saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear him."

Jesus Christ is unchallenged in his preeminence. He is the expressed image of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, Heir of all things, King of kings and Lord of all. He is God over all, blessed forever. At this burst of glory, the disciples "fell on their faces, overcome with awe." When they recovered, "they saw no men, save Jesus only."

8. Mount of Transfiguration and the Hill of Calvary.

Let us compare and contrast the majesty and glory of the Holy Mount and the humiliation of Calvary.

- On the mount, the Lord's face shone as the sun. On the Cross, His visage was marred more than any man's.

- On the mount, His raiment was white as light, exceedingly white and glistening. On the Cross, His garments were taken from Him and the soldiers gambled in order to possess them.

- On the mount, there stood with Him two men - two of the greatest. On the Cross, there were crucified with Him two thieves.

- On the mount, He was wrapped in Shekinah glory. On the Cross, He was clothed in darkness.

- On the mount, out of the cloud came the voice of infinite pleasure. On the Cross, out of the darkness came the anguished cry of desolation, "My God, why have you forsaken me."

Both of these scenes feature the same Christ. Let us bow our hearts and worship Him. 1 Timothy 1:17 says, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Interpreting The Transfiguration:

Read Matthew 16:28 and Matthew 17:1-8. Prior to this startling revelation, the Lord had been conversing with his disciples regarding the opinion men had formed of His person and character. Some of the people said that he was John the Baptist, others that he was Elijah or Jeremiah (see Matthew 16:13-14). But he was also anxious to hear his disciples' appraisal of who He was. Peter, speaking for the disciples, made that glorious confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living

God" (see Matthew 16:16; Hebrews 1:1-3). However, it is questionable whether or not the disciples realized the implications of such a statement. Therefore, six days afterwards, the Lord took Peter, James and John up onto this high mountain.

The key to the interpretation of this passage is found in Matthew 16:28, "There are some standing here that will certainly live to see the Son of man coming into his kingdom." These words were intended by God to reveal the glory of the Lord in the coming kingdom. Peter, writing 30 years later, said, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we were witnesses of his majesty when we were with him on the holy mount."

Let us consider this from the dispensational aspect. Moses and Elijah represent the two groups of believers who will share the kingdom with Christ. Moses represents those who have died in faith, not raised in glorified bodies. Elijah, who was translated to heaven, depicts all believers who at the rapture, will be caught up to heaven without passing through death (see 1 Thessalonians 4).

Peter, James, and John, who beheld the Lord's glory and heard the Father's voice, speak of Israel being restored to the Lord in the latter day, and then of Israel entering into the blessings of the millennial kingdom. The scene at the foot of the mountain illustrates the effects of the Second Advent, namely, the binding of Satan and the troubled nation's deliverance from his power. [Consider briefly the spiritual aspect: Occupation with the glorified Christ is the necessary prelude to service for Him.]

Applying the Transfiguration:

Salvation is found in Christ alone. This blessed one, co-equal with the Father, Lord of all, is also “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (see John 1:29). “Once, in the end of the age hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (see Hebrews 9:26). There is only one way. There is only one name. There is only one mediator. There is only one Savior.

Typology in the Old Testament

What is typology? Webster defines it as a person, thing or event that symbolizes or represents another. A type is a representation, form, figure or pattern of someone or something else. Generally speaking, when we look at the Old Testament scriptures, the one prefigured in the 'type' represents not a mere man, but the great 'I AM,' the God who became man, also known as Jesus.

Genesis and The Cross

The chief scene that many of the 'types' in the Old Testament foreshadow is the most solemn event that has ever taken place on earth: the scene of Jesus' death on the cross. There are quite a few examples we can study to see these types that foreshadow His life and death on the cross.

