



THE BALANCED LIFE OF STEWARDSHIP

By

Ron Christian



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DEDICATED

TO

KAY AND JEAN JOY

AND

BOB AND MYRT BAILEY

BELOVED FAMILY MEMBERS

- Whose Commitment To God's Grace Has Been Tenacious**
- Whose Walk With God Has Been Faithful**
- Whose Balance In The Christian Life Has Been Attractive**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

INTRODUCTION

I love Jesus' Beatitudes as recorded in the 'Sermon On The Mount' in Matthew 5, 6, 7. Jesus describes the person who is blessed, that is, the person whose life is honored by God. Such a person, as Jesus describes him, is most to be envied, for such a blessed person enjoys the 'smile of God's approval' resting upon him, and such a person is also most attractive and winsome in the eyes of his fellow men! But sometimes I wish that Jesus would have given just one more 'Beatitude'. "Blessed are the BALANCED, for their lives will reflect the joy of Christian living which is most attractive to men and most honoring to God!" But, even though Jesus did not give such a beatitude, I do believe Jesus' life was most exemplary in showing us how to live a wholesomely balanced life. Even though He never compromised with sin, He never condemned sinners! Even though He was a man who was acquainted with sorrow, He never turned away children and He gladly laughed and played with them! Even though He called all men to repentance, He never focused on the terrible sinfulness of men, but instead on the glorious forgiveness of God! Even though He often spoke of the terrors of hell and the importance of resisting the devil, He accented His message with the love of God and the promise of eternal life in heaven! Even though Jesus was terrifying in His judgments against the spiritually- blinded and morally-hypocritical Pharisees, He spent most of His time speaking words of hope and forgiveness and healing to the masses of broken people who knew they were lost and undone and in need of a Savior! Jesus said He was "*meek and lowly in heart*" (Matthew 11:29), and yet Jesus could be terrible in His confrontations with those who were exploiting the poor and the weak, as when He took the whip in hand and chased out the dishonest money changers in the House of God! No one in all of history was more balanced in character and more attractive in personality than Jesus of Nazareth! He balanced all the virtues better than anyone - better than all the moralists in history put together!

Only those believers who imitate the example of Jesus Christ and who are filled with the Spirit can learn to live a truly balanced life. Even among sincere Christians, it is far too easy to go to "the left" or to "the right", instead of "staying in the middle of the road" during life's journey toward heaven. "Staying in the center of God's will", instead of "doing our own thing" in the name of "Christian liberty", is a goal constantly to be sought in the life of a sincere believer. Without plenty of prayer and godly counsel and Scriptural guidance, even "the elect of God" (i.e., the true followers of Jesus Christ) can become complacent and careless and confused and self-deceived! Jesus said, "*Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.*" Unless believers develop discernment in moral decision-making, they will inevitably drift off the well-beaten pathway (the center of the road which leads to heaven - where millions have traveled before them), and they will become sidetracked by the ideas and the philosophies of mere men! Learning to hold complementary truths in "holy tension" is not learned easily, but is, nevertheless, a mark of spiritual maturity. There is more than one angle from which the multi-sided truths of God can be viewed.

Paul, the greatest follower and most powerful apostle of Jesus Christ, was also a most balanced and sane-thinking person. It is true that, before his dramatic conversion to Christ, Saul the persecutor who became Paul the apostle, was a radical of the worst sort! He fanatically hunted down Christians and sought to destroy as many of them as he could, thinking all the time he was engaged in a holy campaign. He believed he was an unmatched champion for the God of his fathers and for the cause of Judaism (which he perceived as the true religion of the true God). It is no wonder that Paul, following his conversion, considered himself to have been “the chiefest of sinners”. Some scholars believe that Paul may have spent as long as fourteen years in the Arabian Desert, following his conversion, to be trained by the Holy Spirit in order that he might understand the deep thoughts and ways of the true and living God who had revealed Himself most wonderfully in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth (whom Paul previously had been bitterly persecuting). Why was the Apostle Paul so able “rightly to divide the word of truth” in his many writings and messages? Why was he so balanced in his teachings regarding Christ and the life of Christianity? Why was Paul so able to avoid all perversions of the truth, and so able to fight all heresies which often threatened to destroy the young believers in the churches which he founded? The answer to all of these questions lies in the fact that Paul was tutored long and carefully by none other than the blessed Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit who is the “Spirit of Truth”! It was the Spirit of God who enabled Paul so perceptively to understand the relationship between Law and Grace, between Faith and Good Works, and a host of other truths which must be held together in “holy tension”.

We today, amidst a barrage of false teachings which seek to pervert the truth of the Gospel, need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and of Jesus’ greatest apostle (Paul), and “earnestly to contend for the holy truth” which was revealed by God through Jesus and through His holy apostles in the Early Church. With so many competing ideas and philosophies and doctrines and teachings in our modern day, there is a great need for ‘balance’ and for sensitive understanding and discernment and wisdom - and also for simple God-given “common sense”. Of course, because of the fallen world in which we live, the best of human minds (even the minds of committed Christians) will always be subject to error in judgement and in interpretation of the Scriptural revelation. However, while perhaps no one can attain “perfect balance” or “errorless interpretation of Scripture”, it is nevertheless important that, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we all seek earnestly to understand the truths that were once delivered unto the Son of Man and unto His earliest followers (the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ in the days of the Early Church).

In Paul’s writing (in the twelve or thirteen books of the New Testament which he authored) it is easy to discern the beautiful BALANCE which he displays - balance between doctrine and ethics, balance between creed and life, balance between inner experience and outer conduct, balance between individual salvation and social action. Paul is not an “EITHER - OR” person, but a “BOTH - AND” person.

And so it is with modern-day Christians! Perhaps it is justifiable in certain situations to be an "Either - Or" person rather than a "Both - And" person, but it is usually true that cults are the result of an emphasis upon one side of the truth with a neglect of the complementary side of that same truth. Truth, out of balance, becomes perversion and often times outright heresy!

In living a successful and God-honoring life, we must be both militant and passive, both world-renouncing and world-participating, both introspective and extrovertive, both mystical and practical, both personal and social, both self-renouncing and self-assertive, both in love with one's self and in love with one's neighbors. Balance in living the Christian life often times means one must be a "Both-And" type of person.

Also, in living a successful and God-honoring life, we must be careful that our virtues do not become perverted - by a lack of Balance. For instance, love must not become mere sentimentality, faith must not become cruduality, hope must not become unrealistic optimism, sacrifice must not become fanatical monasticism, spirituality must not become Pharisaism, submission must not become servility, generosity must not become careless extravagance, mercy must not become compromise of justice, firm conviction must not become obstinacy and stubbornness, teachableness must not become unguarded gullibility, courage must not become foolhardiness, self-respect must not become conceit, justice must not become retribution, forgiveness must not become patronage, fidelity must not become indiscriminate loyalty, joyfulness must not become silliness, veracity must not become curtness, enthusiasm must not become fanaticism.

Experiencing BALANCE in one's thinking and in one's emotions and in one's decisions, results in making one mature in his Christian life and attractive and winsome in his Christian witness to others. Who are you most attracted to? I would venture to say that you are most attracted to persons (believers) who have found a BALANCE in the use of their Heads (mind), and of their Hearts (emotions), and of their Hands (actions). BALANCED Christians have learned to love God and to love others with all the powers of their being - including their mind, emotions, and will (Head, Heart, Hands). An unbalanced Christian is one who has become top-heavy in either his head or his heart or his hands. Too much "head" makes one a cold and analytical Rationalist! Too much "heart" makes one a sentimental Emotionalist! Too much "hand" makes one an irrational and an unfeeling Activist! A balanced Christian is one who thinks soundly, and who feels deeply, and who acts decisively - and all because he has learned to think Christ's thoughts, and to be stirred with Christ's compassion, and to be in step with Christ's revealed purposes and programs and plans. He has consecrated his mind and his emotions and his will to the sanctifying Holy Spirit who brings beautiful balance in the use of these God-endowed powers.

Part One of this book gives guidance on building a solid foundation for living a balanced Christian life. Basic truths such as Repentance and Saving Faith are discussed. Understanding the relationship between Law and Grace is also discussed, and the differences

between legalism (living by Rules) and Antinomianism (living without Rules) and true Christian Faith (living beyond Rules - by God's Grace) are contrasted. Learning how to "Christianize" one's thoughts and one's behavior is essential if one is to lay a solid foundation for the Christian life - a reliable foundation upon which a lasting superstructure can be built.

That which has been emphasized in this Introduction - namely BALANCE - is the focus of attention in Part Two of this book. Understanding that Salvation is not either the sole work of God or the sole work of persons will keep one from falling into fruitless debate. The debate unfortunately still rages among believers, as to whether or not Saving Faith is solely a gift from God given to sinners, or whether Saving Faith is an exercise of a sinner's response which God requires before one can be converted. Again, BALANCE is called for! It is not "Either - Or", but "Both - And"! Faith is both a gift from God and an exercise of man's positive volition in response to God's offer of salvation. In other words, a balanced view of salvation leads one to conclude that "Salvation Is A Cooperative Endeavor." This is the title of the first chapter in Part Two of this book. The following chapters in Part Two call for a delicate balance between several other complementary aspects of truth.

Part Three of this book centers on the life of stewardship. A balance Christian life is a life which recognizes that God is the Owner of everything, that persons are the recipients of all of God's good gifts (of time, talents, treasures, influence, etc.), and that each person will someday stand to give an account of the way he has used the gifts which he has received on earth from the hand of a loving God. Included in Part Three is a concluding chapter, the title of which will be "shocking" to some conscientious and sensitive-minded Christians. It is not my intention to choose a title for its "shocking effects" - 'The Helplessness of God' - but I borrowed this title from the great Bible scholar, William Barclay, to emphasize an often-neglected truth - namely, that, not only are human beings totally dependent upon God for life in all of its dimensions, but that God Almighty is dependent upon human beings for the fulfillment of His divine purposes on earth!

Doubtless, the all-powerful God could have chosen to accomplish His plans on earth by Himself (independent of mankind), but the point is, He did not! He limited Himself to fulfill divine purposes through human instrumentality! Someone noted that God has no hands but our hands to work for Him, and no feet but our feet to "run errands" for Him, and no heart but our heart through which He manifests compassion. Indeed, each believer is a part of the body of Christ on earth today! And each of those who serve the Lord as His servants (as His Body parts) on this earth, will someday give an account to the God who has given all good and perfect gifts to His children to use for His glory and for the earth's good! *"For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in our bodies."* (2 Corinthians 5: 10, New Living Translation).

Stewardship means (1) God is the Owner of all, (2) Man is the Receiver of all gifts which are to be used for God's glory and for the good of one's fellow men, (3) Man is accountable for all things which he has received from the hand of a loving God, and someday the quality of

his life and how he has used and developed his God-given gifts must be evaluated by Christ. For a believer, there will be no Judgement of Damnation for his sins (for his sins have already been judged by Christ when He died on the Cross), but there will be a Judgment of Evaluation (with appropriate rewards given by Christ to faithful believers who have sought to use their God-given gifts in God-honoring ways on earth).

A few words now regarding the format and the use of this book. At the beginning of each chapter, the clear division and outline is given in “overview”, to help the reader to understand the general purpose and content of the chapter to be studied.

This book can be used and read in several ways. It can be used and read like any other book - read sequentially with a developing theme. It can be used for serious and personal in-depth study, with a desire to discern the complementary truths regarding how to experience initial salvation and how to live a balanced Christian life. The layout of the book is designed in such a way that it can easily be used for an adult or youth Sunday School course. Because some of the chapters are short enough that occasionally two chapters could be adequately “covered” in one Sunday Morning during a Sunday School class, the nineteen chapters in the book could easily enough be completed during a typical Sunday School Quarter (thirteen Sundays).

The individual chapters contain enough content, and yet are short enough in length, that they could also well serve as material for small midweek study groups (for both adults and youth) within a local Church. The thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter are intended to enable the participating students in a class to review and to apply the relevant material in each chapter.

A couple additional possible uses for this book. There may be local pastors who are searching for new and fresh outlines and sermon material to share with their congregation. As author of this book, I spent much time and effort and prayer in preparing these messages (all of which were first preached to my own congregation). I pastored the First Free Methodist Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, for over 25 years (1967 - 1994) and I thoroughly enjoyed preparing and delivering hundreds of sermons to hundreds of precious believers (and also seekers) during my long-term pastorate at this one local Church. I would be delighted if these sermons could be used (partly or in their entirety) to bless other congregations. I can also envision this book as appropriate curriculum to be used in Christian Day Schools, probably in High School Departments, as a devotional study. Teens could profit from studying the basic truths of Christian beliefs regarding the meaning of salvation and the importance of living a balanced Christian life. Teens are sometimes characterized as “Extremists” (failing to understand the complementary sides of truth and the difficult paradoxes of the Christian Faith). So perhaps the content in this book could enable some teens to discover the “beautiful balance” in Christian teaching and (more importantly) in Christian living. If any teen (and for that matter, any adult) can be diverted from hurtful radicalism and fanaticism and imbalance (which can often lead to doctrinal error or even to outright heresy and cultism), then this book will have served an important purpose.

It is my hope and prayer that this book may be used by God in the lives of many believers to bring greater depth in understanding the beauty as well as the wonder of God's truth - especially the truth of practical and balanced and mature Christian living!

- Ron Christian -

FOR THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE

Jesus, my Savior, Brother, Friend,
On whom I cast my every care,
On whom for all things I depend,
Inspire, and then accept, my prayer.

If I have tasted of thy grace,
the grace that sure salvation brings;
It with me now thy Spirit stays,
And, hovering, hides me in his wings;

Still let him with my weakness stay,
Nor for a moment's space depart;
Evil and danger turn away,
And keep till he renews, my heart.

**IF TO THE RIGHT OR LEFT I STRAY,
HIS VOICE BEHIND ME MAY I HEAR,
RETURN, AND WALK IN CHRIST, THY WAY;
FLY BACK TO CHRIST, FOR SIN IS NEAR!**

-Charles Wesley -

Taken from a Free Methodist Hymnal, published in 1883 by Benjamin Titus Roberts, No. 524)

PART I

LEARNING TO 'CHRISTIANIZE' LIFE

CHAPTER 1

THE IMPORTANCE AND

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

CHAPTER 1

SUBJECT: THE IMPORTANCE AND THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 3: 1-12

TEXT: *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’”* Matthew 3:1

INTRODUCTION: God sent “John the Baptist” as “John the Preparer”, for John prepared the people for Jesus’ coming. John told them: *‘Get ready, the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world is coming.’* He preached repentance and preparation, getting the people ready for the appearance of Christ. Adequate preparation for the coming of Christ into one’s life always involves repentance.

I. WHY IS REPENTANCE SO DIFFICULT TO EXPERIENCE?

- A. Because Man Tends To Blame Others For His Own Wrong.
- B. Because Man Tends To Rationalize His Behavior.
- C. Because Man Tends To Procrastinate.
- D. Because Man Tends To Avoid Anything That Is Unpleasant Or Painful.
- E. Because Man Tends To Compare Himself Favorably With Other Persons.
- F. Because Man Finds It Difficult To Humble Himself And Admit That He Is Wrong.
- G. Because Man Tends to Hold On To The ‘Pleasures Of Sin.’

II. WHY IS REPENTANCE SO IMPORTANT?

- A. Because God’s Absolute Requirement For Salvation Is Repentance.
- B. Because The Purpose For Which Christ Came To Earth, And The Central Message Of The Gospel Is That All Persons Must Repent.
- C. Because Those Who Don’t Repent Will Perish In Their Sins.
- D. Because The Kingdom Of God Cannot Come Without Repentance.
- E. Because Personal And National Healing Can Only Come Through Repentance.

III. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF GENUINE REPENTANCE?

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CONCLUSION: Are you preparing yourself for the coming of Christ into your life? Adequate preparation demands genuine repentance. Turn from any known sin in your life, confess it to God, and follow Christ closely and conscientiously.

Chapter 1

SUBJECT: THE IMPORTANCE AND THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 3: 1-12

TEXT: *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’”* Matthew 3:1

INTRODUCTION: “In our nation’s capital, Washington, D.C., traffic is often interrupted by a motorcycle policeman with lights flashing and sirens screaming. Following him are one or two other policemen and finally a large limousine. In the automobile may be the President of the United States or some other important official of the Government. The policemen who speed their motorcycles before the limousine are important. They prepare the way and announce that someone of greater importance is coming.

“When God sent His Son into the world, He sent a sort of a motorcycle escort before the Savior. The escort wasn’t a group of uniformed policemen; it was one man. He didn’t come with screaming sirens and flashing lights. He came rather quietly. But like the modern motorcycle escort, he had a very important task. He was to say, *‘The Lord is near!’*” (The Christian Family Prepares For Advent; page 31.

“Most people call Jesus’ cousin ‘John the Baptist’. That’s not a bad name, but is it the best? Maybe he ought to be called something else, something like ‘John the Preparer’, for that was His most important purpose in life. God sent him to prepare the people for Jesus’ coming....John told them: *‘Get ready, the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world is coming.’*.....He preached repentance and preparation, getting the people ready for the appearance of Christ.” (Ibid, pg.32)

PROPOSITION: Adequate preparation for the coming of Christ into one’s life always involves repentance.

If repentance is so important as a requirement for proper preparation for Jesus’ coming into our lives, we must ask ourselves three questions: (1) Why is Repentance so difficult to experience? (2) Why Is Repentance so Important? (3) What is the Meaning of Genuine Repentance?

I. WHY IS REPENTANCE SO DIFFICULT TO EXPERIENCE?

Repentance is a subject of great relevance to both Christians and non-Christians. Sometimes we Christians tend to think that repentance is only for the sinners, but repentance is also for believers. I John 1:9 is addressed to believers as well as to non-

believers. It says, *"If we continue to confess our sins, faithful is He and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from every unrighteousness."* (Wuest's translation)

Judgment and repentance must begin at the household of God - the Church. I Peter 4: 17, 18 says, *"For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin first among God's own children. and if even we who are Christians must be judged, what terrible fate awaits those who have never believed in the Lord? If the righteous are barely saved, what chance will the godless have?"* In other words, if even Christians are subject to judgment by God and need to repent, how much more are non-Christians subject to judgment and in need of repentance? If believers are saved only because they submit to God's judgment which leads to repentance, how can sinners who are oblivious of their need for repentance ever going to stand a chance of being saved?

The narrow gate to heaven is the gate of repentance! Jesus said, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. for the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."* (Matthew 7: 13, 14)

Repentance is difficult for several reasons:

A. Because Man Tends To Blame Others For His Own Wrong.

Recall the fact that Adam blamed Eve for his disobedience in the Garden of Eden! How easy it is for us humans to place blame on someone else instead of accepting personal responsibility. Menninger, in his book "Whatever Became of Sin?", notes, "My proposal is for the revival or restoration of personal responsibility in all human acts, good and bad. Not total responsibility, but not zero either." (Pg. 178)

Repentance is difficult because there is a tendency in human beings to blame others.

At three I had a feeling of
Ambivalence toward my brothers,
And so it follows naturally
I poisoned all my lovers,
But now I'm happy; I have learned
The lesson this has taught;
That everything I do that's wrong
Is someone else's fault. (Ibid; pg.181)

It is hard to admit that we are wrong. Ego gets in the way of so many. But he who is always right is always wrong - wrong by his very attitude of self-righteousness!

B. Because Man Tends To Rationalize His Behavior.

Excuses, excuses and more excuses - man becomes an expert at justifying his behavior. I once counseled with a couple. She was raised in the Church and knew the Bible rather well and claimed definitely to be a born-again Christian. Her husband did not claim to be a Christian. She tried to justify a divorce, based upon her claim that he was insensitive to her. He did not want a divorce. He wanted the marriage to work. Recently she got pregnant and was so distraught with this fact, that - on her own and against his will - she went to a doctor and had an abortion performed! Think of it! A professing Christian, considering divorce against her husband's wishes and then getting an abortion against his will - and then rationalizing the whole thing on the basis that he was not a Christian and that he could not provide adequate security for her and a future child!