First, in Genesis 4, we see the story of Abel's lamb as a type for the sacrifice of Jesus thousands of years later. God declares Abel's sacrificial offering of the "firstborn of his flock" as worthy and that of Cain's unworthy. See Genesis 4:4. Abel's offering comes through a repentant and faithful heart, giving his best of his work from the land, while Cain's heart is unrepentant and he fails to sacrifice his best fruits in the offering. This "firstborn" mention of the lamb is possibly a type that refers to Jesus as the "firstborn of all creation" that reconciled all things to Himself through the shedding of His blood. (Colossians 1:15) Abel's offering signifies the individual sacrifice that Jesus made for each individual in His own sacrificial death.

Secondly, there is the identification of Jesus in the New Testament with the Old Testament remembrance of the Passover lamb. The Passover celebration was initiated with God's rescuing the Israelites from the Egyptians by putting the blood of the sacrificial lamb over their doorposts. (See Exodus 12) When Jesus comes to earth, He identifies Himself as the Passover lamb, the ultimate and final sacrifice for the people's sin. This sacrifice then, represents the sin of the nation atoned for via first the lamb's sacrifice, and now, via Jesus' death once and for all. It was revealed to John the Baptist that Jesus was the lamb, as he cries out in John 1:29 and 35, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" In the institution of the Last Supper, Jesus recognizes that He will be the final Passover lamb to sacrifice for the sins of the world, saying, "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)

Thirdly, in Genesis 22, we have a typical scene on Mount Moriah showing Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son on the altar as God has commanded. God commands Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Genesis 22:2) This scene represents a type for God giving His only son to the world for the cleansing of sin. See John 3:16.

Psalms, Prophets and The Cross

In various writings of the psalms and prophets we can also observe the 'types' presented that are brought to new light with events of the New Testament. For example, In Psalm 22, we see a detailed description of

Christ's sufferings and the specific events of the cross. The Psalmist cries, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1) The Psalmist even mentions the "dogs" piercing his feet and casting lots for His clothes, a type which clearly represents the occurrence of Christ's crucifixion and the guards casting lots for His clothing as He was dying on the cross. See John 19:24 and Matthew 27:35.

In Psalm 69, we see the Psalmist lamenting rejection experienced in his life, typifying the kind of rejection that Jesus would later experience. He cries, "My throat is dry; my eyes fail while I wait for my God. Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me." Psalm 60 extends this type by giving an example of the mocking that Jesus would endure at the cross. The Psalmist cries out to God, saying, "For innumerable evils have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart fails me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me! Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who seek to destroy my life; let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor who wish me evil. Let them be confounded because of their shame, who say to me, "Aha, aha!" Even the prophet Isaiah describes the suffering in much detail that eventually will come to describe that of the Lord Jesus. In Isaiah 53 we are told, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."

Other Typology in Genesis

There are also several 'typical' representations in Genesis that are referenced in the New Testament from which we can draw important lessons. Then in Genesis 2 we can see the church foreshadowed through a 'typical' picture. This shows the account of the formation of Eve, her indissoluble union with Adam. God creates Eve, and Adam says, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Here we learn that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Genesis 2:23-25) In Ephesians 5:31-32, Paul tells us that this is a type of our relationship with Christ. Quoting from Genesis 2:24, Paul says, "The two shall become one flesh." Then he adds, "this is a great mystery, but I am speaking of something deeper still, the marriage of Christ and the church."

The Ark is another wonderful type of the Lord Jesus. God found the earth to be wicked and desired to destroy everything on it. We are told that "God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth." (Genesis 6:12) But the ark bore the wrath of God's judgment against sin and was the secure place of refuge from judgment for Noah and his descendants. The ark had only one door for its entry, in a similar way that there is only one way to heaven, through Jesus Christ. In John 14:6, Jesus teaches, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