The way of repentance is closed when the way of rationalizing of sin is open.

C. Because Man Tends To Procrastinate.

I dealt with another couple who wanted me to marry them. I talked in detail with them about the importance of knowing Christ. She seemed to deny her need and he seemed to admit his need, but he said (in effect): "Every man's time comes to consider these matters, but I'm not sure it is my time yet." Procrastination! *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"* (Hebrews 2: 3)

The demons came to offer their suggestions, in turn, to Satan as to how mankind could best be deceived. Said one, "Tell them there is no God!" Satan said, "You fool, that won't deceive man, for men know there is a God!" Said the second demon, "Tell them there is no hell!" "You fool," said the Devil, "men know there is a hell!" Finally the third demon spoke up, "Tell them there is PLENTY OF TIME!!" "Yes, Yes," said Satan, "go tell them there is plenty of time. Millions of humans will be deceived!"

The way of repentance is closed when the way of procrastination is taken.

D. Because Man Tends To Avoid Anything That Is Unpleasant Or Painful.

Billy Graham notes that one of the most disturbing things about the last many years is the lack of clear preaching and emphasis on repentance. Because repentance involves honest reflection upon one's sinful nature, repentance usually is discomforting to one's self-image. It is easy to concentrate on one's good, but difficult to face the fact of one's sinful nature and sinful practices.

Some don't want to think about God because this contemplation causes a sense of uneasiness. J. B. Phillips says, "I think, if the truth were told, a great many people would have to admit that they are very far from satisfied with themselves. They may still have their ideals, but it is uncomfortably true that they don't live up to them. They may know what they ought to be, but that is very different from what they actually are. Many people keep themselves very busy not only to gain money and prestige, but simply to avoid facing this unpleasant contrast. It's far easier to reflect comfortably upon all our busyness or the number of our possessions than to think honestly about what sort of people we are." (Good News; pg. 3,4)

Conviction and repentance cause disturbance in people's lives. "There is mental conflict in all conversions. Conversion demands conversion upwards. The 'ought-to-be' stands over against the 'is' and demands change. That is disturbing, for it means an alteration of life and its plans and purposes. That means emotional disturbance. It is called 'conviction'." (Conversion; pg. 197) (E.S. Jones)

Years ago, when I was a young pastor, I proposed a daily religious (Christian) program to the program manager of a 'country western' radio station. Said the Program Manager to me, "The men who listen to our radio station are the rough and tough 'cowboys' and they would tend to be greatly disturbed if those kind of programs were heard. It would disrupt their feelings."

The way of repentance is open only if one is willing to experience the pain of conviction because of acknowledged sin in his life!

E. Because Man Tends To Compare Himself Favorably With Other Persons.

How many times have you heard people say, "I am just as good as that person who attends Church all the time!" Perhaps so, but what does that prove?

Remember what Jesus taught in Luke 18: 9-14.

"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The way of repentance is closed when one takes the way of self-righteousness.

F. Because Man Finds It Difficult To Humble Himself And Admit That He Is Wrong.

Once I tried to lead a man to Christ - a man who was very bitter because his wife, who was a professing Christian, deserted him and left him to raise a handicapped child. He was touched as I talked to him about Christ's love but then he quickly resumed his hard posture and said, "If that woman who was once my wife is allowed to go to heaven after what she has done to me, then I don't want to go to heaven. I would rather go to hell!" I shuddered as he said this, and I tried to appeal to him that God is willing to forgive her and that, after all, even though he claimed to be a good father, surely his sins were also great and that he needed forgiveness also. But his response was a self-righteousness stance. Only after I talked for some time about sin and forgiveness, did he make a slip and say, "Well, my sins in other areas of life are probably worse than my wife's sins." Hardly realizing what he had just admitted (he opened the subconscious door to all of his own guilt) - he quickly withdrew his statement and said, "What am I saying?"

The way of repentance is opened only when the door of honest confession of personal guilt and sin is opened!

Even with a multitude of opportunities and when a mass of evidence for the truth is presented to some people, they refuse to repent! The Bible says that the Goodness of the Lord is intended to lead a person to repentance. With all the blessings surrounding them, instead of surrendering to God in their attitude, some tend to take credit to themselves. Instead of repenting, they become more proud in their self-reliant attitudes!

Then, if the goodness of God doesn't lead them to repentance, God allows severity to enter their lives, seeking to get the attention of such proud men. When severity comes, instead of humbly turning to God in repentance, some turn further from God and begin to blame God for their calamities. They say, 'If God were a God of love He would not allow this to happen to me!'

So, men refuse to repent through either the goodness of God or the severity of God!

The very presence of Jesus among His people failed to produce repentance in many. *"Even in his own land and among his own people, the Jews, he was not accepted. Only a few would welcome and receive him."* (John 1: 11, Living Bible)

Jesus' mighty miracles failed to produce repentance in some. "Then he (Jesus) began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. *'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you Bethsaida: for if the mighty works done in you had even been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.'*" (Matthew 11: 20 ,21)

Some would refuse to repent even if one should rise from the dead and bring the message of God's love to them!

G. Because Man Tends To Hold On To The 'Pleasures Of Sin'.

There are pleasures in sin 'for a season'. One cannot come to God until he is thoroughly 'fed up' with his old way of life. The devil is constantly baiting sinners with another pleasure in sin. However, in the moral realm, there is the 'law of diminishing returns'. What gave great pleasure at one time, no longer gives the same degree of pleasure. Before there can be genuine repentance, a person must

pleasure in them. God alone is my pleasure!” (Ecclesiastes 12: 1,2)

The Bible speaks of ‘lovers of pleasure, more than the lovers of God’.
When men love sin, the way of repentance is closed.

II. WHY IS REPENTANCE SO IMPORTANT?

A. Because God’s Absolute Requirement For Salvation Is Repentance.

Acts 17: 30 says, *“God commandeth all men every where to repent.”*

B. Because The Purpose For Which Christ Came To Earth, And The Central Message of The Gospel Is That All Persons Must Repent.

“And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, ‘why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ And Jesus answered them, ‘those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’” (Luke 5: 30-32)

The central message of the New Testament sermons was repentance and faith. Said Peter in one of his sermons: *“Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3: 19)* If there is no repentance, there can be no refreshing, no joy from the Lord!

C. Because Those Who Don’t Repent Will Perish In Their Sins.

“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?..Though I say to the wicked, ‘you shall surely die’, yet if he turns (repents) from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he had taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die, none of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him: he shall surely live.” (Ezekiel 33: 11, 14-16)

Jesus said, *“Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”* (Luke 13: 3) The only options open to us are two: Either Repent or Perish!

D. Because The Kingdom Of God Cannot Come Without Repentance.

John the Baptist’s key message was repentance. The Kingdom of God could only be ushered in through repentance. *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* (Matthew 3:2)

Not only did John prepare for the coming of the kingdom by preaching repentance, but Jesus himself preached repentance. *“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”* (Matthew 4: 17)

E. Because Personal And National Healing Can Only Come Through Repentance.

“When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh, ‘By the decree of the king and his nobles: do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.’” (Jonah 3: 6-9)

Do Christians need to repent of sin? To answer that question, one must understand what sin is.

Sin, according to the Bible, includes a lot.

Sin is failure to be what we can be, i.e., being less than what God intends us to be. Fruitlessness is sin.

Sin is failure in human compassion, having a lack of pity for those who hurt. Failure to feed the hungry, to give water to the thirsty, to welcome the stranger, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and those in prison. These failures constitute serious sins according to Jesus in Matthew 25!

Sin is a failure to live in fellowship with our fellow men, i.e., having an unforgiving spirit.

Sin is the absence of love.

Sin is the absence of prayer. Said Samuel concerning his responsibility to his people: *“As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.”* (I Samuel 12: 23)

Sin is becoming a stumbling block to another. (Romans 14) Paul did not want to cause his brother to sin by needlessly offending him. By insensitivity we can cause another to sin.

Sin is self-willed living rather than God-centered living.

Sin is the enthronement of Self rather than the enthronement of God.

Sin is deliberate rejection of God’s loving invitation to disciplined living.

Is there a need for Christians to repent? Always, if one properly understands the full Biblical teaching on sin!

III. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF GENUINE REPENTANCE?

To understand the meaning of repentance, we must first note some of the misconceptions regarding repentance.

Repentance does not mean self-improvement. Reformation is human endeavor; transformation is divine renewal. A person may attempt to reform a pig by cleaning him up and dressing him in clean clothes. However, unless the nature of the pig can be changed, the pig will go back into the mud puddle. Man’s nature must be changed by God. Self-improvement is not sufficient. Man must be divinely transformed.

Repentance is not merely regret or remorse. Simply to feel sorrow about events in the past is not to change things in the present or in the future. Regret and remorse are both involved in repentance, but repentance is more than regret and remorse. The mourner’s bench is good, but one must do more than mourn. Combined with mourning must be a genuine change of the will and of the mind.

Some people save face by substituting religious activities for genuine repentance. “It is doing religious acts in order to avoid an authentic return to God. It is not outright hypocrisy; it is not a deliberate outward show to convince others of religiousness. It

is primarily an effort to convince oneself that he is right with God.” (The Psychology of Christian Experience; Mavis; pg. 13) Some people substitute membership in a Church, or baptism, or participation in the Lord’s Supper, or congregational confession for personal repentance. Writes E. Stanley Jones, “Many today are converted to phenomena surrounding Christianity, the music, the architecture, the ritual, the eloquence of the preacher, the standing it gives one in a community to be a member of the Church, the keeping up of mores from generation to generation - it’s the thing to do - and other such phenomena surrounding the Christian movement. But there is no vital saving contact with this saving Person. It’s all secondhand and marginal. It lacks luster and vitality. It’s an echo instead of a voice. They have not given themselves, so no transformed self emerges.” (How To Be A Transformed Person; pg. 79)

Repentance is not only recognizing the fact of sin and the seriousness of sin, but repentance is also recognizing one’s inability to save himself from the consequences of sin, in terms of both spiritual death and eternal death. To have a true spirit of repentance is to acknowledge one’s personal helplessness. Before one is ready to receive God’s help, he must declare his moral bankruptcy!

Repentance, next, involves a confession of sin to God. Confessing means ‘agree with’. One must agree with God’s evaluation of sin and God’s provision for sin. Repentance means rejecting man-made solutions for salvation, and accepting God’s sole solution for salvation.

Repentance is “a moral U-turn. A change of mind toward sin, from one of embracing to one of separation.” (Stanley Walters) Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death.*” (II Corinthians 7: 9, 10 RSV)

Writes John Murray, “The change of heart and mind and will principally respect four things; it is a change of mind respecting God, respecting ourselves, respecting sin, and respecting righteousness.” (Redemption Accomplished and Applied; pg. 114)

The prodigal son is an example of true repentance. He changed his mind about his sin. He saw the results of sin and came to despise his sinful way of life. He turned his back on his former way of life - he made a moral U-turn - and went to his father. His repentance began with regret and remorse, but it ended up in action. Repentance is basically an action of the will - “I will go to my father.”

Genuine repentance is shown by a life of righteous deeds. To those who came to be baptized, John the Baptist said, “***Before being baptized, prove that you have turned***

from sin by doing worthy deeds.” (Matthew 3: 8, Living Bible)

CONCLUSION:

Are you preparing yourself for the coming of Christ into your life? Adequate preparation demands genuine repentance. Turn from any known sin in your life, confess it to God, and follow Christ closely and conscientiously.

CHAPTER 1

QUESTIONS

1. Basically, what was the main purpose for which Jesus' cousin, John, came into the world, and how can his life's mission best be described?
2. Why is the popular verse I John 1:9, which is often used to witness to non-believers, a verse which applies also to Christians?
3. Tell what is meant by the statement: "Judgement and repentance must begin at the household of God - the Church." (Note I Peter 4: 17, 18)
4. What does Adam's blame of Eve for his disobedience to God, in the Garden of Eden, teach us regarding the difficulty that man has in repenting of his sins?
5. Give an illustration from your own life, or from the life of someone you have observed, which shows how rationalization of wrong moral behavior has kept one from experiencing godly sorrow and genuine repentance of sin.
6. What is one of Satan's chief ways to deter persons from coming to Christ in true repentance and genuine saving faith? (Note Hebrews 2: 1-3)
7. As it relates to man's need for repentance, tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It's far easier to reflect comfortably upon all our business or the number of our possessions than to think honestly about what sort of people we are."
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "The way of repentance is open only if one is willing to experience the pain of conviction because of acknowledged sin in his life!" Do you personally recall the mental conflict which you experienced during the time of your "awakening" to the reality of your lost condition previous to your conversion to Christ?
9. Why does comparing one's self favorably with others hinder one in making a true repentance? (Note Luke 18: 9-14)
10. If a sinner does not accept the goodness of God as his motivation to repent (Romans 2:4), how does God often seek to bring a sinner to an acknowledgment of his need for repentance of sin and surrender to Christ as Savior?

11. What, according to Ecclesiastes 12: 1-2, keeps some people from repenting of their sins?
12. According to Acts 17: 30, whom does God command to repent of their sins? Why?
13. Is it possible for a person to be spiritually refreshed and experience the joy of the Lord without repentance? (Note Acts 3: 19)
14. Why is an attitude of self-sufficiency and self-reliance so detrimental in one experiencing the forgiveness of his sins? (Note Luke 5: 30-32)
15. According to Ezekiel 33: 11, 14-16, what hope is there for a wicked person? What objective evidence must be present in a person's life, to indicate that he has experienced true repentance before God? Is it ever God's will that a wicked person should die in his sins? (Note Ezekiel 33: 11; Isaiah 1: 18; Isaiah 55: 1; Ezekiel 18: 31; Matthew 23: 37; 2 Peter 3: 9).
16. Do you believe the following statement reflects Biblically-based realism: "The only options open to us human beings are two: Either Repent or Perish!"? (Note Luke 13: 3) Do you believe that too often sinners are approached with the promises of forgiveness without confronting them with their need to experience sorrow for their sins and genuine repentance because of their sins? Is it possible to become a true follower of Christ until one "turns his back" on his sins (i.e., makes a moral U-turn)? Why or why not?
17. What relationship is there between repentance and personal healing? (Note Jonah 3: 6-9; Acts 3: 19; Isaiah 66: 2; 2 Corinthians 7: 10)
18. Is repentance the call of God for sinners (unbelievers) only, or is it the call of God to believers also? (Note 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalms 139: 23,24)
19. Put a check by those following statements which you do not agree with or which you do not really understand:
 - _____ a. Sin is failure to be what we can be, i.e., being less than what God intends us to be.
 - _____ b. Sin is a failure in human compassion, having a lack of pity for those who hurt.
 - _____ c. Sin is failure to live in fellowship with our fellow men, i.e., having an unforgiving spirit.

- d. Sin is the absence of love.
- e. Sin is the absence of prayer, i.e., failing to pray consistently for needy people you know.
- f. Sin is becoming a “stumbling block” to another Christian, i.e., causing your brother in Christ needlessly to be offended by your actions.
- g. Sin is self-willed living rather than God-centered living.
- h. Sin is the enthronement of self rather than the enthronement of God in your life.
- I. Sin is deliberate rejection of God’s loving invitation to a disciplined lifestyle.
- j. Sin is any action in your life which is not motivated by faith in God and goodwill towards others.

20. Check those following statements with which you disagree:

- a. Every Christian sins every day, in word or in thought or in deed.
- b. Christians are simply forgiven sinners.
- c. It is not the perfection of your life, but the direction of your life that really counts.
- d. Sin is really a virtue, for the more you sin, the more the grace of God has opportunity to be exercised in powerful forgiveness.
- e. If a Christian fails immediately to repent of his isolated act of sin against God, he immediately loses his relationship with God and he becomes a backslidden person.
- f. After one becomes a true Christian, it is impossible for him ever to sin again.
- g. One who professes to be a Christian, and yet who presently is practicing a life of sinning, is no longer a Christian.
- h. Christians must confess their sins to one another on a regular basis if they expect to continue to experience forgiveness and healing.
- I. Jesus came to earth to save His people FROM their sins, not in their sins, according to Matthew 1:21, therefore true Christians do not practice sinning. There is no such thing as a “sinning Christianity.”
- j. As long as a Christian is on this earth, he will always be plagued with sin, for sin is inseparably connected with the human body.
- k. It is possible for a Christian never to deliberately break God’s moral laws, according to I John 2:1, but if a Christian does sin, he has an Advocate (Jesus Christ) to plead his “case” before Almighty God.

- _____ l. As long as a believer continues to walk in the light of God's Truth, he continues to enjoy fellowship with God and to experience cleansing from all of his sins.
- _____ m. According to 2 Chronicles 7: 14, believers need to repent of the wickedness in their lives, which wickedness hinders God from bringing national healing.
- _____ n. According to James 5: 20, it is possible for a believer to wander away into a lifestyle of sinning, and eventually to experience spiritual death if he refuses to repent of his sins and return to Christ for spiritual restoration.
- _____ o. According to I John 5: 16, if you see a Christian sinning in a way that does not end in death, you should ask God to forgive him and God will give him life.
- _____ p. One should not be very concerned when he sins, for it is "God's business to forgive sins", and God will forgive all sins of a Christian automatically (i.e., whether or not a sinning Christian actually confesses his sins to God).
- _____ q. Repentance is a concern only for non-believers, not for believers.
- _____ r. Repentance is not a one time experience which initially brings an unbeliever into the "family of God", but repentance is a constant attitude which all true believers maintain as they always humbly recognize their need for God's ongoing grace and mercy and forgiveness.
- _____ s. If a Christian "regards iniquity in his heart" (Psalms 66: 18), the Lord will not hear him.
- _____ t. A Christian husband who mistreats his wife (I Peter 3: 7) and who refuses to repent of his sin against his wife, will not have ready answers to his prayers.

21. Put a T beside those statements with which you agree, and a F beside those statements with which you disagree.

- _____ a. Repentance means self-improvement, or human reformation.
- _____ b. Repentance is the first step towards divine transformation of a sinner's life.
- _____ c. Repentance is not merely regret or remorse over one's wrongs in his life.
- _____ d. Simply to feel sorrow about events in the past is not to change things in the present or in the future.

- _____ e. Repentance is a change of mind regarding sin, from an attitude of embracing sin to an attitude of forsaking sin, a moral U-turn.
- _____ f. Repentance is more than simply mourning over one's sins, for true repentance involves a genuine change of one's will and of one's mind, not simply a grief in one's heart because of one's wrong doings.
- _____ g. Some people "save face" by substituting religious activities for genuine repentance.
- _____ h. Repentance is laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over from the ground floor.
- _____ i. Before one is ready to receive God's help, he must declare his moral bankruptcy.
- _____ j. Before one can really get "right with God", he must spend much time agonizing over his sins, resulting in shedding many, many tears.
- _____ k. Before a person can really come to know God, he must confess each individual sin he has committed.
- _____ l. There is a "godly repentance" that leads to forgiveness and spiritual healing, and there is such a thing as a "worldly repentance" which leads to spiritual death - as seen in the examples of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot.
- _____ m. Repentance means rejecting man-made solutions for salvation, and accepting God's sole solution for salvation.
- _____ n. True repentance may begin with remorse and regret, but it always ends with an action, i.e., a new moral direction in one's life.
- _____ o. One may truly repent before God without any necessary change in one's behavior or lifestyle or values.
- _____ p. Many people engage in "easy Believism" rather than in true repentance, and are thus self-deceived in thinking they are Christians when they really are not born again.

CHAPTER 2
GOD'S RULES -
LIBERATING OR ENSLAVING?

CHAPTER 2

SUBJECT: GOD'S RULES - LIBERATING OR ENSLAVING?

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 20: 1-18

TEXT: *"Love does no wrong to anyone, so love satisfies all of God's requirements."* (Romans 13: 10, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION: Just as there can be no happiness or harmony or meaning without rules in a common game like football or basketball, so there can be no happiness or harmony or dialogue or meaning in life and in relationships without the recognition of God-given objective moral laws and standards.

- I. **IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Liberation).**
- II. **MEANING OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Respect).**
- III. **MOTIVATION FOR KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Love).**

CONCLUSION: Love is the great motivation to keep God's laws the best the believer knows how, and love is also the great humbler that keeps the believer striving to better serve others. The love-filled person constantly feels that he is a debtor to both God and to man.

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TEXT: *"Love does no wrong to anyone, so love satisfies all of God's requirements."* (Romans 13: 10, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION:

How would you feel if, while you were playing basketball or football, the rules were changed in the middle of the game? Worse yet, how would you feel if, all of a sudden, in the middle of a football game, all the rules were eliminated? Suppose the officials were suddenly taken off the field, and it was announced over the loud speakers to all the players on the field: "For the next hour, there are no rules. Everyone is simply to do whatever he feels like. Everyone is to play by his own rules. No flags will be thrown and no penalties will be exacted. Every player is to play by his own instincts and desires."

I can hear your reply now! I would not be surprised if you said, "But it is impossible to play any game if there are no rules or limits or expectations or standards! If everyone played by his own rules, the game would be totally unpredictable and completely 'unfair'." But, if there are no objective, written rules by which the game is played, no one can say any action on the part of players is 'unfair' or 'unjust'. Actions of self-centered players who are guided by their own desires might be considered 'inconvenient' or 'painful', but they could not be considered 'unfair' or 'unjust'. To say any action is 'unfair' or 'unjust' or 'unlawful' is to assume the presence and reality of an objective set of rules which all the players respect and seek to follow. A harmonious and meaningful game can only be played if there are clearly-defined and consistently enforced rules! Without rules, there will be disharmony, unpredictability, a hollering match with tempers flying, and an eventual dissolution of the game!

It is also true that without the reality of God's rules and without submitting to God's rules for life, there can be no meaningful dialogue, no praise for so-called 'good' behavior, and no 'blame' for so called 'bad' behavior. In fact, without rules, there is no such thing as 'good' or 'bad'. In fact, without rules, everything is subject to personal taste, preference and desires. Life becomes a shouting match, a battle involving everyone trying to get his or her own way. Everyone does that which is right in his own eyes! Total confusion and ultimate anarchy will ultimately result! The 'game of life' will shut down. Just as there can be no happiness or harmony or meaning without rules in a common game like football or basketball, so there can be no happiness or harmony or dialogue or meaning in life and in relationships without the recognition of God-given objective moral laws and standards.

PROPOSITION:

The Ten Commandments compose God's guidelines for living, God's rules for harmonious and happy relationships in the so-called 'game of life.'

We must recognize the consequence of moral subjectivism, i.e., an attempt to live without God's Ten Commandments. We must understand the essence - the true meaning - of the Ten Commandments as they are reduced to their simplest possible attitude for right living. We must understand the source of power available to man which enables him to keep the Ten Commandments.

Let us, with these statements in mind, look at (1) The Importance of the Ten Commandments, (2) The Meaning of the Ten Commandments, (3) The Motivation to Keep the Ten Commandments.

I. IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Liberation)

How important are the Ten Commandments? Are the Ten Commandments outdated, irrelevant, and impractical" or are the Ten Commandments still relevant, important, compelling, and essential for abundant living? Are God's rules 'liberating' or are they 'enslaving'? Are the Ten Commandments 'Obsolete' or are they 'Absolute'?

In his Commencement Address, delivered at Duke University in May of 1987, Ted Koppel made the following statements about our modern-day moral 'descent': "We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. Shoot up if you must, but use a clean needle. Enjoy sex whenever and with whomever you wish, but wear a condom. No! The answer is No! Not because it isn't cool or smart or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward, but No because it is wrong...In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It's a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions." (Flyleaf of 'Turning Point', Marvin Olasky).

Have the 'Ten Commandments' lost their 'punch', their power to influence our modern society? Have we turned the 'Ten Commandments' into the 'Ten Suggestions'?

What is the consequence of ignoring or denying the 'Ten Commandments'? The very last statement in the Biblical book of Judges is a description of our modern-day moral (or better stated, immoral) scene. "*In those days...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" (Judges 21: 25) Moral relativism - a situation in which people live by their own selfish instincts rather than by the objective moral laws of God! No 'blacks' and no 'whites', only 'grays'. Notes Swindoll, "'Do your own thing' is not some modern motto. It began in the days of the Judges. They were adrift in a sea of shifting

feelings and carnal impulses. Each person did what felt good. And so, in light of that, we should not be surprised to read these words earlier in the book: *'The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord'* (Judges 6: 1). When folks are free to choose the path of least resistance, wrong doing becomes commonplace - it's the direction most choose to go." (Living Beyond The Level Of Mediocrity, 243)

What are the consequences - corporately and individually - when God's moral laws (the Ten Commandments) are ignored, denied, or rejected?

- (1) **Social Chaos** - Everyone does that which is right in his own eyes! No order in society! Selfishness rules! No respect for the rights of others! No restraints to the expressions of lust! Undisciplined society! Might makes right! The poor are neglected, the weak are destroyed! Society is topsy-turvy! "The challenge we face is the tidal wave of militant anti-Christian belief engulfing society and the chaos it leaves in its wake: the AIDS epidemic, the dissolution of the family, the abortion holocaust, growth in economic weakness, the crisis of judge-made law, teen pregnancy, widespread financial fraud. These difficult problems and many others are largely the by-product of the humanist idea that man is the measure of all things and that all ethical standards are relative." (Turning Point; Marvin Olasky, pg. 7)
- (2) **Moral License** - When there are no standards by which to judge wrong behavior, people tend to take the path of least resistance. They tend to live by their passions. Sexual immorality is rampant. They tend to live for mere physical pleasure, guided by their own hedonistic motto "If it feels good, do it!"

If there are no moral absolutes by which one ought to guide his behavior, but if instead all decisions are the results of one's own subjective ideas and physical drives, then no one can condemn any sexual practice, whether it is what most consider gross and debased acts such as homosexual acts, or whether it is the widespread practice of fornication and adultery. "If subjectivism in ethics is sound philosophy, i.e., if there is no objective moral order in reference to which the act of the individual is right or wrong, then complete permissiveness is reasonable. If I believe that there is no objective moral order, I have no rational justification for objecting, on moral grounds, to anything that any man chooses to do to me. I may be able to strike him, or to shout at him (if he tries to rape me or tries to sexually abuse my daughter or if he callously spreads AIDS (added by R. Christian)), but I cannot rationally enter into dialogue with him, because, according to our premise, there is nothing to talk about. If subjectivism is accepted, the other man's desire to harm me is the end of the story, so far as rational discourse is concerned." (Elton Trueblood; The New Man For Our Time; pg. 106-107)

- (3) **Mental Confusion** - Unless there is a clearly defined objective standard, not subject to man's changing ideas, there will be great mental confusion regarding the values of life or relationships. For instance, if there is no set of objective moral standards, then anyone's ideas are as 'valid' as anyone else's ideas. Hitler's idea regarding a super race is 'valid' on the battlefield of ideologies, if one denies the Biblical revelation which clearly states that God loves everyone equally. B. F. Skinner's conceptions that man is merely an environmentally-determined animal is a 'valid' option in the marketplace of ideas, if one denies the Biblical declaration that man is a free-moral-agent created with the power to choose his own individual destiny for time and for eternity! Fraud's contention that man is a creature, solely controlled by his lower sexual drives, is again a 'valid' conclusion if one denies the Biblical affirmation that man is mainly a spiritual being who is capable (with God's enabling grace) to control his lower physical drives!

To deny the objective laws of God and the divinely-revealed truths of God is to fall into the quagmire of 'mental confusion'.

- (4) **Selfish Violence** - "As a man thinks, so is he." If one thinks that man is merely a product of a long evolutionary process, that man is simply a complex animal with no eternal spirit and with no inherent or eternal worth, then it is not hard to see why humans are treated as 'cogs' in a machine, or as 'pons' in the hands of a totalitarian government, or as disposable military tools in the hands of an aggressor power. If man has no eternal value, if he is merely a speck of matter on an insignificant planet that came into existence by mere chance, then it is not difficult to understand why the individual has no 'inalienable rights' to be honored. It is not difficult to understand why this chemically-determined creature can easily be eliminated in one of many ways: on the front lines of a battlefield, through an abortion before he ever sees the light of day, by starvation as an older person (euthanasia), or by neglect or abuse as an unwanted child (infanticide).

If one denies the reality of objective Moral Laws (as The Ten Commandments), then why should one say that the democratic ideas of Abraham Lincoln were any better than the philosophy and practices of Adolf Hitler? If there is no God-revealed law that says "Thou shalt not murder", then one cannot pronounce any moral condemnation against Hitler! If there is no God-revealed standard which states "Love your neighbor as you love yourself", then one cannot praise Abraham Lincoln for his love of the black slaves and for his "Emancipation Proclamation"! Without the reality of God-revealed, objective moral standards and values, there is no basis, morally-speaking, for either blame or for praise, in terms of ideas and behavior.

Notes Elton Trueblood, "If we propose to operate on the basis of ethical subjectivism, we have no right to claim that anything, anywhere, is really wrong. The systematic tolerance that recognizes both 'your truth' and 'my truth' leaves no room for dialogue. What was to keep Hitler from claiming that persecution of the Jews was his truth? But if rational dialogue is logically impossible, what then? All that remains is the capacity to shout the other fellow down, or to hit him over the head with a chair, and this, in fact, is what occurs. Violence is inevitable if reason is undermined!" (The New Man For Our Time: pg. 107, 108)

II MEANING OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Respect)

Recognizing the practical and the terrible implications of the philosophy of 'ethical subjectivism', is one way of increasing one's appreciation of and commitment to God's 'Ten Commandments'. Without recognition of and obedience to Ten Commandments, society will eventually be reduced to total anarchy, or it will fall into the hands of a totalitarian dictator whose 'might makes right'!

If the Ten Commandments are this important, then what, in essence, is involved in 'keeping' The Ten Commandments?

The essence of The Ten Commandments is found in one word: Respect.

- (1) Respect for God's place in your life - "*You shall have no other gods before me*". He is Lord and Master. He must have the same place in your life as He has in His great Universe - first place!
- (2) Respect for God's nature in your understanding - "*You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything.*" Jesus said that they that worship God must worship Him in 'spirit and in truth'. To worship God 'in spirit' is to worship Him in reality in contrast to worshipping God through the medium of a false literal image or false conceptual image. "Idolatry is carving out things to represent God and pretending that those things are God or that they contain God...idolatry occurs when the symbol of Deity is confused with the reality of Deity and evolves into the object of our praise and adoration." (Robert Kopp)
- (3) Respect for God's Name which represents His character - "*You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*" When you misuse or profane a person's name, you really profane a person's character. Why? For "a person and his name are so closely associated and related that we ourselves feel that our personal honor is involved in the use that is made of our name." (Maurer)

- (4) Respect for God's special Day which, for Christians, is the First Day of the week - Resurrection Day. When believers gather together each Sunday to worship corporately, they are witnessing their belief in the reality of the resurrection of Christ and their faith in the power of God to save sinners from death and for everlasting life!
- (5) Respect for Parents as God's special gift to children. - "*Honor your father and your mother.*" Respect for parent's personhood and a parent's loving discipline is the first and the most fundamental respect that a child can learn. Wrote Paul, "*Children, obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you. Honor your father and mother. This is the first of God's Ten Commandments that ends with a promise. And this is the promise: that if you honor your father and mother, yours will be a long life full of blessing.*" (Ephesians 6: 1-3, Living Bible)
- (6) Respect for the sanctity of life - "*You shall not murder.*" Life, to God, is sacred and is not to be destroyed - whether that destruction is self-destruction (suicide) or destruction of another, or whether that destruction of another is physical or spiritual.
- (7) Respect for the person and body of others - "*You shall not commit adultery.*" Marriage is instituted of God, and sexual relations are to be confined alone to the context of a loving relationship between a husband and wife who are committed for a life time - 'till death do us part'. To engage in sex outside of marriage is to involve yourself in the selfish act of enjoying another's body without committing yourself to that other person's spirit and soul. The use of another's body without commitment for life to that person's total being is to exploit another for one's own temporary satisfaction. From a Biblical viewpoint, this is not 'love' but 'lust', and lust is the opposite of respect! Wrote the writer of Hebrews: "*Honor your marriage and its vows, and be pure; for God will surely punish all those who are immoral or commit adultery.*" (Hebrews 13: 4, Living Bible)
- (8) Respect for another's property - "*You shall not steal.*" *Why is stealing wrong?* Because it infringes upon someone's rights. Because stealing is getting something that one wants for nothing, at the expense of someone else.
- (9) Respect for another person's reputation - "*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*" There are many ways to destroy another person's reputation - intentionally distributing lies (slander),

repetition of a report without careful investigation (tale-bearing), implying another's guilt (false impression), failing to defend someone against an untruth which is stated 'behind his back' (silence), attributing an ulterior motive to a person (imputation of motive), circulation of a story without certainty of facts (rumor).

- (10) Respect for proper desires which bring honor to God - "*You shall not covet*". Notes Matthew Henry, "The tenth commandment strikes at the root. It implicitly forbids all desire of doing that which shall be an injury to our neighbor and all inordinate desire of that which shall be gratification to ourselves."

III. MOTIVATION FOR KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Love)

Jesus did not come to destroy the Moral Law, but He came to fulfill the Moral Law. How is the Moral Law fulfilled? When God's love is imparted to the human heart! God promised, through Jeremiah, that the day would come when God would establish a 'New Covenant' with his people. "*The time is coming' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them.'* declares the Lord. '*This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time', declares the Lord, 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord", because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'*" (Jeremiah 31: 31-34)

Because of the atoning work of Christ on the Cross, God is able to forgive mankind's sins. The laws of God are now written on the heart of the repentant believer, not on mere tablets of stone as in the days of Moses! When God changes the human heart, the new nature desires to keep God's Laws. The expulsive power of a new affection! "*When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!*" (II Corinthians 5: 17, Living Bible)

Love is the fulfillment of all the Ten Commandments, and it is the Holy Spirit who imparts God's love to the surrendered heart of the repentant sinner and of the humble believer!

Is Christianity a list of demands - laws - or is Christianity a reservoir of resources - offers? Christianity is not a list of demands and prohibitions! Christianity is a life of love and joy because of a personal relationship with Christ.

We are not saved by law-keeping, but if we are saved, we will obey God's laws and we will serve God's Christ!

Freedom does not come from throwing off all restraints and 'doing your own thing'. Freedom comes through surrender to the person of Christ and by obedience to the laws of God. The laws of God are laws of safety. Learning what is hurtful to mankind, we can avoid the painful and the destructive, and follow the way of health and happiness.

Do you remember the old-fashioned 'floor furnaces' of your childhood? Your parents laid down the law regarding these 'floor heaters': "Don't step on the heater with bare feet, or your feet will be blistered!" That law was given by your parents, not to restrain your freedom, but to give you true freedom. The law - 'don't step on the heater' - was meant to safeguard children against hurt and injury and burns. The laws of God are not meant to take away one's freedom, but to define one's freedom. Knowing where not to step, one has been given assurance of where he can step. There is no such thing as unlimited and absolute freedom. There is only freedom within certain clearly-defined boundaries. The Ten Commandments define those boundaries. Knowing what we are not to do allows us knowledge as to what we can do. The Ten Commandments tell us where the 'floor heaters' are in life - where the places are that we ought to avoid in order not to be hurt spiritually. The Ten Commandments are thus 'safeguards' - our guidelines to freedom!

The 'Christian Way' is the way to live! The right thing morally is always the healthy thing physically, mentally, economically, socially and spiritually!

The Ten Commandments are not meant to be seen as something negative and forbidding. The last word of Christianity is not denunciation but affirmation, not sacrifice but salvation, not sorrow over sins but joy over redemption. It was not the purpose of the Ten Commandments to enslave mankind but to free mankind.

We are saved by faith, not by works. But a saving faith is a working faith. Without works, faith is dead. Faith is more than mental affirmations. Faith is active obedience to God's guidelines and rules and laws. Not that we are saved by merely trying to keep laws. We are saved by Jesus Christ whose power to transform human nature enables the disobedient to become obedient, the vile to become pure, the rebellious to become submissive, the proud to become humble. Keeping God's commandments is a natural outcome of a heart which has responded to God's call to repentance and faith. The man without Christ has no ability to obey the Ten Commandments. The non-believer may give an artificial consent to the rightness of the Commands and even try hard (as a moralist and Pharisee) to obey the commands. However, without Christ's presence and power within, one can only, at best, keep the commandments externally. The internal spirit of the Ten Commandments - the spirit of love - is the

gift of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5: 5). In order for one to keep the Ten Commandments, he must have his nature changed. Jesus taught that the Ten Commandments can only be kept as the nature of man is changed. Only one who is loved-saturated can observe the internal spirit of the Ten Commandments. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that the attitudes are of man is just as important as the actions of man. Lust is condemned along with adultery. Hate is condemned along with murder. Covetousness is condemned along with stealing. Jesus taught that love is the fulfillment of all the Ten Commandments. The Christian answer to keeping the Ten Commandments is a transformed nature - a nature controlled by the Holy Spirit and a life that has received the gift of God's love. One great saint said, "Love God and do what you like." Loving God supremely and loving your neighbor as yourself enables one to look at life from a totally different perspective - a perspective no longer of selfish exploitation but a perspective of genuine respect for God, respect for yourself, and respect for others.

So what is the answer to keeping the Ten Commandments? First and foremost, let God change your nature. Allow God to change your motivations and affections and desires. Let God give you a new 'want to'. If you love God supremely and if you love your neighbor as yourself, you will respect God, yourself, and others. The Ten Commandments will then not be seen as negative prohibitions which you find impossible to observe, but the Ten Commandments will be seen as a wonderful exposition of the lifestyle of a transformed believer. The first step to take in order to keep the Ten Commandments, is to surrender your life totally to the lordship of Christ, and to allow the Holy Spirit to shed abroad God's divine-like love in your heart. If you have not been born again, do so today! If you have not become filled with the Spirit (as a believer), then surrender to the Christ of love today. Let Christ have full control of your inner life.

Jesus said that we are to love God supremely, and to love our neighbor as ourselves! What God commands - love, and what my nature demands - love, God supplies - love! *"We feel the warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love."* (Romans 5: 5b, Living Bible)

Further, the love-filled person desires to respect and to care for his fellow human beings. Not only does divinely-imparted love guide him in his worshipful attitudes towards God's place and God's nature and God's name and God's special day (the first four commandments), but this divinely-imparted love guides him in his horizontal relationships with his fellow human beings. Notes Paul, *"If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself, you will not want to harm or cheat him, or kill him or steal from him. And you won't sin with his wife or want what is his, or do anything else the Ten Commandments say is wrong. All ten are wrapped up in this one, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love does no wrong to anyone. That's why it fully satisfies all of God's requirements. It is the only law you need."* (Romans 13: 9, 10, Living Bible)

CONCLUSION:

The love-filled person is not proud in his attempts dutifully to keep a list of God-given commandments. Rather, a love-filled person (i.e., a person who loves God supremely and who loves his fellow men sincerely) is humble in his acknowledgments that he fails daily to love as fully and as consistently as he could and as he should. The love-filled person feels he can never pay his debt to the Christ of Calvary. The love-filled person feels he can never meet all the needs of his fellow human beings. Thus, the love-filled person is constantly focusing on God's perfect standards of holiness, and, because he realizes his moral and human weaknesses in failing fully to keep God's holy laws, he finds himself regularly confessing his sins and failures and weaknesses to God. 'Lost in wonder, love, and praise', he humbles himself before God, uttering prayers of thanksgiving to God and confessing openly his need for mercy and forgiveness from God and from his fellow men whom he serves imperfectly. Love is the great motivator to keep God's laws the best he knows how, and love is also the great humbler that keeps the believer striving to better serve others. The love-filled person constantly feels that he is a debtor to both God and to man.