We also observe in Genesis that it is the seed plot of the Bible, containing in germ form many of the great doctrines of the New Testament. The truth of salvation is

revealed in type in Genesis 3. Our first parents were naked and unfit for God's presence, yet God clothed them with coats of skin. (See Genesis 3:21) To procure those skins, death had to occur, blood had to be shed, and the innocent had to die instead of the guilty. This was the only way that man's shame could be covered, and the only way he could stand before God. The vicarious death of the Lord is foreshadowed through this imagery. It was God who provided the skins, made them into coats, and clothed our first parents, while Adam and Eve did nothing. This is evident in the type of salvation we are granted through Christ's death for us on the cross. We are saved by grace, not by anything we merit or do ourselves. (See Ephesians 2:8)

Genesis also teaches us through the example of Joseph, who was also a 'type' for Christ. When we read the story of Joseph's life in Genesis 30-50, we see that he is the most beautiful type of Christ in the Scriptures, with seemingly no blot on the pages of his life to mar him. Joseph is loved by his father, clothed by him, and sent forth on a mission for him. His brothers, who plot to kill him, strip him of his robe, and sell him to the Gentiles of that age, the Egyptians – they hated him. Joseph's sorrow, suffering, shame, and exaltation are depicted in a series of word pictures. His brothers put him into a pit, he is bought for a price, he is deceived at Potiphar's house, put into prison, and then works in the palace in a highly revered position; finally, everyone, including his brothers, bow to him.

In these images, we can see a representation of Christ that resembles the life of Christ. The pit reminds us of what the Psalmist cried in Psalm 69:2, foreshadowing Jesus' own suffering: "I sink in deep mire where there is

no standing.” Secondly, Joseph is sold for twenty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. The Lord is also “sold” to those who would condemn him for thirty pieces of silver by his betrayer, Judas. (See Matthew 26:15 and 27:9) Next, Joseph becomes a servant in the Egyptians household, and as such he is falsely accused, despised, imprisoned, and numbered with the transgressors. The Lord could also identify with false accusation and imprisonment, saying, “They hated me without cause.” (See Psalm 69:4 and John 15:25) When Joseph is in prison he gives a message to two malefactors, just as Jesus gives a message of life and death to the two people on the crosses beside Him at Calvary. Joseph is ultimately exalted to the highest place in the palace as the Pharaoh with an honorable reputation. Jesus, similarly, is lifted up and glorified as the Savior of the world, sitting at the highest throne on the Father’s side. He has been exalted to the apex of the universe. However, we see that the Lord is described by Paul as the One who voluntarily empties himself, makes himself of no reputation, and takes upon him the form of a servant. (See Philippians 2:5-11) But the ‘anti-type’ of Jesus goes far lower and humbler than the type of Joseph. Jesus humbles himself and becomes obedient unto death, even death on a cross, so for this we have no parallel in Joseph’s life. The Lord goes far below Joseph in his humiliation, and rises far above him in his exaltation.

Typology of the Holy Spirit

The Old Testament also utilizes several symbols of the Holy Spirit. For example, in Exodus 13:21-14:19, the pillar of cloud represents God’s presence among the Israelites, guiding, admonishing, and assuring them of

His faithful leading, for much the same purpose that the Holy Spirit was granted to God's people much later at Pentecost. In the wilderness, redemption for Israel had been accomplished, the paschal Lamb had been slain, and the blood sprinkled. But the blood-bought people now required a guide, so God gave them the pillar of cloud to lead them by day and night. This pillar offered God's presence, protection, and provision. It sheltered them from the sun, it gave light in the darkness, and it never left them until they arrived in the land. The Lord said much the same thing about our present Guide, the Spirit we have been given by Jesus.

In John 14:15-16, Jesus promises, "And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." A second example of a type is in Exodus 17:1-7, where Moses strikes a rock to provide water for the grumbling Israelites. Here, the water that flowed from the rock is a type of the Holy Spirit, since water is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit that was employed by Jesus Himself several times.

The first time Jesus refers to water and the Holy Spirit, He identifies it as an upspringing water in John 4:13-14, when He speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well. He says, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." Again in John 3:5-8, Jesus speaks about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and references the "living water" of the Holy Spirit. He says, "Unless one is

born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Lastly, Jesus refers to the overflowing nature of the Holy Spirit in John 7:37-38, when he promises the coming of the Holy Spirit: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

A third example of the Holy Spirit as a ‘type’ in the Old Testament scriptures is through the imagery of wind. This type is seen in Ezekiel 37:9, where Ezekiel testifies to this ‘wind’ giving mighty power, saying, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”” This wind identified in Ezekiel is a representation of the Holy Spirit that came upon the early church at Pentecost. Today, we need the mighty pushing of the Pentecostal winds to blow upon us as individuals and assemblies.

Typology of the Word

Furthermore, the manna is a ‘type’ of the written word as well as the living word, which we identify as Christ. The manna for the Israelites’ provision was a supernatural gift. It was small in size, pure, gathered daily by stooping, yet nevertheless despised by the grumbling multitude. These characteristics resemble the written Word as believers now use it as their spiritual food, a small book that is holy, divine, read daily for nourishment and at times an undesired discipline for believers. We can also see how the manna is also a type for the living Word, because it was given in a time of great need. The glory of God was linked with the giving

of the manna; it was a free gift from God, it came down to where the people were, and met a daily need. It was sweet to the taste, and ultimately became the lifeline of Israel that sustained them for forty years. Our living Word, Jesus, is also a free gift from God that came to earth to be where His people were, and still daily meets all of His people's needs. Indeed, if we consider the quantities involved with the collection of the manna, the result is startling. There were around two million Israelites, and each day each person gathered one omer, or the equivalent of six pints. This means that everyday, twelve million pints, or nine million pounds, were gathered to feed the multitude! In one year, that is one million tons, and in forty years, that makes forty million tons. In other words, God sent manna amounting to forty million tons to provide for the Israelites' need over those forty years. In much the same way, the written Word and the Living Word, Jesus, have met the spiritual needs of millions upon millions of saints throughout the ages and will continue to do so until the Church is raptured into His presence!

New Testament Use of Typology

There are also alternative names for the term "type," such as symbol, prefiguration, foreshadow, or example. The types of the Old Testament have the same function as the parables of the New Testament in that they are windows to seeing and understanding a certain subject or object in terms the audience can understand. Consider the parable of the lost sheep we read about in Matthew 18. This image of sheep and the idea of Israel as secure or straying sheep is rampant in Old Testament passages such as Jeremiah 13 and 23, Psalm 23 and 119, and Ezekiel 34 among others. Or consider the letters to

the churches that appear in Revelation 2-3, in which several images recall Old Testament imagery or vocabulary commonly known or recognized at the time of Jesus. (See Ezekiel 1, Daniel 1 and 7, Isaiah 45, 49, and 55) It is extremely helpful and important for us to know that the typology of the Old Testament is the alphabet and vocabulary in which the language of the New Testament is written. For example, it is said that "the New is in the Old contained, the Old is by the New explained." Many prophecies or images that appear in the Old Testament do indeed become more deeply understood and explained with new clarity through the events, characters, and statements of the New Testament.

Jesus and Paul's Typology

Both Paul and the Lord showed how important the subject of typology is in their teaching. Paul, in Romans 15:4, says, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning." He also states in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 that the wilderness experiences of the children of Israel, spanning the history of Israel from the place of bondage to the land of promise, happened to them for our example, as figures or types that were recorded to teach us important lessons. Paul also uses them as examples or types to instruct us as we travel homeward, to avoid lusting after evil things. He says, "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them...Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of