CHAPTER 2

QUESTIONS

1. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Without the reality of God’s Rules and without submitting to God’s Rules for life (the Ten Commandments), there can be no meaningful dialogue, no praise for so-called ‘good’ behavior, and no ‘blame’ for so-called ‘bad’ behavior.”
2. Do the following statements reflect “Reality” in the world (perceived by many to be a ‘moral world’) in which we all, as human beings, live? - “Without rules, there is no such thing as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Without rules, everything is subject to personal taste, preference, and desires. Life becomes a shouting match, a battle involving everyone trying to get his her own way. Everyone does that which is right in his own eyes! Total confusion and ultimate anarchy will ultimately result!”
3. How would you define “Moral Subjectivism”?
4. Are the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) outdated, irrelevant, impractical, obsolete or are the Ten Commandments still relevant, important, compelling, absolute and essential for abundant living? How will the answer to this above-stated question determine the quality or type of life you will live?
5. From your personal observation of a modern-day society, do you believe that most people have turned the “Ten Commandments” into the “Ten Suggestions”? Why do you think that so many people today in our world have ignored the “Ten Commandments”, relegating them to the ancient Old Testament world of Moses, no longer relevant to our modern world? Do you personally consider the “Ten Commandments” as ‘Obsolete’ or ‘Absolute’?
6. From your own personal experience, and from your observation of others, what is the consequence of ignoring or denying the “Ten Commandments”?
7. What are some of the specific, tragic, social consequences in a society which primarily believes that “man is the measure of all things and that all ethical standards are relative”?
8. Tell if you agree or disagree with the following statement: “If I believe that there is no objective moral order, I have no rational justification for objecting on moral grounds, to anything that any man chooses to do to me.”

9. Tell what are the 'Basic Ideas' of the following persons: Hitler, B. F. Skinner, Fraud. Tell why their so-called 'Evil Ideas' are just as 'valid' as those of Mother Teresa, or Abraham Lincoln, or Martin Luther King, if there is no set of objective moral standards which have been divinely-revealed to Mankind as a whole?
10. Give your personal response or reaction to the following statement: "If one thinks that man is merely a product of a long evolutionary process, that man is simply a complex animal with no eternal spirit and with no inherent or eternal worth, then it is not hard to see why humans are treated as 'cogs' in a machine, or as 'pons' in the hands of a totalitarian government, or a disposable military tools in the hands of an aggressive power."
11. From what source, conceptually and theologically speaking, does the United States Constitution declare that every U.S. citizen has certain 'inalienable rights.'?"
12. What is the relationship between abortion, euthanasia, and infanticide to belief in an Objective (Divinely-Given) Moral Order? With the widespread abandonment in our society of belief in an objective moral order and standard, is it surprising that there is a widespread practice of abortion and an increasing number of cases of infanticide and euthanasia? Why or why not? (Note Judges 21: 25; Judges 6: 1)
13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Without the reality of God-revealed, objective moral standards and values, there is no basis, morally-speaking, for either blame or for praise, in terms of ideas and behavior."
14. Is there evidence, from observation of our modern-day world, that the following statement is true? - "Violence is inevitable in society which has generally abandoned God's Objective Moral Laws."
15. What one word, in essence, describes the Ten Commandments?
16. Match each commandment with the proper definition:

____ A. Respect for proper desires which bring honor to God.	1. You shall have no other gods before me.
____ B. Respect for another's property.	2. You shall not make for yourself an idol.
____ C. Respect for another persons's reputation.	3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

_____ D. Respect for the person and body of others.	4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.
_____ E. Respect for the sanctity of life.	5. Honor your father and your mother.
_____ F. Respect for God's special day.	6. You shall not murder.
_____ G. Respect for Parents as God's special gift to children.	7. You shall not commit adultery.
_____ H. Respect for God's place in your life.	8. You shall not steal.
_____ I. Respect for God's Name which represents His Character.	9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
_____ J. Respect for God's nature in your understanding.	10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

17. If the symbols of Deity are not confused with the reality of Deity, is it justifiable to use symbols (like crosses and pictures and statues and icons) in worship services to aid one in focusing upon adoration of the true and living God? What is your understanding of the Second Commandment?
18. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To engage in sex outside of marriage is to involve yourself in the selfish act of enjoying another person's body without committing yourself to that other person's spirit and soul. The use of another's body without commitment for life to that other person's total being is to exploit another for one's own temporary satisfaction."
19. Describe several ways in which one can destroy another person's reputation, and thus break the Ninth Commandment.
20. According to Jeremiah 31: 31-34, how would God establish His New Covenant with His people?
21. If Christ came to earth, not to destroy the Old Testament Law, but to fulfill the Law, then how was such fulfillment accomplished? (Note II Corinthians 5: 17; Romans 13: 9-10; Romans 5: 5)
22. Tell what is meant by the statement: "The laws of God are laws of safety."

23. Is Christianity a list of demands - laws - or is Christianity a reservoir of resources - offers?
24. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There is no such thing as unlimited and absolute freedom. There is only freedom within certain clearly-defined boundaries."
25. Tell what your personal reaction or response is to the following statement: "The Ten Commandments are 'safeguards' - our guideline to freedom."
26. From your own personal experience and from your observation of the lives of others, tell if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The 'Christian Way' is the way to live! The right thing morally is always the healthy thing physically, mentally, economically, socially and spiritually!"
27. Is the 'last word' of Christianity a positive or a negative word? Tell if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The last word of Christianity is not denunciations but affirmation, not sacrifice but salvation, not sorrow over sins but joy over redemption."
28. Tell if you believe the following statement accurately reflects spiritual reality from a Christian viewpoint: "Keeping God's Commandments is a natural outcome of a heart which has responded to God's call to repentance and faith." (Note I John 5: 2-5)
29. Illustrate from Jesus' Sermon on The Mount (Matthew 5, 6, 7) that the attitudes and motives of a person are just as important as the actions of a person.
30. Tell what is meant by the following statement: - "Love God and do what you like."
31. What it is that God commands, and that my nature demands and that God supplies? (Note Romans 5: 5)
32. What according to Jesus and the Apostle Paul, is the greatest of all the Commandments of God, the keeping of which fulfills all the Old Testament Laws? (Note Romans 13: 9, 10)
33. Put a T by those statements which you believe are true, and a F by those statements which you believe are False, in describing what a Love-Filled person is:

- _____ A. A proud person who exalts himself in the fact that he dutifully and carefully and perfectly obeys all the Ten Commandments.
- _____ B. A person who loves God supremely and who loves his fellow men sincerely.
- _____ C. A person who humbly acknowledges that he fails daily to love as fully and as consistently as he could and as he should.
- _____ D. A person who feels he can never pay his debt to the Christ of Calvary.
- _____ E. A person who feels he can never meet all the needs of his fellow human beings.
- _____ F. A person who feels that he need not be concerned if he breaks the Ten Commandments, for he recognizes he is saved by God's grace and not by keeping God's Laws.
- _____ G. A person who is constantly focusing on God's perfect standards of holiness, and, because he realizes his moral and human weaknesses in failing fully to keep God's holy laws, he finds himself regularly confessing his sins and failures and weaknesses to God.
- _____ H. A person who proudly and confidently and boldly declares before his fellow men that he is living a righteous and obedient and God-fearing life.
- _____ I. A person who is filled with gratitude to God for His love and for His Spirit-empowering presence.
- _____ J. A person who openly confesses his need for mercy and forgiveness from God and from his fellow men whom he serves imperfectly.
- _____ K. A person who constantly feels that he is a debtor to both God and to man.
- _____ L. A person who likes everyone, and who finds it easy to be compatible with everyone.
- _____ M. A person who never is disagreeable, but who finds it easy to be with everyone, and who never is out of fellowship with anyone.

34. Tell with what degree you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Love is the great motivation to keep God's laws the best a believer knows how, and love is also the great humbler that keeps the believer striving to better serve others."
35. Share with those in your discussion group some of your God-inspired visions for 'reaching out in love' to others, i.e., your 'love projects' for the immediate future.

CHAPTER 3
LIVING BY RULES, WITHOUT RULES,
OR BEYOND RULES?

Chapter 3

SUBJECT: LIVING BY RULES, WITHOUT RULES, OR BEYOND RULES?

SCRIPTURES: Matthew 5: 17-20

TEXT: *“Love does no harm to its neighbor...Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”* (Romans 13: 10)

INTRODUCTION: The legalist tends to reduce the Gospel to rules and regulations. The antinomian says that law does not matter since one is saved by grace alone. The man of faith takes into account the importance of some definite rules, but primarily guides his life by the all-encompassing principle of love.

I. LIVING BY RULES (The Way of Legalism)

- A. The Way Of Legalism - Externalism
- B. The Way of Legalism - Traditionalism
- C. The Way of Legalism - Exclusivism

II. LIVING WITHOUT RULES (The Way of Antinomianism)

- A. Definition of Antinomianism
- B. Description of Antinomianism

III. LIVING BEYOND RULES (The Way of Love)

- A. Divinely-Given (Not Humanely-Achieved)
- B. Obedient (Not Complacent)
- C. Humble (Not Proud)
- D. Accepting (Not Condemning)
- E. Forgiving (Not Vindictive)
- F. Dynamic (Not Static)
- G. Creative (Not Rigid)
- H. Correctable (Not Perfectionist)
- I. Involved (Not Isolated)
- J. Others-Oriented (Not Self-Centered)
- K. Attractive (Not Repulsive)
- L. Uncalculating and Open-Ended (Not Calculating)
- M. Challenging (Not Easy)
- N. Broad and All-Inclusive (Not Narrow and Exclusive)

CONCLUSION: The principle of love requires thoughtful creativity, unceasing effort, and unlimited growth. When Jesus gave principles rather than rules, Jesus took off the upper limits of what was expected of his followers.

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SCRIPTURES: Matthew 5: 17-20

TEXT: *“Love does no harm to its neighbor...Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”* (Romans 13: 10)

INTRODUCTION:

Do you primarily guide your life by rules or do you go to the other extreme and disregard rules and live without rules altogether? There is a third alternative which is the best way to live; living beyond rules. The legalist tends to reduce the Gospel to rules and regulations. The antinomian says that law does not matter since one is saved by grace alone. The man of faith takes into account the importance of some definite rules, but primarily guides his life by the all-encompassing principle of love.

Notes Donald Bastian: “Mature Christians know you cannot live without rules any more than a truck driver can drive a truck or a manager can operate a store without special regulations. Mature Christians also know that it is folly to try to live by rules. To do so is to court legalism. For mature Christians it is neither a matter of living without rules nor by rules. The object is to live beyond rules.” (Adventures In Church Membership: pg. 142)

PROPOSITION:

Every man must choose between the way of antinomianism, the way of legalism, and the way of love. *“Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.”* (Romans 13: 10)

I. LIVING BY RULES (The Way of Legalism)

Living By Rules - the way of legalism - is living a life which is characterized by a focus on Externalism, Traditionalism, and Exclusivism.

A. The Way Of Legalism - Externalism

The person who lives exclusively by rules is rigid, inflexible, intolerant, and ultimately inconsistent. Life is reduced to a system of dull and unattractive ‘Do’s’ and ‘Don’ts’. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day were given over to a life which was guided by thousands of petty and minute laws and regulations. “The scribes and Pharisees saw religion in terms of obedience to rules and

regulations, to rituals and to ceremonies: Jesus saw religion in terms of love to God and love to man.” (The Mind of Jesus; Barclay; pg. 157)

A life of Externalism can be illustrated as follows: “The most precious thing the Jews had was the law. The Jew said, ‘Oh how I love the law!’ And he did. The Jew uses the word ‘law’ in two senses. First he uses it to mean the written law in the Old Testament, namely the Ten Commandments and the first five books of the bible. Now the law in the Old Testament does not have a multitude of rules and regulations, what it has is great wide principles, and it lays on the individual man, on each and all the responsibility of fitting these principles to every individual case that comes up. But the Jewish theologians and leaders thought this far too risky. They wanted rules and regulations to meet the needs of every man in every situation - to be able to say this, this, this, in each particular situation. And so, out of the principles they began to extract literally thousands and thousands of rules and regulations: after all, the law was the word of God, therefore complete and perfect, and therefore everything is in it - not explicitly, then implicitly, and one has to dig it out.

“Take the case of carrying a burden. We all know the question without my telling: ‘What is a burden?’ And we get a long list - pages and pages of it: anything the weight of a dried fig; enough paper to write ‘Hear, O Israel’, enough wine for one swallow; enough oil to anoint a small member (what is a small member? - it is the little toe of a baby three days old!); and on and on and on. And so they argued. Can a man go out with a wooden leg on the Sabbath, or is he carrying a burden? Can a woman go out with false hair on the Sabbath or is she carrying a burden? Or can a man pick up a child on the Sabbath or is he carrying a burden? No, he can pick up the child all right, but not if the child has a stone in his hand - it’s a burden then. But - what is a stone? Anything big enough to throw at a bird. On and on it goes.” (The Life of Jesus For Every Man; Barclay; pg. 31-33)

It is interesting how Paul describes the characteristics of the legalistic life-style. He points out the features of the legalistic life-style, and shows at the same time the futility of such a life-style - by declaring his own utter failure as a rigid and legalistic Jew, before he becomes a Christian. ***“Yet if anyone ever had reason to hope that he could save himself, it would be I. If others could be saved by what they are, certainly I could! For I went through the Jewish initiation ceremony when I was eight days old, having been born into a pure-blooded Jewish home that was a branch of the old original Benjamin family. So I was a real Jew if there ever was one! “What’s more I was a member of the Pharisees who demand the strictest obedience to every Jewish law and custom. And sincere? Yes, so much so that I greatly persecuted the Church; and I tried to obey every Jewish rule and***

regulation right down to the very last point.” (Philippians 3: 3-7; Living Bible)

Humanly-speaking, Paul, as a devout Jew, had a long list of outstanding credentials - hereditary and religious and moral credentials - but he declares that none of his legalistic attempts to gain a right standing with God were successful. He had to count all of his human attainments as utter loss, in order that he might gain Christ!

Paul declares that the way of legalism is the way of futility because of its exclusive focus on Externalism. Outward religious performance becomes the standard for righteousness rather than inward relationship with God. In the case of these Jews, the fact that one had received the physical mark of circumcision in the flesh proved that one was acceptable to God. There are still those today who depend on religious performance to bring them acceptance by God. Reading so many chapters in the Bible daily, or saying so many prayers, or doing so many good deeds, or knocking on so many doors (Jehovah’s Witnesses), or being baptized, etc., - these activities are looked at as MEANS to one’s acceptance by God rather than as RESULTS of one’s love response to God for His salvation. Legalism focuses on one’s outward performance rather than upon the internal condition of one’s heart.

B. The Way of Legalism - Traditionalism.

Tradition, in and of itself, is not necessarily bad. The past is to be cherished, and lessons from the past can be beneficially applied to the present - day situations. But Paul, as a legalist before he became a Christian, trusted in his past heredity and heritage exclusively as the means by which he gained a right standing with God.

There are still those today who, in a limited degree at least, are like Paul before he became a Christian. Some depend on their birth into a Christian home as their ‘passport’ to heaven. Some unconsciously, if not consciously, believe that the fact that they are an American gives them a special and favorite place in God’s evaluation. Because they believe in democracy and freedom and justice and equality - American ideals - they think that they are ‘Christian’ automatically. Some, like Paul, stress the absolute purity of their race or of their special and unique descent, or of their elite aristocratic ancestry, believing that such an heredity brings them special treatment from God.

There are some who, like Paul before his Christian conversion, depend upon their own achievements as worthy credentials to present to God in order to

earn God's acceptance. Religious achievements, or moral and social achievements, or educational and cultural and professional achievements. There are those yet who mistakenly think that certain things will save them, such as morality, religion, baptism, Church membership, culture, natural birth, charitable deeds, or mere sincerity.

But, after Paul lists all of the credentials which he took pride in while he was striving to please God through his legalistic life-style, he declares: "*But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.*" (Philippians 3: 7-8)

Humanly-speaking, Paul, as a devout Jew, had a long list of outstanding credentials - hereditary and religious and moral credentials - but he declares that none of his legalistic attempts to gain a right standing with God were successful. He had to count all of his human attainments as utter losses, in order that he might gain Christ!

The way of legalism - i.e., the way of externalism and traditionalism and human achievement - is the way to ultimate and total loss!

C. The Way of Legalism - Exclusivism

"The Pharisees regarded ordinary people who did not keep the whole scribal law as unclean. Even to touch the garment of such a person was to be defiled. A Pharisee was forbidden to receive a non-Pharisee as a guest or to be the guest of such a person; a Pharisee would never dream of entering the house of such a person, of sitting at meal with such a person. Their one aim was to have nothing whatever to do with the sinner; the one aim of Jesus was to go alongside the sinner and to woo him back to God. The Pharisees narrowed the love of God until it included only themselves; Jesus widened the love of God until it reached out to all men, saints and sinners alike. There can be no common ground between a religion which sees the sinner as a man to be avoided at all costs and a religion which sees the sinner as a man to be sought out at all costs, between a religion which sees the sinner as a man to be saved and a religion which sees the sinner as a man to be destroyed." (The Mind of Jesus; Barclay; pg. 157-158)

II LIVING WITHOUT RULES (The Way of Antinomianism)

A. Definition of Antinomianism

During the period when Judges ruled over Israel, it is written that during this time “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” It is little wonder that this period was a period of chaos and crime. The lawless society is the corrupt and crumbling society. If the way of law is barren, the way of lawlessness is also barren. Neither is adequate, but between the two, the way of law is far better than the way of lawlessness. In a society without law, every person becomes his own law, and such a society has fallen into the mucky marsh of relativism. The religious person who lives without laws is an antinomian. “The result where antinomianism prevails is high profession of grace matched by low moral achievement. This error, in fact, has in extreme cases encouraged immorality.” (Donald Bastian)

“Today you have only to cross the hall in your apartment house and the people on the other side may live in an utterly different world; a world in which there is no God, no divine law, where only self-interest, animal instincts, and the ‘survival of the fittest’ rule.” (Sermon Builder; July 1971, pg. 38) Such people are living essentially without rules to guide their lives.

If the way of Legalism is a perversion of true faith, the way of Antinomianism is also a perversion of true faith. If Legalism is “living by rules”, Antinomianism is “living without rules.” These ways are two opposite and extreme ways to live - both of which lead to eternal death!

What is the way of Antinomianism? Philippians 3: 18-19 describes this futile way of life. *“For I have told you often before, and I say it again now with tears in my eyes, there are many who walk along the Christian road who are really enemies of the cross of Christ. Their future is eternal loss, for their God is their appetite: they are proud of what they should be ashamed of; and all they think about is this life here on earth.”* (Living Bible)

Legalists “debase grace by mixing works with it; the antinomians pervert grace by divorcing it from behavior.” (Paul Rees)

Legalists are those who fall into the folly and futility of salvation by works, and the antinomians are those who, on the opposite end of the continuum, fall into the folly and futility of professing a salvation which makes light of works, resulting in them ending up in a state of lawlessness and anarchy.

Antinomians are those who want liberty without restraint, privileges without responsibilities, and grace without law. “The antinomians were those who denied that there was any law at all in the Christian life. They declared that

they were within the grace of God, and that, therefore, it did not matter what they did, God would forgive, they were quite safe, no further discipline and no further effort were necessary....There were those who distorted the principle of Christian liberty into unchristian license, and gloried in giving their lusts and passions full play. There were those who distorted the Christian doctrine of grace. They said that grace was wide enough to cover every sin and stain; that the love of God was great enough to forgive any sin; therefore, let a man sin as he liked and not worry; it would make no difference to the all-forgiving grace of God.” (Barclay’s *Philippians*; pg. 83, 85)

B. Description of Antinomianism

(1) Antinomians are Enemies of the Cross of Christ.

Wrote Paul, “*For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.*” (Philippians 3: 18) Antinomians don’t realize the seriousness of sin and the high cost to God to forgive sins through the bloody death of Christ on the cross. Anyone who ‘trades’ on the mercy of God treats the Cross of Christ lightly - and therefore is an enemy of the Cross of Christ!

(2) Antinomians are self-indulgent.

They live to gratify the desires of their flesh, with no desire to sacrifice, for sinning gives God a chance to exercise His great grace in forgiveness!

Paul refutes such reasoning: “Anyone who lightly regards sin, also lightly regards the meaning of union with Christ, and lightly regards the call to holy and righteous living!” In other words, willful, habitual sinning is a perversion of God’s grace! It is a tragedy to presume upon the mercy of God and to pervert the grace of God!

Paul would warn us against a trivial attitude toward sinning - the kind of attitude the antinomians have regarding sinning. Paul would urge us never to take God’s grace and mercy for granted! Realize the seriousness of sin, confess it quickly, and turn from it decisively. To engage in willful, habitual sinning is a total perversion of God’s grace. To practice sinning is to deny the operation of God’s grace in one’s life. Paul would agree with John who states that he who is practicing sinning is he who is not in a present state of knowing Christ. (I John 3: 8)

There are antinomians who are very perverted in their thinking: “The more we sin, the more grace will abound. Sin does not matter, for God will forgive anyway.” “Heine the great German philosopher was dying. He had not been a Christian and he had not bothered much how he lived, but he was not in the least worried. Someone asked him why he was taking it all so calmly. ‘God will forgive and there will be no trouble and it will be quite all right.’” (The Old Law & The New Law; Barclay; pg. 63)

If the antinomian is even aware of sin, he makes a virtue out of sinning: “Sin is an excellent thing because it gives the grace of God a chance to operate.” The conclusion of such an argument is that sin produces the greatest thing in the world!

To use this type of antinomian reasoning is about like saying (to use a very simple illustration) that it is a good thing for basements of houses to be filled with rain water, for this gives a chance for the pumps to show their power in pumping water out of basements!

Or it is like saying, “It is a good thing to have an accident, for the accident gives the doctor a chance to prove his medical skills!”

Or it is like saying, “It is a good thing to have a rebellion child, for this situation gives the parent opportunity to exercise his love and grace in forgiveness!”

III LIVING BEYOND RULES (The Way of Love)

The mature, Bible-centered Christian does not disregard some basic rules, but essentially goes beyond the realm of rules to the realm of principles by which he seeks to guide his life. There is a big difference between rules and principles, between the way of law (or lawlessness) and the way of love!

A. Divinely-Given (Not Humanely-Achieved)

‘Agape’ love finds its source in God alone. No man, independent of God, can create or produce or manufacture this divine-like love. It is God who “*has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.*” (Romans 5: 5)

B. Obedient (Not Complacent)

In contrast to the way of antinomianism (living without laws), the way of love is the way of obedience. Jesus said, *“If you love me, keep my commandments.”* Wrote John, *“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God.”* (I John 3: 10)

William Barclay illustrates this principle: “In the same way, if we are loved by someone, we should not use that as a reason for doing what we like. If a young person is loved by his parents, he should not say, ‘I’ll do what I like. No matter what I do, they won’t throw me out. Whatever I do, they will still look after me.’ He ought to say, ‘I love my parents and they love me; and I must do my very best not to hurt them or disappoint them or cause them anxiety.’” Barclay continues, “Love is not a reason for doing what we like; it is a reason for doing nothing to grieve those who love us.” (The Old Law & The New Law; pg. 64, 65)

C. Humble (Not Proud)

The man of love never takes pride in his own achievements, for he knows that without the Lord’s strength he could do nothing! It is not his own glory which he seeks, but it is the glory of God alone which he seeks. He knows that he is always on the receiving end, and that God is always on the giving end. He is ‘lost in wonder, love and praise’, for he acknowledges that “God is the Giver of all good and perfect gifts.” He knows that he deserves nothing but the judgment of God, and he knows further that he needs nothing but the mercy of God. Realizing that he can never repay God for His gifts of love and forgiveness, he exclaims with the hymn writer:

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

D. Accepting (Not Condemning)

The man of love never condones the sin in others, but the man of love never condemns or rejects the sinner himself. He knows that, if God has forgiven him of his own sins, God can forgive the sins of anyone else. He does not compromise with sin for he takes God’s Ten Commandments most seriously, but he nevertheless accepts warmly the sinner who is breaking the Ten Commandments. The man of love follows the example of Jesus who, as the sinless Son of God, never tolerated sin, but who nevertheless was the ‘friend of sinners’.

Notes E. Stanley Jones: "If morality were based on the commandments of God rather than on communication with God, it would be hard, legalistic unattractive morality. But based as it is on fellowship with God, its special characteristic is love. Hence the maturity is moral, but it is a winsome morality. It loves the immoral without standing over them as a frowning Sinai, saying, 'Thou shalt', and 'Thou shalt not'. Its morality is based on 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'" (Christian Maturity; pg. 65)

E. Forgiving (Not Vindictive)

The man of love will always find a way to forgive those who sin against him. The man of love understands something of the grace - the 'unmerited favor' of God - and therefore he knows that if God has forgiven him, he has an obligation to forgive those who have sinned against him. The man of love knows that if God has forgiven him the 'big sins' - the very kind of sins which helped crucify Jesus - then he ought always to be able to forgive the relatively 'smaller sins' which others have committed against him.

F. Dynamic (Not Static)

The man of love knows that he has a long way to go before he reaches his goal of full maturity, and that he has unlimited potential for further growth. He is future-oriented, not past-oriented! He is never satisfied with past accomplishments or with the status quo. He is constantly on the stretch for further progress in the spiritual life. He guards against resting on the 'laurels of past accomplishments'.

The man of love adopts the same attitude which Paul expressed when he wrote, "*So, whatever it takes, I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead. I don't mean to say I am perfect, I haven't learned all I should even yet, but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be. No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us.*" (Philippians 3: 11-14, Living Bible)

G. Creative (Not Rigid)

"Love always finds a way" - a way to overcome obstacles and adversities which hinder one in showing his love to others. Without compromising

moral standards, the man of love is nevertheless 'bendable', 'adaptable', 'tolerant'. And understanding of special 'circumstances'. His objective is not rigid obedience to impersonal law, but his objective is to express redemptive compassion within the context of warm human relationships. The man of love knows that there is more than one way to accomplish his goal of finding the lost and of serving the found.

The way of strict law is the way of inflexibility; the way of compassionate love is the way of adaptability. There is a big difference between the way of law and the way of grace, between rigid rules and adaptable principles. "A rule resembles the command of a superior officer to be carried out literally with an eye on the law rather than on the situation. A principle is a policy of action to be interpreted and applied in line with a general purpose and in relation to particular situations. The distinction is observable in the work of a physician. He has certain rules in his practice, to be sure. But when he comes into a sick-room, it is principles rather than rules which guide him most. The individuality of the patient, the peculiar phases of the particular case may cause him to alter his rules in pursuing his principles of healing. Similarly, Jesus the Physician emphasized principles as above rules." (The Paradoxes of Jesus; Sockman; pg. 30, 31)

H. Correctable (Not Perfectionist)

The man of love seeks always to obey the commandments of God, but, at best, he knows that he 'comes short' of perfect obedience. He does not practice deliberate sinning, for his will is 'set' to do God's will only, but, nevertheless, he knows that he needs God's daily forgiveness. Forgiveness for 'sins of omission' (failure to do all the 'good' that one was capable of doing within the span of a day and within the context of a particular situation), forgiveness for 'sins of ignorance' (failure to do God's entire will because of inexcusable ignorance regarding a dimension of God's will), forgiveness for 'sins of prayerlessness' (failure to pray for God's power and wisdom in a particular situation because of an over-dependence on 'human strength'), forgiveness for 'sins of lovelessness' (failure to be 'a good Samaritan' - failure to express heartfelt compassion towards a hurting person whom God brought across one's pathway), forgiveness for 'sins of commission' (failure to keep the explicit commands of God because of intentional moral rebellion or because of spiritual slothfulness).

Notes E. Stanley Jones: "A maturity in love is possible and consistent with a great deal of imperfection in character. You can love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and yet manifest that love imperfectly. For our actions are made up of intelligence

and intentions. The intentions may be good, but the intelligence may be less than perfect; therefore the action, which is the offspring of these imperfect parents, will be imperfect. Those actions, which are imperfect, are constantly being cleansed by the blood, or the life, of Jesus Christ. He is the oxygen which we breathe, and that oxygen is constantly cleansing the impurities of the blood of daily human living. This constant cleansing saves us from frustration. When we fall, we fall on our knees. When we stumble, we stumble forward - into His arms! He is there - always! Never leaves us alone. He is the Advocate - the one-called-alongside-of. And He is never closer than when we need Him most.” (Christian Maturity; pg. 84)

I. Involved (Not Isolated)

Someone said that love has the ability to ‘go down’ - to go down to the low level of human misery, to minister the healing ointment of God’s love to the wounds and hurts of lost mankind. The love-filled person is the highly involved person - involved in the ‘messy’ business of lifting the fallen, of healing the sick, of befriending the lonely, of strengthening the weak, and of guiding the confused. Wrote Edward Hale: “I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”

In her study of the early Methodists, Dr. Mary Alice Tenney observes: “Perfect Love operates in two directions: vertically toward God, horizontally toward man. Early Methodists really loved men. They did not sign a check for Community Chest Drives; they went into dirty garrets and nursed sick old women. Even noblemen did that sort of thing, denying themselves luxuries in order to do it. It got right down among the needy, the evil, even the criminals, and showed them what real friendship and compassion are. People still need friends more than clothing. More than money they need the news that inner resources are theirs for the asking. The usual social worker knows nothing about this. A twenty dollars a week contribution leaves the hungry essentially as hungry as before, for the heart is still starving. If Love could be allowed to work in the world today among the Great Hungry here and overseas, as it was released by the Methodist Revival, the ground work for world change would be laid.” (Living In Two Worlds; pg. 112, 113)

The theology of the great Wesleyan Movement is the theology of love. Practical love - love that ‘goes down, down, down’ to reach lost mankind! Notes Walter F. Mueller, “The power of the Wesleyan spirit projected itself into purification of morals, a revision of penal laws, the abolition of slavery, popular education, a new spirit of philanthropy, and eventually into the great labor movement. While its contributions to concrete reforms like anti-slavery

and temperance, have been great, its contribution through the persistent feeding of moral vitamins into the social organism has been even greater.”

When a modern-day saint, Toyohika Kagawa, first became acquainted with Christianity, he cried out: “O God, make me like Christ!” To follow Christ’s example, Kagawa went to live in the slums of Japan, although he himself had tuberculosis. He lived in a six foot by six foot hut in a Tokyo slum. Cecil Northcott tells what Kagawa did. “On his first night he was asked to share his bed with a man suffering from contagious itch. That was a test of his faith. Would he go back on his point of no return? No. He welcomed his bed-fellow. Then a beggar asked for his shirt and got it. Next day he was back for Kagawa’s coat and trousers and got them too. Kagawa was left standing in a ragged old kimono. The slum dwellers of Tokyo laughed at him, but they came to respect him. He stood in the driving rain to preach, coughing all the time. ‘God is love. Where love is, there is God.’ He often fell down exhausted, and the rough men of the slums carried him gently back to his hut.”

J. Others-Oriented (Not Self-Centered)

Love is outgoing - ‘reaching out in love’ to others. Love concentrates on the needs of others, not on the desires of self. The love-filled person is others-oriented, not self-absorbed! God’s outpoured love is the great healer of the universal disease of ‘self-centeredness’. The love-filled person thinks little about himself and much about others. His others-oriented thinking reflects itself in more prayers for others (Intercession) and less prayers for self (Petition), and reflects itself in a sacrificial lifestyle. Notes John Howard, “We must learn to give up our luxuries to supply the comforts of others, our comforts to supply their necessity, and even our necessities to supply their extremities.”

A humble Scottish woman had lived for many years on porridge that she might give to missions the cost of her comforts and luxuries. One day a friend gave her a coin to ‘buy a chop’, he said. She looked at it awhile, and then said, “I have got on very well on porridge so far, and I think I’ll stick to it.” And so the coin went for missions. A minister was telling this at a missionary breakfast, and a comfortable-looking woman got up and said, “Well, I never have done without a chop for Christ’s sake, so I shall begin today to sacrifice by giving \$1,000 to missions.” Others followed suit, and before that breakfast was over \$12,000 had been contributed to missions.

K. Attractive (Not Repulsive)

There is a type of 'Christianity' which is critical and harsh and legalistic. As in Jesus' day, there are still religious people who are adept at manifesting a rough spirit, all in the name of morality and justice. Such people would never offer a shoulder for you to weep upon!

Make no mistake about it; there are times when love must be expressed in forms of discipline, as when Jesus drove out the moneychangers with whips! However, more times than not it is not whips, but words of tenderness and forgiveness which Jesus used to draw people to the heart of God!

We must never lose our ability to be indignant with holy love, and we must be able to whip our will into a holy campaign against sin when the occasion demands it. But too many times we find it easier to identify with the critical, self-righteous crowd who wanted to stone the condemned adulterous woman, than we do to identify with the kind-hearted Christ who spoke words of love and forgiveness to the guilty woman. (John 8: 1-11) The crowd's stones would have broken her body, but Jesus' love broke her heart. *"Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more."* Those were the kind words. Here is the sweetness of Jesus' temper which put the woman at ease and which shrank back from causing her needless pain. The pain of her shame and guilt was enough to drive her to repentance. No need for the infliction of the cruel pain of self-righteous judgment. Jesus' kindness healed the woman! The kindness of Jesus' followers will also heal the broken-hearted today!

There are still those professed followers of Jesus—followers in name rather than in spirit—who are more concerned about the letter of the law than about the spirit of the law, more concerned about justice than about mercy, more adept in inflicting pain than in applying the salve of healing.

It is true that there is no place for compromise with sin, but it is also true that there is no place for discourtesy with sinners. While hating sin intensely, let us love sinners tenderly, and treat sinners with that courtesy which befits the Christian gentleman.

'Agape' love is kind without being morally soft, and disciplined without being morally rigid. Notes William Barclay, "Real Christianity must always attract and never repel. There is such a thing as a hard, austere, unlovely and unlovable goodness, but such a goodness falls far short of the Christian standard. In all his efforts to be good, in all his striving toward moral holiness, the Christian must never forget the beauty of holiness." (New Testament Words; pg. 156, 157)

L. Uncalculating and Open-Ended (Not Calculating)

We must continue to emphasize: There is a big difference between the way of law (and the way lawlessness) and the way of love. "Think of it this way. If we are obeying the law, there is a definite limit to what we have to do. Suppose we buy something in a shop; we owe the shopkeeper the cost of the article. When we have paid the cost, we do not owe him any more. He has no further claim on us at all. But could we ever repay what we owe to our parents? We can by payment satisfy a legal obligation; nothing we can do can ever pay for being loved... You can always satisfy the claims of the law; if you give everything you have, you have not paid for being loved or for hurting love." (The Old Law & The New Law; Barclay; pg. 65)

Let us note further examples between laws and love, between rules and principles. Think of a child's nurse. She may conceivably complete her duties to the child. Think in contrast of the child's mother. The mother out of love - not mere responsibility - carries on her responsibilities to her child. Her job is never completed. One may pay the debt of law; the debt of love can never be paid. A servant has specific responsibilities to be carried out and completed. A friend has both defined and undefined responsibilities of love to be carried out in an uncalculated manner. It is no wonder that Jesus raised the status of his disciples from servants to friends. (John 15: 15)

Love is uncalculating in its response of forgiveness. The law of the Rabbis would command one to forgive three times. Peter expanded on this and asked Jesus if he should forgive seven times. Jesus, pointing to the way of love and guided by principle rather than by rule, said that a true Christian should forgive seventy times seven - or in other words, an unlimited number of times!

M. Challenging (Not Easy)

Greater challenge has no man than this - to consistently live a life of love, patterned after Jesus' life of love!

"Consider (as an example) the employee whose hours and rules are prescribed. Later he becomes the head of the business, responsible to his stockholders, his employees, and the public. No time schedule and no code of rules are laid down for him. He is simply expected to follow one central principle, that of doing the best he can to make the most of the business. But if he is a conscientious man, his sense of responsibility will prove far more exacting than any set of rules held over him. It is safe to say that many a time he will look back longingly to the period when he had someone to tell him what to do and how to do it." (The Paradoxes of Jesus; Stockman; pg. 34)

It is often much easier to live by rules than it is to live by principles. I heard a minister who said that, after he had pastored for several years, he worked on another job for two years. This 'secular employment' had definite working hours and specific rules and regulations that he must carry out. He said that it was so tempting to remain on that job instead of returning to the pastorate, for he said, on the pastorate, he felt his work was never done. Even at night, after a long day he would tend to feel that his job was not finished. Living by principles ("Doing the best he can to make the most of his call") was much more difficult for him than living by law (Working a job that had clearly defined expectations and specific working hours).

Let us take this same idea and apply it to a person who is seeking to live the Christian life on the basis of principles rather than on the basis of laws. Suppose that all that was necessary in living the Christian life was to carry out certain rules: (1) Attend Church twice a week; (2) Give one-tenth of income to the Lord's work; (3) Read one chapter from the Bible each day. These rules would be relatively easy to keep. However, the mature Christian life is lived primarily, not on the basis of rules, but on the basis of principles. Note, for instance, one of the many principles that is adopted by those who become members of a particular Church: "I will show goodness and mercy to all men, and especially to the household of faith, both to their physical and spiritual needs as I have ability." Will anyone even dare to suggest that the aforementioned principle of love and mercy is easy to apply at all times?

Principles require far more than any set of external rules could require. Rules usually can be kept without too much trouble, but rules seldom touch the most important part of life, namely, internal attitudes and motives. Living by principles throws the responsibility upon the individual conscience to determine the rightness and the wrongness in special kinds of circumstances. The mature Christians, living by principles instead of by rules, are "those who through constant practice have their spiritual faculties carefully trained to distinguish good from evil." (Hebrews 5: 14b, Weymouth)

N. Broad and All-Inclusive (Not Narrow and Exclusive)

Living by love, rather than by law (or in lawlessness), enables one to exercise tolerance without compromise towards those who differ from him, both in the areas of doctrinal controversy and in the areas of behavioral expectations. All Christians do not see 'eye-to-eye' with each other, either in the area of Biblical interpretation or in the area of personal moral convictions. "Because we apprehend truth with varying degrees of clarity, Christians differ in areas where the Scriptures do not speak explicitly." (Donald Bastian) How should such differences between Christians be resolved? How can the unity of the

Church be maintained when strong-willed leaders in a Church strongly disagree with each other? Without compromising one's own personal convictions, how can one accept those who think and who live differently than he thinks and lives? 'Love' is the 'oil' in the 'machinery of human relationships', enabling the fellowship of believers to remain strong and undivided.

Love allows one to be both strong in the maintenance of his own convictions and yet teachable and tolerant in his attitude towards others who differ from him.

In forming personal convictions, the mature believer knows he must go beyond rules to principles. Donald Bastian notes that, in making decisions in the 'gray' areas of life, Romans 14 gives basic principles: (1) Principle of Right Influence - 'Will this be an offense to others?' (2) Principle of Accountability - 'How do I feel about this matter in the light of my coming appearance at the judgment seat of Christ?' (3) Principle of the Lordship of Christ - 'Can I really do this unto the Lord?' (4) Principle of a Clear Conscience - 'Is my own mind clear and settled?'