them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” Secondly, the Lord, the great anti-type, also used certain types to explain significantly important truths. In Numbers 21:4-9, we see the story of Moses providing the people with the brazen serpent on a pole, lifted up, so that those who might look upon it would live. This “lifting up” of the serpent on the pole is a type of the Lord Jesus, who was lifted up on another pole so that those who looked upon Him and believe might live too. In the gospel of John this type is confirmed with Jesus’ statement: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:14) A third representation exists in the story of Jonah, which is explained in Matthew’s gospel by Jesus Himself. Jonah’s time spent in the belly of the whale is represented by Jesus’ time between his death and resurrection as the sign that He has conquered death. Jesus predicts his death and the repentance of the world through his atonement for their sin using this analogy. He says, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.” (Matthew 12:39-41) Lastly, Jesus uses the city of Sodom in Matthew 11:23-24 to recall a type that

represents unrepentant cities, like Capernaum. He laments the doom of the Capernaum in its trying to make itself known in the world much like Sodom had attempted to do. Jesus cries, "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

Typology in the Gospel of John

If we examine the gospel of John, we will find constant references to types. In John 1:29, as we have previously examined, we see the Lamb of God that hearkens back to all the lambs that had been sacrificed from Abel's lamb in Genesis 3 to the final lamb offered in the temple as part of the Old Testament law given to the Israelites by the Lord Himself. At the end of John 1 there is a reference to Jacob's ladder and angels "ascending and descending" towards heaven and earth. (See Genesis 28:12) Jesus tells his new followers, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John 1:51) Secondly, in John 1:14, Christ is shown as the anti-type of the tabernacle from the Israelites' wanderings in the desert. John writes, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." This dwelling among us, as Jesus came to earth to live with us, was like Jesus pitching his tent and living with us in our camp. Later, the Lord again compares Himself to the temple. Jesus claims, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again." (John 2:19) This reference is most certainly referring to his death and resurrection after three days, where He Himself has become the

temple in which the people of God should worship. Jesus identifies Himself as the brazen serpent, which we have already examined. (See above and John 3:14) Thirdly, in John 6, Jesus tells us that he is the true manna, thereby identifying Himself as the spiritual food for God's people we have also previously examined. Again in John 7 we are reminded of Christ the smitten rock, which poured forth rivers of living water before Moses and his people. In John 8:12 and 9:5, Jesus calls Himself "the light of the world," which harkens back to the pillar of cloud and fire that we examined earlier. (See the "Typology of the Holy Spirit" above) In John 10:11, Jesus represents the anti-type of all the shepherds that are mentioned in the Old Testament, calling Himself the "good shepherd." John 13:3-17 presents a new and distinct type in how the Lord prepares His disciples for service in the Holy Place by the use of the laver. He shockingly cleanses His disciples through the washing of their feet. If we recall the use of the laver in the Old Testament law, it was extremely important for the purity regulations and holiness of the temple the priests were commanded to keep. Here the laver represents both a physical washing and a spiritual cleansing as the Lord equips His disciples to go out after His death and be witnesses for the gospel. Finally, in John 15, Jesus calls Himself the true vine, which contrasts and recalls the commonly named "vine" of the Israelites that God brought out of Egypt but who failed to produce fruit and bear witness to God through obedience to Him. (See Isaiah 5:1-7 and 27:2-6) John clearly draws on many Old Testament images to portray Christ in a new and distinct way with the knowledge of His death, resurrection, and ascension.

If we consider the entirety of the Old Testament, there is really no end to the symbolism and typology. A cursory look at symbols in the tabernacle, like the brazen altar, the laver, the covering of the skin, the candle stick, the oil, the altar of incense, the showbread, the scapegoat, the leper, the veil and the mercy seat all point to many themes, sayings, and teachings in the New Testament much later. (See Exodus 29-31 and Leviticus 14 and 16) Many types point to the suffering and death of the Lord and our sins having been borne away, but most of the typology that exists in Scripture can be examined through the lens of the teachings of Jesus and the events of His life on earth. They certainly all display our almighty and powerful Lord as the Savior of the world and sinless, perfect fulfillment of all the types illustrated in the Scriptures.