Love covers a multitude of situations! Love is broad in application! Love is all-inclusive, not narrow or exclusive!

CONCLUSION:

The principle of love requires thoughtful creativity, unceasing effort, and unlimited growth. When Jesus gave principles rather than rules, Jesus took off the upper limits of what was expected of his followers.

Living by rules is legalism. Living without rules is antinomianism. Living beyond rules is living by love. Wrote Paul, "*Pay all your debts except the debt of love for others - never finish paying that! For if you love them, you will be obeying all of God's laws, fulfilling all His requirements. If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself you will not want to harm or cheat him, or kill him or steal from him. And you won't sin with his wife or want what is his, or do anything else the Ten Commandments say is wrong. All ten are wrapped up in this one, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love does no wrong to anyone. That's why it fully satisfies all of God's requirements. It is the only law you need.*" (Romans 13:7-10, Living Bible)

CHAPTER 3

QUESTIONS

1. What is your definition of a legalist and of an antinomian?
2. What attitude does a man of Christian faith have toward both rules and principles, as he seeks to live a truly God-like life?
3. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The person who lives exclusively by rules is rigid, inflexible, intolerant, and ultimately inconsistent."
4. In contrast to the Pharisees, how did Jesus view the essence of true religion?
5. What was the outcome of Paul's attempts to live a life of strict obedience to the Old Testament Laws, as a means of becoming 'justified' and 'accepted' by God? (Note Philippians 3: 4-11)
6. Describe how some religious people in our modern world depend upon "religious performance" to bring them "acceptance with God."
7. Give some illustrations of how some people today, as Paul did before he became a Christian, depend upon their religious or moral or social or educational achievements to give them a 'right standing' before God.
8. After Paul discovered the way of faith in Christ Jesus, what was his estimation of the way of traditionalism as an attempt to find relationship of justification with God? (Note Philippians 3: 7-8)
9. What was the attitude of the Pharisees of Jesus' day toward ordinary people who did not keep the whole scribal law? What attitude should true Christians have toward those persons who don't profess to know God and who have a low regard for the Church? What was Jesus' attitude toward sinners, in contrast to the attitude of the Pharisees towards sinners?
10. According to Philippians 3: 18-19, how can the lifestyle of an antinomian be described?
11. Does the following statement describe persons or groups of persons whom you have observed in our modern-day society? "Antinomians are those who want liberty without restraint, privileges without responsibilities, and grace without law." Do you believe the widespread practice of "live-in" relationships (unmarried men and women living together) reflects this attitude, as described in the above statement?

12. Do you believe that there are many professing Christians today who do not carefully regard God's Moral Laws, and who presume upon God's mercy and grace as they carelessly sin against God Almighty? (Note Romans 6)
13. What do you believe is the difference between true "Christian liberty" in contrast to "unchristian license?" Is it possible that one's Christian "liberty" may be another Christian's "license?" Why or why not? (Read Romans 14, before answering this question)
14. Why can it be said that "antinomians are enemies of the Cross of Christ?" (Note Philippians 3: 18)
15. Do antinomians tend to be self-centered? Why or why not? (Note Jude 12)
16. Are true Christians intended by God to be both earthly-minded and spiritually-minded - i.e., valuing the things of earth, but always using the things of earth to serve the higher purposes of the eternal kingdom of God? To what extent are true Christians to value the good things of this earth?
17. Why can it be said that the future of antinomians is eternal loss? (Note Jude 4, 12, 13)
18. Give your personal response or reaction to a professing Christian who says the following: "If I sin, so what! I am a Christian! I am saved by grace and grace alone. The degree of my sinning in no way affects my relationship with Christ. If I once was saved, I am always saved, regardless of my sinning. Grace covers all my sins. Did not Paul write, *'Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds!'*? *In light of God's great power to forgive, it is therefore safe - and even virtuous - to sin, for my sinning gives God a chance to exercise His great grace in forgiveness!*" (According to Romans 6, how would the Apostle Paul have responded to this type of rationalization regarding a practice of sinning?) (Also note I John 3: 8)
19. Is it possible for one to exercise 'agape' love if he is not surrendered to Jesus Christ? Why or why not? (Note Romans 5: 5)
20. What objective evidence can one point to, in order to assure himself that he truly is a follower of Jesus Christ (a Christian)? (Note I John 3: 10)
21. What is the relationship between the possession of love and the characteristic of humility in the life of a true believer?
22. What attitude should a true believer have toward a person who is living a life of sinning and godlessness?

23. What motivation does a true Christian have to forgive persons who have grievously sinned against him? Do you believe the reasoning, as expressed in the following statement, is an aid in helping you to find in your heart the ability to forgive a person who has deeply hurt you by sinning against you? - "The man of love knows that if God has forgiven him the 'big sins' - the very kind of sins which helped crucify Jesus - then he ought always to be able to forgive the relatively 'smaller sins' which others have committed against him."
24. Is a love-filled person primarily past-oriented or future-oriented? Why? (Note Philippians 3: 11-14)
25. Regarding attitudes and actions towards other people, what is the difference between a person whose life is guided by strict moral laws and the person whose life is guided by compassionate principles?
26. From your own life's experiences or from your observation of others, give an illustration which demonstrates the truth of the following statements: "Love always finds a way - a way to overcome obstacles and adversities which hinder one in showing his love to others. Without compromising moral standards, the man of love is nevertheless 'bendable', 'adaptable', 'tolerant', and understanding of special 'circumstances'. His objective is not rigid obedience to impersonal law, but his objective is to express redemptive compassion within the context of warm human relationships."
27. Match the proper definition with the list of various types of sin:

___ a. Sins of Omission	1. Failure to keep the explicit commands of God because of intentional moral rebellion or because of spiritual slothfulness.
___ B. Sins of Ignorance	2. Failure to expose heartfelt compassion towards a hurting person whom God brought across one's pathway.
___ C. Sins of Prayerlessness	3. Failure to pray for God's power and wisdom in a particular situation because of over-dependence on human strength.
___ D, Sins of Lovelessness	4. Failure to do God's entire will because of inexcusable ignorance regarding a dimension of God's will.

E. Sins of Commission	5. Failure to do all the 'good' that one was capable of doing within the span of a day or within the context of a particular situation.
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28. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The man of love does not practice deliberate sinning, for his will is 'set' to do God's will only but, nevertheless, he knows that he needs God's daily forgiveness."
29. Is it possible for one to be mature in his love, and yet to manifest that love imperfectly? Why or why not?
30. What should a believer do when he realizes that he has failed morally or when he has unintentionally offended others or when he has failed to express, love in human relationships as he ought to? (Note I John 1: 7, 9; I John 2: 1-2; James 5: 16; Galatians 6: 1-3)
31. Tell what is meant by the statement: "Love has the ability to 'go down'."
32. Do you feel personally significant in terms of the importance and effectiveness of your personal involvement in helping God to cure the ills of our world among the mass of suffering humanity? Why or why not? Give your personal reaction or response to the following statement: "I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do." What are some of the moral and social issues which you believe Christians should become involved in at this time in history?
33. Tell whyt you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We must learn to give up our luxuries to supply the comforts of others, our comforts to supply their necessity, and even our necessities to supply their extremities." Do you think that Christians, materially-speaking, should live like 'a king' or like 'The King' (Jesus)? To what extent should Christians live a life of frugality, in order to help meet the basic physical and material needs of less fortunate persons in the world (especially the needs of those persons who don't have adequate food, clothing, and shelter)?
34. Tell to what extent you agree with the following statement: "There are still those professed followers of Jesus who are more concerned about the letter of the law than about the spirit of the law, more concerned about justice than about mercy, more adept in inflicting pain than in applying the salve of healing." Tell why these types of persons hinder the work of God and growth of the Kingdom of God so very much?
35. Give an illustration to demonstrate the truth of the following principle: "One may pay the debt of law; the debt of love can never be paid."

36. Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Living by love, rather than by law or by lawlessness, enables one to exercise tolerance without compromise towards those who differ from him, both in the areas of doctrinal controversy and in the area of behavioral expectations. All Christians do not see ‘eye-to-eye’ with each other, either in the area of Biblical interpretation or in the area of personal moral convictions.”
37. Without compromising one’s own personal convictions, how can a believer accept other believers who think and who live differently than he thinks and lives?
38. According to Romans 14, what basic principles should a Christian follow in making decisions in the so-called ‘gray’ areas of life, i.e., in those areas where the Scriptures do not speak explicitly?
39. Give your comments on the following statement: “When Jesus gave principles rather than rules, Jesus took off the upper limits of what was expected of his followers.”

CHAPTER 4

LEARNING TO CHRISTIANIZE BEHAVIOR

CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT: LEARNING TO CHRISTIANIZE BEHAVIOR.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 4: 17-31

TEXT: “Live no longer as the unsaved do...Don’t cause the Holy Spirit sorrow by the way you live.” (Ephesians 4: 17, 30)

INTRODUCTION: It is possible to become a Christian in a moment of time, and yet it takes a lifetime of patient practice to become Christianized in thoughts, actions, and relationships. Truth subjectively experienced is Jesus Christ, and He can be received in a moment of time when the repentant one opens his heart’s door to the Heavenly Guest. Truth objectively understood is the Word of God (Bible), and to fully experience this truth takes a lifetime of study, discipline, and humble inquiry.

I. WHY PRACTICE CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR? (Motivation)

- A. Because Pagan Behavior Is Contrary To The Christian Life (vs. 17-19)
- B. Because Pagan Behavior Causes The Holy Spirit Great Sorrow (v. 30)

II. HOW TO PRACTICE CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR? (Method)

- A. **Performance Without Empowerment (Moralistic attempts at Living the ‘Good Life’ are Futile!)**
- B. **Preoccupation With Truth (vs. 20-21) (The Way of Faith is Fruitful for it is God’s way)**
- C. **Partaker Of New Nature (vs. 22, 24) (The Way of Commitment is Productive of New Life!)**
- D. **Progressive Renewing of Attitudes and Thoughts (v.. 23)**

III. WHAT TO PRACTICE IN CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR? (Content)

- A. **Telling The Truth Rather Than Lying (v. 25)**
- D. **Self-Control Rather Than Anger (vs. 26-27)**
- E. **Honest Work Rather Than Stealing (v. 28)**
- F. **Edifying Language rather Than Bad Language (v. 29)**

CONCLUSION:

“You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,
By deeds that you do, by words that you say.
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true,
Say, what is the gospel according to you?”

CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT: Learning To Christianize Behavior.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 4: 17-31

TEXT: “Live no longer as the unsaved do...Don’t cause the Holy Spirit sorrow by the way you live.” (Ephesians 4: 17, 30)

INTRODUCTION: It is possible to become a Christian in a moment of time, and yet it takes a lifetime of patient practice to become Christianized in thoughts, actions, and relationships.

We become a Christian in a moment of time through faith and repentance, and yet we are always thereafter ‘Christians in the making.’ It is an experience of a moment, and yet it is a process of a lifetime. Truth subjectively experienced in Jesus Christ, and He can be received in a moment of time when the repentant one opens his heart’s door to the Heavenly Guest. Truth objectively understood is the Word of God (Bible), and to fully experience this truth takes a lifetime of study, discipline, and humble inquiry.

Today let us look at behavior and seek to show from the Bible how behavior is to be Christianized. The earnest believer seeks to Christianize all of his actions and reactions. He seeks to be thoroughly Christian in all of his behavior.

PROPOSITION: In writing to the Church at Ephesus, Paul was concerned not only with the great doctrinal themes regarding God and Jesus Christ, (Chapter 1-3), but he was also concerned in the practical ethics of everyday living (Chapters 4-6). Doctrine must always be translated into practice. Knowing the right must result in doing the right. A clear head must produce a clean life.

Paul describes Christian behavior - what it is in contrast to non-Christian (pagan) behavior. Paul believed, as did Jesus, that a man shall be known by his fruits. What a man is may be revealed by what he does.

Paul notes the Motivation for Christian Behavior, the Method for Realizing Christian Behavior, and then describes representative forms of Christian Behavior (the Content of Christian Behavior.)

I. WHY PRACTICE CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR? (Motivation)

Paul gives two main reasons why Christians should practice Christian Behavior.

A. Because Pagan Behavior Is Contrary To The Christian Life (vs. 17-19).
Pagan behavior is described as follows:

1. Ignorant In Mind - Pagan mind that is darkened in its ignorance. "Live no longer as the unsaved do, for they are blinded and confused." (v. 17)
2. Hardened In Heart - Pagan Conscience that is petrified in its insensitivity. "They are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds against him, and they cannot understand his ways." (v. 18)

The pagan conscience can be petrified because of insensitivity to habitual sinning. It is possible to become so petrified in conscience that one does not even realize that he is sinning.

3. Brazen In Flesh - Pagan flesh that is shameless in its indulgence. "*They don't care anymore about right and wrong and have given themselves over to impure ways.*" (v. 19a)

Notes Barclay, "The heathen way of life can become so mastered and dominated by sin that it loses even natural shame, so that a man ceases to be a man, and reverts to being a beast." Think of the bondage of drugs, alcohol, and immorality. One can become such a slave to these lusts that he can abandon himself shamelessly to them, not even caring if people observe his indulgence in these lusts. Such behavior, practiced by pagans, is totally incompatible with a Christian profession.

4. Greedy In Desires - Pagan desires that ~~are~~^{are} uncontrollable in greed. They have a "continual lust for more." (v. 19b, NIV) Such greed is an "irresistible desire to have what we have no right to have." (Barclay) The Greeks called this greed "the accursed love of possessing," "the unlawful desire for the things which belong to others."

Notes Barclay, "It is the spirit of the man who does not care whom he hurts and what he desires."

Why should the believer practice Christian behavior? First, because pagan behavior is so Christless, and is a direct contradiction of Christlike living. Christian behavior should be far removed from the behavior of the non-Christian who is described vividly as ignorant in understanding, insensitive in

conscience, shameless in fleshly indulgence, and uncontrollable in selfish greed.

B. Because Pagan Behavior Causes The Holy Spirit Great Sorrow (v. 30)

1. Spirit's personality - The Holy Spirit is not an 'It' but is a Person, and as the Divine Person, has will, intellect, and feeling. Just as a child can grieve or hurt a loving parent by misconduct, so a believer can hurt or grieve or cause sorrow to the blessed Holy Spirit through unchristian behavior.

The very behavior that characterizes an unbeliever, should never characterize the behavior of a believer. Willful ignorance, insensitivity to sinning, rationalizing wrong and thus seeking to still the conscience, indulging the flesh in any kind of sin, an uncontrollable desire to possess things - these are the sins in the believer that are reflections of a pagan way of life rather than a godly life. The Holy Spirit is grieved when worldliness creeps into the life of the child of God.

2. Spirit's Performance - The Holy Spirit lives within the believer to cleanse and to keep the believer from sin and to preserve the believer unto the final day of total redemption. To indulge in sin is to grieve the Holy Spirit. To continue to sin is to eventually force the Holy Spirit out of one's life, not because the Spirit wishes to leave ~~but because the Spirit wishes to leave~~ but because the Holy Spirit can only dwell in a humble and contrite heart.

It is God's intention, conditioned upon the believer's continued response of love and faith, to continue in the believers life, preserving and perfecting the believer, eventually to present the believer to the Father at the end of life, for total redemption - freedom and liberation and eternal life.

The Holy Spirit is "God's work of ownership on you, a guarantee that the Day will come when God will set you free."
(v. 30, Today's English Version)

The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee to the believers that the abundant and Christlike life of earth is simply "the first installment of the life of heaven and the guarantee that the fullness of that life will some day open upon us. The gift of the Holy Spirit is God's token and pledge of still greater things to come." (Barclay's 2 Corinthians, pg. 177.)

Why then practice Christian Behavior? Because pagan behavior is contrary to the Christian life, and because non-Christian behavior causes the Holy Spirit great sorrow.

II. HOW TO PRACTICE CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR? (Method)

A. Performance Without Empowerment (Moralistic attempts at Living the 'Good Life' are Futile!)

It is one thing to see the importance of Christian behavior and even to desire Christian behavior. It is another thing to understand the means or method by which one can realize Christian behavior.

There are those who see Jesus simply as a great teacher to be imitated, whose teachings are helpful guidelines to follow in living the 'good life.' Those who seek to follow His example and who seek to obey His teachings are doomed to failure, apart from divine enablement.

Jesus is not primarily a teacher, although no greater teacher has ever lived. To follow His teachings requires supernatural power, for obeying His teachings requires strength unknown to fallen human nature. Those who assume that the Ten Commandments or The Sermon on the Mount can be obeyed merely by human discipline and effort are short-sighted and spiritually-naive.

Such individuals have failed to perceive the corruptness and weakness of fallen human nature, and have failed to understand the true spiritual nature of God's Holy Laws and noble standards.

Jesus came not primarily to give us standards to reach, laws to obey, or mere examples to follow. Standards, laws, and examples are important, but these only stand to condemn the unregenerate soul, however disciplined in effort he may be in his futile attempts to keep them.

It has been said, "The Christian life is not hard; it is impossible. Only one person has ever lived the Christian life, and that was Jesus Christ. He desires to go on today living his life through Christians whom He indwells." (Bill Bright; The Christian Adventure; Booklet 1, pg. 13)

Herein lies the secret to practicing Christian Behavior - the Indwelling Christ!

B. Preoccupation With Truth (vs. 20-21) (The Way of Faith is Fruitful for it is God's Way)

1. Hear the Voice of Christ.

Living a Christian life is impossible without receiving Christ into one's life. This first involves hearing the voice of Christ (v. 21). God speaks in many different voices. God speaks unmistakably through His written Word - the Bible. God speaks through the voice of Nature, pointing men to the Beautiful Designer and Lord of Nature. God speaks through the voice of Reason (*'Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord.'* Isaiah 1) C. S. Lewis was driven to Christ through God's use of skepticism and reason. God speaks through the conscience, awakened by a convicting sermon. God speaks through the loving actions of compassionate friends.

One of the greatest Christians in history was brought to Christ through the voice of a small child. The young Augustine (354-430) who was raised by a godly mother, went deep into sin. However, even while living loose and wild, he was struggling to find peace of heart. "Suffering from conscious moral impotence and self-disgust because of his inability to control his sexual desires,...at the climax of his struggle Augustine rushed from his friends into a quiet nook in a garden, seemed to hear the voice of a child commanding 'take, read,' found before him a copy of Paul's letter to the Romans, and his eye fell on the passage in the thirteenth chapter which includes the words: *'not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.'* This crisis precipitated conversion (386)." (A History of Christianity; Kenneth Scott Latourette, pg. 96, 97)

2. Learn Truths regarding Person of Jesus.

Those who hear the voice of Jesus must learn who Jesus is. Jesus is the sinless Son of God, the friend of sinners. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He came not to condemn but to save. He is Savior and as Savior he both hates sin but loves the sinner. He never condones sin and He never condemns the repentant sinner. The Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins. Jesus delivers from the pollution of sin and also the power of sin. He is Mighty to save the lost and to empower the weak.

C. **Partaker Of New Nature (vs. 22, 24) (The Way of Commitment is Productive of New Life!)**

When one hears the voice of Christ and learns of the person of Christ, listening and learning leads one to a decisive experience in Christ. The old life is exchanged for the new life. The selfish life is exchanged for Christ's indwelling life. There is a decisive act of the will. The old self is surrendered to Christ. Christ gives one a garment new self. The old garment of sin is removed decisively (aorist tenses) and the new garment of Christlike living is put on.

"Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts...and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."
(vs. 22, 24, RSV).

The new nature is characterized by Christ's righteousness. It is a borrowed righteous

The new nature is characterized by Christ's righteousness. It is a borrowed righteousness. The new nature is also characterized by Christ's holiness. *"Be ye holy for I the Lord thy God am holy."* It is a borrowed holiness. Separation from outward sin and cleansing from inward sin - this is the nature of the new nature. The new nature is created by the Holy Spirit.

The Christian life is an exchanged life - the old life exchanged for the new life, the corrupt nature exchanged for the cleansed nature, the selfish life exchanged for the selfless life, Christless behavior for Christian behavior.

D. Progressive renewing of Attitudes and Thoughts (v. 23)

Following the decisive step of putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature, there must follow a daily and progressive renewing of the believer's attitudes and thoughts. To the extent that the heart is regularly renewed, to that same extent will one's behavior increasingly become Christianized. A daily renewal of one's mind results in a steady perfecting of one's actions.

Wrote Paul, "*Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better.* (v. 23, Living Bible)

Learning to think Christ's thoughts after Him, enables one to practice Christ's actions. Christlike behavior is borne out of Christlike attitudes. Daily surrender of the mind for cleansing will provide the stimulus for Christlike behavior.

III. WHAT TO PRACTICE IN CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR? (Content)

A. Telling The Truth Rather Than Lying (v. 25)

Paul makes it clear that we are to tell the truth because each one of us is a member of each other. Each is part of the body of Christ. "We can only live in safety because the senses and the nerves pass true messages to the brain. If in fact the senses and the nerves took to passing false messages to the brain, if, for instance, they told the brain that something was cool and touchable when in fact it was hot and burning, life would very soon come to an end. A body can only function accurately and healthily when each part of it passes true messages to the brain and to the other parts. If then we are all bound into one body, that body can only function when we speak the truth. All deception impairs the working of the body of Christ." (Barkley's Ephesians, pg. 184)

There are several ways in which the truth can be twisted or destroyed.

SLANDER - "the lie invented and distributed with malicious intention."

TALE-BEARING - "repetition of some report without careful investigation."

FALSE IMPRESSION - "a hint, a suggestion, or even the adroit asking of a question." that leaves an impression which is unfounded and untrue.

SILENCE - remaining silent when one knows that an untrue or inaccurate statement is made or is circulated.

IMPUTATION OF MOTIVE - suggesting that something is done for an ulterior motive when none is intended. ("He knows what side his bread is buttered on.")

FLATTERY - "to say to another man concerning him things which are not believed to be true for the sake of pleasing him."

Many years ago, the great Dr. Johnson gave the following piece of advice in raising children: "Accustom your children constantly to this (the telling of the truth); if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from truth will end...It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world." (Barclay; Ephesians, pg. 183)

B. Self-Control Rather Than Anger (vs. 26-27)

(1) Self-control is a great virtue according to the Bible:

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." (Proverbs 16:32)

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." (Proverbs 25:28)

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." (1 Peter 3:10)

"Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." (Psalms 34:13)

"He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." (Proverbs 13:3)

"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." (Proverbs 21:23)

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” (James 1:26)

“The discretion of a man maketh him slow to anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.” (Proverbs 19: 11)

“Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.” (Ecclesiastes 7: 9)

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” (James 1: 19, 20)

“He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly:” (Proverbs 14: 17)

“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil (it tendeth only to evil doing).” (Psalms 37: 8)

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger...be put away from you.” (Part of Ephesians 4: 31)

“A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.” (Proverbs 15: 1)

(2) Anger causes very great mental and physical anguish.

“The doctors tell us that stomach ulcers are often caused by anger and resentments, and that they will return even after they are cut out by operation, the edges of the wound becoming ulcerated again, if the resentments are not eliminated.” (E. S. Jones; Abundant Living; pg. 52)

Says Dr. S. I. McMillen: “Running people down does not keep us from a host of diseases of body and mind. The verbal expression of animosity toward others calls forth certain hormones from the pituitary, adrenal, thyroid, and other glands, an excess of which can cause disease in any part of the body. Many diseases can develop when we fatten our grudges by rehearsing them in the presence of others.” (None of These Diseases; pg. 71, 72)

- (3) Anger makes one vulnerable to Satan's Attacks.

One is more subject to temptation during anger, for one's mind cannot function objectively during moments of anger - thus, irrational suggestions and temptations are easily yielded to.

- (4) Tongue-Control depends upon heart and mind control.

"When any Christian comes to the point of yielding to the Lord - in full sincerity, cost what it may - control of his thought life, the problem of managing his tongue will be solved, provided that such a surrender goes deeper than the intellect and reaches the emotions and the will." (The Practical Epistle of James; Gabelein; page 89) Jesus said, "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*" (Matthew 12: 34) It is the Holy Spirit who can best deal with carnal anger, cleansing and redirecting that anger into righteous channels.

Notes Robert Andrews: "Many of the forces which consume men - like anger - must themselves be consumed by something more powerful. Only the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit is capable of devouring the driving forces that devour us and waste our lives. There is only one answer - turn your anger and your life over to Christ."

- (5) There is a righteous anger that is beneficial, but even this anger must be guarded carefully, lest it become uncontrollable and bitter.

What are the characteristics of righteous anger?

(a) Motivated by unselfish considerations. "Jesus Christ never spoke one angry word when he was personally mistreated - not even at Calvary, when he was unjustly put to an excruciating death as a common criminal. His indignation was aroused only over wrong done to others, particularly the weak and helpless." (How to Be Good - And Mad; pg. 3; Christianity Today; July 19, 1968)

(b) Properly Focused and Directed. Righteous anger “is directed not against persons, wrong though they be, but against wrong deeds, things, institutions, and situations.” One of my daughters as a small child, said, “God loves the robbers, but he hates the things they do.)”

(c) Seeks positive and constructive action to end the wrong that occasioned the anger.

“We do not see the vital point,
That ‘tis the eight most deadly sin,
To wail, ‘The world is out of joint’,
And not attempt to put it in.” (Ibid: 4)

As Christians we are “duty bound, not merely to protest against whatever evils prevent human beings from reaching their full God-intended stature, but to do all in our power to end such evils...It is always characteristic of righteous anger that it not only protests but also proposes, that it not only raises its voice to object but also raises its hand to remedy.” (Ibid)

When Abraham Lincoln saw “the slave market at New Orleans for the first time he is reported to have said, ‘Let’s get out of this, boys. If I ever get any chance to hit this thing, I’ll hit it hard.’” (Ibid; 4)

C. Honest Work Rather Than Stealing (v. 28)

(1) Christians are to be plainly honest. One of the biggest evidences of a true revival of religion is honesty in paying old debts. Sangster “Observes that there were those who said the Welsh revival was mere emotional fanaticism until they found that ‘people were paying old and neglected and half-forgotten debts.’ When this began to happen, even with debts written off as quite ‘hopeless, they looked upon it as a miracle and they criticized the revival no more.’” (Alive To God Through Prayer; pg. 52)

(2) Christians are to be conscientious in their work habits. Christians ought to be the best workmen around. Sangster notes that “Revival would improve the quality and increase the output of work.” Notes Demaray: “In a recent issue of a leading American magazine, the question was raised, Is there too much leisure today? It pointed out,

among other things, that some are spending too much time on the coffee break. This kind of cheating is a well known phenomenon in our culture (some do it by having a work partner punch the time card in their absence!). Some rationalize it; others know it is quite wrong but do it anyway. Now a revival of religion would do away with that sort of thing. People would become conscientious. They would be sharply aware that stealing time is surely not loving one's neighbor as one self, that someone or ones are suffering because of this carelessness, that dishonesty is the basic issue at stake."

(3) Christians are to be generous in their giving to the needy. The purpose of working is not to accumulate wealth, but to aide those in need. In E. Stanley Jones' "Ladder For Mastery Over Money", he gives these points: (a) Put in a stop where your needs end. After that all you make belongs to other people's needs. (b) Keep your needs down to needs, not luxuries disguised as needs (c) Settle the level of need in the full light of the needs of others, of your enlightened conscience, and of the judgment of a disciplined group. (d) While you are lifting your economic level to the level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn. (e) Work for a co-operative order in which each will think and work for all, and all will think and work for each. (Abundant Living; pg. 300-302)

D. Edifying Language rather Than Bad Language (v. 29)

(1) Bad language is condemned in the Scriptures. Says Jesus, "*I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*" (Matthew 12: 36, 37) "*Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*" (Ephesians 5: 4) "*The words of the pure are pleasant words.*" (Proverbs 15: 26b)

(2) Good language results in edifying and encouraging others. (a) Positive speech is encouraged. Words fitly spoken can be a great source of great strength ~~Old Testament~~ to a person. By your words you create your world. Negative words create a negative world. Positive words - faith words - create a positive world. (b) Complimentary speech is encouraged as the only option to the terrible words as described in Ephesians 4: 31, (brawling and slander). Kind words - not harsh words is the call to all believers. (c) Peaceful speech is encouraged in place of quarreling words (v. 31)

CONCLUSION: Christians are to be Christ-like in behavior. Why? Because pagan behavior is contrary to the Christian life (v. 17-19). Because non-Christian behavior causes the indwelling Holy Spirit great sorrow.

How can one practice Christian behavior? Not by mere human effort, but through surrendering the old nature and becoming clothed in the new nature (v. 22, 24). By progressive renewing of the attitudes and thoughts daily (v.23).

What are some representative forms of vital Christians behavior? (v. 25-29) (1) Telling the truth rather than lying, (2) Self-control rather than anger, (3) Honest work rather than stealing, (4) Edifying language rather than Bad language.

A vital Christian witness depends upon vital Christian behavior.

I'D RATHER SEE A SERMON

I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one any day.
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way.
The eye's a better pupil, and more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel's oft confusing, but example's always clear.
And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds;
For to see good put into action is what everybody needs.
I can soon learn how to do it if you'll let me see it done;
I can watch your hands in action but your tongue too fast may run;
And the lectures you deliver may be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give;
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.
- Author Unknown -

“You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,
By deeds that you do, by words that you say.
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true,
Say, what is the gospel according to you?”

“What you are speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you are saying.”

YOU ARE THE BEST CHRISTIAN THAT SOMEONE KNOWS!

CHAPTER 4

QUESTIONS

1. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is possible to become a Christian in a moment of time, and yet it takes a lifetime of patient practice to become Christianized in thoughts, actions, and relationships."
2. What is the difference between "Truth subjectively experienced" and "Truth objectively understood?"
3. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statements: "Doctrine must always be translated into practice. Knowing the right must result in doing the right. A clear head must produce a clean life."
4. In what four ways does Paul describe "Pagan behavior " in Ephesians 4: 14-19?
5. Is it possible for one's conscience to become so petrified that he does not even realize that he is sinning? (Note Ephesians 4: 18)
6. From the Biblical viewpoint, what is "Greed", and why is it so wicked?
7. Is the Holy Spirit an impersonal force or a personal divine being? Is it possible to hurt or to grieve the Holy Spirit? (Note Ephesians 4: 30) Is the Holy Spirit grieved or deeply hurt when worldliness creeps into the life of the child of God?
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To continue to sin is to eventually force the Holy Spirit out of a believer's life, not because the Spirit wishes to leave but because the Holy Spirit can only continue to dwell in a humble and contrite heart."
9. What is God's intention and will for every believer, and what is the believer's responsibility in cooperating with God in seeing God's intention fulfilled in the life of a believer?
10. Give your interpretation and further explanation of the following statement: "The Holy Spirit is God's work of ownership on you, a guarantee that the Day will come when God will set you free." (Note Ephesians 4: 30)

11. How likely is it that a person will live a genuine “Christian life” if he seeks only to imitate Jesus as a great moral example whose teachings he tries very hard to obey?
12. Give your personal reaction or response to the following statements: “The Christian life is not hard; it is impossible. Only one person has ever lived the Christian life, and that was Jesus Christ. He desires to go on today living his life through Christians whom He indwells.”

What insights or advice would you give to a sincere person who is seeking to “gain God’s approval and to experience personal justification in God’s sight” by earnestly attempting to obey the Ten Commandments (Exodus, 30) and to live by the principles which are taught in Jesus’ Sermon On The Mount (Matthew 5, 6, 7)?”

13. What is the “Secret” to living the Christian life?
14. List several ways in which God speaks to persons, attempting to awaken them to their need for a personal relationship with Him?
15. What is Jesus’ attitude toward sin and toward sinners? (Ephesians 4: 20-21)
16. According to Ephesians 4: 22, 24, when one hears the voice of Christ, and learns of the person of Christ, and makes a decisive commitment to Christ, what can one expect to happen?
17. From what source can one receive true righteousness and holiness in his life? (Ephesians 4: 22, 24)
18. Tell what is meant by the statement: The Christian life is an exchanged life.”
19. Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement; “Following the decisive step of putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature, there must be a daily and progressive renewing of the believer’s attitudes and thoughts so that the believer’s behavior increasingly becomes Christianized.”
20. In terms of ‘Body Life’ (i.e., the life of the Church of Jesus), why is telling the truth (Ephesians 4: 25) so very important?
21. What are several ways in which the truth can be either twisted or distorted or destroyed?
22. Give your reaction or response to the following statement; “It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world.”

23. Why, according to the Bible, is self-control such a great virtue? (Note Proverbs 13: 3; I Peter 3: 10; Psalms 34: 13; Proverbs 21: 23; 19:11; 14: 17; James 1: 26; Ecclesiastes 7: 9; James 1: 19-20; Psalms 37: 8; Ephesians 4: 31; Proverbs 15: 1)
24. List some of the hurtful consequences when anger goes unchecked and unyielded to God.
25. Do you think a believer is more vulnerable to Satanic attacks when he is angry? Why or why not? (Note Ephesians 4: 26-27)
26. Where can one find help in learning to control his tongue?
27. What are the characteristics of 'righteous anger'?
28. Give your response to the following statement; "One of the biggest evidences of a true revival of religion is honesty in paying old debts." (Note Luke 19: 1-10)
29. Why should Christians be conscientious in their work habits? (Note Ephesians 4: 28)
30. Put a 'A' by these statements with which you 'Agree', and put a 'D' by those statements with which you 'Disagree'.

- _____ 1. Because Christians are 'children of royalty'. Spiritually-speaking, they ought to work for and expect to enjoy the best things, materially-speaking, that this world has to offer.
- _____ 2. After your basic needs, as a believer, are met, all you make financially belongs to other people's needs.
- _____ 3. As a believer, you should keep your needs down to needs, not luxuries disguised as needs.
- _____ 4. God has given His children all things on the earth richly to enjoy. Therefore it is good and proper for believers to enjoy many luxuries in this life on earth.
- _____ 5. As a believer, you should settle the level of your need materially-speaking, in the full light of the needs of others, of your enlightened conscience, and of the judgment of a disciplined group.
- _____ 6. A Christian should not have abundance of possessions - like big houses and expensive clothes and new cars - for the possession of these things will make others envious and might cause fellow believers

- _____ 6. A Christian should not have abundance of possessions - like big houses and expensive clothes and new cars - for the possession of these things will make others envious and might cause fellow believers who are poor to be offended.
- _____ 7. There is no 'fixed standard' by which all believers in all parts of the world must conform, regarding the amount of material possessions they should own, if they are to be pleasing to God.
- _____ 8. While you are lifting your economic level to the level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn.
- _____ 9. A Christian ought to lay up some treasures (money and possessions) for himself, so that his needs and the needs of his wife will be adequately met in future years after his retirement.
- _____ 10. A true Christian is one who works for a co-operative order in which each will think and work for all, and all will think and work for each.
31. Why is 'bad language' so severely condemned in the Scriptures? (Note Matthew 12: 36-37; Ephesians 5: 4; Proverbs 15: 26)
32. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statements: "By your words you create your world. Negative words create a negative world. Positive words - faith words - create a positive world"
33. Instead of brawling, slander, and quarreling, what kind of speech should a follower of Christ be engaged in? (Ephesians 4: 31-32)
34. Can one have a vital Christian witness for Christ without the consistent demonstration of godly Christian behavior? Why or why not?
35. "You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day, By deeds that you do, by words that you say. Men read what you write, whether faithless or true, Say, what is the gospel according to you?"

YES! "What is the gospel according to you?"

Remember! "You may be the best Christian that someone knows!"

36. From your own personal observations and experiences from your relationships to others, give an example which demonstrates the truth of the following popular statement:

“What you ARE speaks so loudly that I can’t HEAR what you are saying.”

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING TO BE SLOW AND TO BE QUICK

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT: LEARNING TO BE SLOW AND TO BE QUICK.

SCRIPTURE: James 1: 19-22

INTRODUCTION: Wise is the person who knows when to be quick and when to be slow. The Bible makes it clear when to be slow and when to be quick.

I. SLOW TO SPEAK - QUICK TO LISTEN

- A. Slow To Speak**
- B. Quick To Listen**

II. SLOW TO ANGER - QUICK TO FORGIVE

- A. Slow To Anger**
- B. Quick To Forgive**

III. SLOW TO JUDGE MEN - QUICK TO OBEY GOD

- A. Slow To Judge Men**
- B. Quick To Obey God**

CONCLUSION: To live a successful Christian life, one must learn when to be Quick and when to be Slow!

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT: LEARNING TO BE SLOW AND TO BE QUICK.

SCRIPTURE: James 1: 19-22

INTRODUCTION:

Wise is the person who knows when to be quick and when to be slow. The Bible makes it clear when to be slow and when to be quick.

I. SLOW TO SPEAK - QUICK TO LISTEN

A. Slow To Speak

The Bible says much about speech. *“To quarrel with a neighbor is foolish; a man with good sense holds his tongue.”* (Proverbs 11: 12, Living Bible) *“The man of few words and settled mind is wise; therefore, even a fool is thought to be wise when he is silent. It pays him to keep his mouth shut.”* (Proverbs 17: 27, 28, Living Bible) *“Don’t talk so much. You keep putting your foot in your mouth. Be sensible and turn off the flow!”* (Proverbs 10: 19, Living Bible)

Every person is accountable for the words he speaks. Said Jesus, *“And I tell you this, that you must give account on Judgment Day for every idle word you speak. Your words now reflect your fate then: either you will be justified by them or you will be condemned.”* (Matthew 12: 36, 37)

Here is a good prayer for a believer daily to pray: *“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”* (Psalms 19: 14)

It is always wise for us to guard our lips. Notes James: *“Anyone who says he is a Christian but doesn’t control his sharp tongue is just fooling himself, and his religion isn’t worth much.”* (James 1: 26, Living Bible)

Proverbs 13: 3 says *“Self-control means controlling the tongue! A quick retort can ruin everything.”* (Living Bible)

How often we have our mouths open when they should be shut! The apostle Peter often ‘put his foot in his mouth’, speaking impulsively before thinking.

Proverbs 21: 23 gives this advice: *“Keep your mouth closed and you’ll stay out of trouble.”*

The apostle Peter may have been too quick to speak in his younger life, before the day of Pentecost, but spiritual maturity - a closer walk with God - tamed and controlled his tongue. He later wrote, *“If you want a happy, good life, keep control of your tongue, and guard your lips from telling lies. Try to live in peace even if you must run after it to catch and hold it!”* (I Peter 3: 10, 11, Living Bible)

We are exhorted to use edifying speech, and edifying speech is usually speech that is carefully and sometimes even reticently spoken. This is not to say that we should be slow to offer sincere compliments, but it is to say that we should keep our tongues constantly in check and under the control of the Holy Spirit. Unedifying speech is usually impulsive and careless speech. Giving advice to another is good, but it must be within God’s timing, not merely our own timing. Notes Proverbs 25: 11 - *“Timely advice is as lovely as golden apples in a silver basket.”* *“Words from a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips.”* (Ecclesiastes 10: 12) *“Kind words are like honey - enjoyable and healthful.”* (Proverbs 16: 24, Living Bible)

B. Quick To Listen

James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote, *“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak”.* (James 1: 19)

We need to learn to listen to both God and to our fellow men. To do this, we must get rid of impediments to good listening.

What are some of the impediments to good listening, especially as this relates to God?

One impediment is Noise. We all need to cherish solitude - being alone in the quietness of God’s presence, uninterrupted for periods of quality time to commune with our Lord without the noise of the world. Says the Lord to us: *“Stand silent!! Know that I am God!”* (Psalms 46: 10, Living Bible) Habakkuk 2: 20 says, *“The Lord is in his holy Temple; let all the earth be silent before him.”* Our society is too characterized by noise, rather than by silence and solitude.

Another impediment to listening to God is ‘Busyness’. If you are too busy to listen to God, then you are far too busy! Jesus took time from His busy schedule to get alone in a favored garden spot regularly where He prayed and

meditated and listened to the voice of His heavenly Father. "Take time to be holy: The world rushes on: Spend much time in secret With Jesus alone; by looking to Jesus, Like Him you shall be; Your friends in your conduct His likeness shall see."

Another impediment to listening to God is the annoyance of other voices. Some hear the voice of others more than they hear the voice of God. Some hear the voice of their own mistrained and misguided conscience more than they hear the voice of God. It is even possible to mistake the mimicked voice of the evil one (Devil) for the voice of God! A mature Christian learns to distinguish between the voice of God and the voice of Satan. The voice of Satan is loud and clamorous, and feverish, and strong; the voice of God is quiet and persuasive. Satan deals in generalities but God speaks in specifics. The voice of Satan is driving, but the voice of God is tender and leading.

A fourth impediment to listening to God's voice is dullness and insensitivity. The immature and untrained Christian has a hard time hearing God speak to Him. Like unexercised muscles that are incapable of much strain, so ears that are untrained in spiritual matters cannot comprehend the deeper messages of the Lord. Wrote the writer to the Hebrews, "*The story which has been laid upon me to tell you about this matter is a long story, difficult to tell and difficult to grasp, for your ears have become dull. For, indeed, at a stage when you ought to be teachers because of the length of time that has passed since you first heard the gospel, you still need someone to tell you the simple elements of the very beginning of the message of God.*" (Hebrews 5: 11-12, Barclay)

Let's note some of the Aids to good listening. The greatest aid of all to listening to the voice of God is the Holy Scriptures. The Psalmist wrote, "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*" The more you read and meditate on the Bible, the more sensitive you will become to hearing and discerning the voice of God!

Godly training in the atmosphere of God's people is another way to learn to listen to God. Young Samuel who was trained by the priest Eli was prepared to hear God speak to him. Upon hearing God speak to him the third time, he was told by Eli (the old priest) to respond to the voice. "*The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me. Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"*" (I Samuel 3: 8, 9) The person who surrounds himself with God's people usually has a much easier time hearing the voice of God, than the person who tries independently to hear God's voice.

Another aid to hearing the voice of God is learning to wait expectantly upon God every day. In the quietness of your 'quiet times' alone with God, you will hear the *'still, small voice of God'*. (I Kings 19: 12)

He who is quick to listen for the voice of God is the same person who is quick and effective in listening to the cries and frustrations of other persons. The best way to become a good listener in human relationships is to become a consistent listener to the voice of God in the quietness of your own devotional 'Closet'. But even with this source as the basis for good listening, the following disciplines and guidelines are good to consider.

(1) A good listener gives full concentration to the person with whom he is relating, not allowing his mind to drift to other subjects while the speaker is talking.

(2) A good listener allows the other person who is speaking to share his thoughts and feelings without the listener carrying on a mental debate within himself. A good listener does not preoccupy himself with reviewing the arguments he plans to use against the other person while he is talking.

(3) A good listener always gives the person who is speaking the 'benefit of the doubt' and he does not impute wrong motives to the speaker. Listening for the purpose of better understanding rather than for the purpose of gathering 'ammunition' for debate and argumentation, is vitally important in good communication.

(4) A good listener seeks to listen 'empathetically', i.e., 'with his heart' and not only with his ears. 'Reading between the lines' and being sensitive to the feelings of another and being aware of the 'body language' of another are vitally important characteristics of the effective listener.

(5) A good listener restrains himself from replying too hastily to the speaker, and he restrains himself from giving 'pat answers' and 'easy advice'. Most hurting persons need to share openly, and such persons do not expect quick or complete solutions to all their problems. Providing a 'listening ear' and a 'sympathetic heart' is far more important than offering quick advice to a hurting or a frustrated person.

There is a time for offering advice and guidance and counsel, but usually this is offered prematurely without adequate listening first.

II. SLOW TO ANGER - QUICK TO FORGIVE

A. Slow To Anger

Write James, *“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”* (James 1: 19-20)

The Bible says that God Himself is ‘slow to anger’. God restrains his wrath and extends His mercy, to unrepentant mankind. Wrote the Psalmist, *“He is merciful and tender toward those who don’t deserve it; he is slow to get angry and full of kindness and love.”* (Psalms 103: 8) *“Jehovah is kind and merciful, slow to get angry, full of love.”* (Psalms 145: 9, Living Bible)

To backslidden people, God can say: *“Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me all your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, mourning. Let your remorse tear at your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered; he is full of kindness, and anxious not to punish you.”* (Joel 2: 12, 13, Living Bible) God takes no delight in destroying the wicked.

Contrast Jonah’s anger with God’s mercy: *“This change of plans made Jonah very angry. He complained to the Lord about it: ‘This is exactly what I thought you’d do, Lord, when I was there in my own country and you first told me to come here. That’s why I ran away to Tarshish. For I knew you were a gracious God, merciful, slow to get angry, and full of kindness; I knew how easily you could cancel your plans for destroying these people.’”* (Jonah 4: 2, Living Bible)

Just as God is slow to get angry, so we too as believers are to be slow to anger. The Proverbs speaks often to this issue of self-control and slowness to become angry. *“A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes.”* (Proverbs 14: 29) *“A quick-tempered man starts fights; a cool-tempered man tries to stop them.”* (Proverbs 15: 18) *“It is better to be slow-tempered than famous; it is better to have self-control than to control an army.”* (Proverbs 16: 32) *“A rebel shouts in anger; a wise man holds his temper in and cools it.”* (Proverbs 29: 11) *“There is more hope for a fool than for a man of quick temper.”* (Proverbs 29: 20, Living Bible)

Anger leads to evil speech and to unkind actions. Wrote Paul, *“Stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry. Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives.”* (Ephesians 4: 31, Living Bible)

Anger gives the devil an opportunity to bring defeat to a believer. *“If you are angry, don’t sin by nursing your grudge. Don’t let the sun go down with you still angry - get over it quickly; for when you are angry you give a mighty foothold to the devil.”* (Ephesians 4: 26, 27; Living Bible)

B. Quick To Forgive

Said Jesus, “So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and suddenly remember that a friend has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar and go and apologize and be reconciled to him, and then come and offer your sacrifice to God. Come to terms quickly with your enemy before it is too late and he drags you into court and you are thrown into a debtor’s cell, for you will stay there until you have paid the last penny.” (Matthew 5: 23-25, Living Bible)

Why is it so important quickly to forgive others who have sinned intentionally or unintentionally against you? For several reasons:

(1) Quick forgiveness usually brings about quick reconciliation. Most misunderstandings could easily and quickly be solved if those who are at odds with one another would aggressively pursue peace and would quickly give and receive forgiveness from one another.

(2) Quick forgiveness disallows hurt to turn into bitterness and hate and grudge-bearing. The writer to the Hebrews wrote, *“Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives.”* (Hebrews 12: 15, Living Bible)

(3) Quick forgiveness assures you that your own forgiveness from God is maintained. The Scriptures teach that he who refuses to forgive another person, automatically forfeits his own forgiveness from God (Read Matthew 18: 21-35). Said Jesus, *“Your heavenly Father will forgive you if you forgive those who sin against you; but if you refuse to forgive them, he will not forgive you.”* (Matthew 6: 14-15, Living Bible)

III. SLOW TO JUDGEMENT - QUICK TO OBEY GOD

A. Slow To Judge Men.

We are not to condemn a person, but we are to judge the rightness or the wrongness of his position, morally and perhaps theologically. We are commanded to “*contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.*” (Jude 3) Jesus said we are to be ‘fruit inspectors’: “*By their fruits ye shall know them.*” (Matthew 7: 16) We are to examine and to evaluate and to discriminate between truth and falsehood, but we are not to judge men.

Notes Lloyd-Jones: “There is all the difference in the world between judging and expressing an enlightened, intelligent criticism of a man’s views and theories, his doctrine, his teachings or his mode or manner of life. We are called upon to do the latter; but the moment we condemn and dismiss the person we are assuming a power that belongs to God alone and to no one else.” (The Sermon On The Mount; pg. 169)

Why are you to be slow to judge men? For several reasons:

(1) Because you can only look on the outward appearance, whereas God alone knows the real motives of a person.

(2) Because you can only know another person’s present, and God alone knows the future possibilities of a person. “A play producer, Gilbert Frankau, was producing a play and was in need of a male actor and after he was interviewed and tested, Gilbert Frankau telephoned to the agent and said, ‘This man will never do, He cannot act, and he never will be able to act, and you had better tell him to look for some other profession before he starves. By the way, tell me his name again so that I can cross him off my list.’ The actor’s name was Ronald Colman who became one of the greatest actors the screen has ever known.” (Daily Study Bible; Matthew; pg. 266) Never judge a person’s future on the basis of his present!

(3) Because you do not know all the factors of one’s past life which have a bearing upon that man’s present actions and attitudes.

(4) Because you probably do not have all the information regarding a man’s present circumstances, whereas God knows everything.

(5) *“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.”*
(Matthew 7: 12).

B. Quick To Obey God

If we should be slow in our judgment and evaluation of men, we should be quick in our obedience to God. In what areas is quick obedience to God important? Many, but here are some.

(1) Quickly follow Christ when He calls you to repentance. The Bible says, *‘Today is the day of salvation.’* The writer of Hebrews gave this strong exhortation: *“Now is the time. Never forget the warning, ‘Today if you hear God’s voice speaking to you, do not harden your hearts against him, as the people of Israel did when they rebelled against him in the desert.’”* (Hebrews 3: 15, Living Bible)

(2) Quickly follow Christ when He calls you to Christian Service. I have heard too many people say that they heard God calling them to full-time Christian service when they were a teen, but that they resisted the ‘call’, only to find themselves years later finally accepting the call but having to regret the fact that years were wasted in unproductive, self-centered living. When God calls you to follow Him in special ways, immediately follow Him.

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you...So Abram left, as the Lord had told him.”
(Genesis 12: 1, 4) Quick and ready obedience!

“Going on from there, Jesus saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” (Matthew 4: 21, 22)

How often have we told the Lord that eventually we will follow Him, but not now! It is dangerous to use excuses for not immediately following Christ. A delayed obedience can end up becoming an outright disobedience. *“Another of his disciples said, ‘Sir, when my father is dead, then I will follow you.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me now! Let those who are spiritually dead care for their own dead.’”* (Matthew 8: 21, 22, Living Bible)

Don't wait until you are older to serve Christ; start immediately serving Christ. Tomorrow never comes! Today is all we have. Redeem the time and use your gifts to serve Christ today. Wrote Paul, "*Make the most of every opportunity you have for doing good.*" (Ephesians 5: 16, Living Bible)

(3) Quickly reach out in love to others to witness to them.

"Work, for the night is coming, Work thro' the sunny noon;
Fill brightest hours with labor, Rest comes sure and soon.
Give every flying minute Something to keep in store;
Work, for the night is coming, When man works no more."

It is true that we (as believers) will probably be working forever for our Lord in heaven, but it is doubtful that it will be the important work of witnessing to lost persons. Witnessing to the lost is the work of earth in which the Lord's servants must constantly be involved.

Be quick to witness (not indiscreet or coercive), for the heart of "sinners" may not always be tender and receptive. Be quick to witness to a sinner, for you do not know how long you will have to witness. The sinner may soon die! (Illustration of my appointment with a 'stranger' whom I had met only once, who died in a car accident only one month after he accepted Christ in that 'salvation appointment'). (Illustration of D. L. Moody's regret that he did not urge people to come to an altar to be saved on one night in a Chicago Revival, and those same people (some of them) died in the great Chicago Fire).

(4). Quickly obey God's command to give tithes and offerings. The person who says, "When God prospers me, then I will tithe," fails to see that God needs his money NOW. To postpone giving can be disastrous at times. To wait to give only after you have prospered, is to wait too long. "A businessmen went to a missionary society with \$280 toward sending a new recruit overseas, but he was told that he was too late as they had just canceled her passage for lack of the money. In tears he then confessed: 'God told me to give it some days ago, but I delayed'." (The Grace of Giving; pg. 89)

CONCLUSION:

To live a successful Christian life, one must learn when to be QUICK and when to be SLOW!
Be slow to speak and quick to listen; slow to anger - quick to forgive; slow to judge men - quick to obey God!

CHAPTER 5

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, is it wise to quarrel with a neighbor with whom you disagree? Why or why not? (Proverbs 11:12)
2. According to the Bible, is it wise for you to be slow to speak or quick to speak? Why? (Proverbs 17: 27, 28; Proverbs 10: 19; Proverbs 13: 3; Proverbs 21: 23)
3. Just how accountable is a person for the words he speaks? (Matthew 12: 36, 37)
4. Have you seriously considered repeating the words of Psalms 19: 14 as your daily prayer for guidance?
5. Why do you think it is most difficult for most persons to 'keep their mouths shut' and to listen to the viewpoints, opinions, and concerns of others?
6. According to the apostle Peter, what are some of the important ingredients in learning to live a truly 'happy and good life'? (Note 1 Peter 3: 10, 11)
7. What metaphors are used to describe the value and beauty of kind words spoken in timely ways? (Note Proverbs 25: 11; 26: 24)
8. List at least four impediments to good listening, especially as these relate to listening to God. Of these four impediments, which one do you personally have most difficulty practicing?
9. Describe, by way of contrast, the characteristics of the voice of God and the voice of Satan which seeks to mimic the voice of God.
10. Share from your personal experience how you have learned to train and to sensitize your "spiritual ears", so that you are able to discern the voice of God speaking to you, and to avoid becoming dull in hearing and in understanding the will of God. (Note Hebrews 5: 11-12; I Kings 19: 11-13)
11. What are some of the most effective Aids which you can use to enable you to become a more sensitive listener to the voice of God speaking to you?

12. Tell to what degree you agree or disagree with the following statement: “The person who surrounds himself with God’s people usually has a much easier time hearing the voice of God, than the person who tries independently to hear God’s voice.” How would you personally respond or react to a fellow believer who approached you with a claim that he personally received “a message from the Lord” regarding something which God, through him, wanted to reveal to you regarding God’s will for you?
13. Tell what your response is to the following statement: “The best way to become a good listener in human relationships is to become a consistent listener to the voice of God in the quietness of your own devotional ‘closet’.”
14. List several characteristics of a truly “good Listener.”
15. In counseling settings, do you think there generally is a tendency for most counselors to offer advice and counsel too quickly to counselees, without first adequately and patiently listening to the feelings of the counselees?
16. What, according to Scriptures, is God’s basic attitude towards sinners? (Note Psalms 10: 3; Psalms 145: 9; Joel 2: 12-13; Jonah 4: 2)
17. In contrast to Jonah’s attitude towards repentant sinners, what should be our attitude, as believers, towards repentant sinners? (Jonah 4: 2; Luke 15: 32)
18. What value do the Scriptures place on the quality of self-control and slowness in showing anger? (Note Proverbs 14: 29; 15: 18; 16: 32; 29: 11, 20)
19. What relationship is there between being angry and evil speech and unkind actions? (Note Ephesians 4: 31)
20. In what way does one make himself spiritually vulnerable if he fails quickly to get over his anger? (Note Ephesians 4: 26-27)
21. Why is it so important quickly to forgive others who have sinned intentionally or unintentionally against you?
22. What is the distinction and difference between a believer being a “fruit inspector” and “a judge” of others? (Note Matthew 7: 1-2 and Matthew 7: 15-20 and I John 4: 1-3)
23. Why are you to be slow to judge others?
24. In what areas of your life is quick obedience to God so vitally important? Why?

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING TO CHRISTIANIZE THOUGHTS

CHAPTER 6

SUBJECT: LEARNING TO CHRISTIANIZE THOUGHTS

SCRIPTURE: II Corinthians 10: 3-6

TEXT: *“These weapons can break down every proud argument against God and every wall that can be built to keep men from finding him.”* (II Corinthians 10: 5, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION: As King, Christ is increasingly bringing the thoughts of men into captivity to His Kingdom purposes. Christ’s way is increasingly being proven to be the only effective way to live life - individually and corporately. As Christians, we must learn to Christianize our thinking. Every human category of thought must be brought into subjection to Christ’s way of thinking. Our thoughts must be Christianized.

- I. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO OTHERS - Sociology
- II. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIMSELF - Psychology
- III. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO THINGS - Economics
- IV. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIS BODY - Physiology
- V. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO RULING AUTHORITIES - Government
- VI. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD OF MATTER - Science
- VII. MAN IN SEARCH FOR ULTIMATE MEANING - Philosophy
- VIII. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE PAST - History
- IX. MAN IN SEARCH FOR STANDARDS - Religion

CONCLUSION: Jesus is the Lord of life and the Lord of all of life’s categories of thought. Jesus is in the process of bringing every thought into captivity to His Kingdom!

CHAPTER 6

SUBJECT: LEARNING TO CHRISTIANIZE THOUGHTS

SCRIPTURE: II Corinthians 10: 3-6

TEXT: *“These weapons can break down every proud argument against God and every wall that can be built to keep men from finding him.”* (II Corinthians 10: 5, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION: Wrote Paul, *“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”* (II Corinthians 10: 5)

As King, Christ is increasingly bringing the thoughts of men into captivity to His Kingdom purposes. To put this another way: Christ’s way is increasingly being proven to be the only effective way to live life - individually and corporately.

There is a Christian way and a non-Christian way of looking at everything. We must ‘Christianize our thinking’, for it is possible to be a Christian in part without being one in totality. Jesus is the Truth. There is a Christian way of looking at everything.

As Christians, we must learn to Christianize our thinking. Every human category of thought must be brought into subjection to Christ’s way of thinking. Our thoughts must be Christianized. Look at man’s systems of thought which are going to be brought into captivity to Christ and His Kingdom.

I. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO OTHERS - Sociology

Sociology is the study of man in social relationships. Secular sociology has long taught that man is basically good and that man’s basic problem has been corruption through bad environment. However, Christianity teaches that you may take the sinner out of the gutter, but you can’t take the gutter out of the sinner through man-made schemes. Man is born with a depraved nature and that depravity can only be removed through Christ’s transforming grace.

Christianity teaches that social structures can be changed for the better only as individuals are changed for the better. Society in general will be changed as individuals in particular are transformed. Jesus is that Yes that you can be different and need not be the same. “But can human nature be changed? It is more changeable than anything on earth. It is the nature of human nature to change. The new birth can turn you from hate to love, from defeat to victory, and make you a different person.” (The Divine Yes; Jones; pg. 20)

The problem with secular sociology is the assumption that, if social improvements are made (such as building hospitals, schools, etc), individuals will automatically change. But history gives too many examples of sophisticated nations becoming heartless, cruel nations. Nazi Germany was a highly organized and educated nation which became the tool of untold world suffering.

“We have, from the beginning of modern missions to peoples in undeveloped lands, faced the problem of where to start. Shall we start with the effort to change the civilization, as in the establishment of schools and hospitals, or shall we start with the Gospel message? Even after we have agreed on the need of both, the question of temporal priority still remains. We are fortunate today to have the careful answer of a seasoned missionary in the words of Bishop Neill.

After more than a century it is possible on purely empirical grounds to pronounce a judgment on the two methods. Experience has shown that the order of priority must always be first conversion and then social change; if the inner transformation has been brought about, the problem of social change and uplift can be tackled with far greater prospects of success. The old principle of the Gospel “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,” has proved itself to be not a remote and distant ideal but the most practical of advice.

The sharing of the Gospel is the first aim, but much else follows by consequence. The experience of unity among Christians is one of these, and a multitude of social services is another. If we do not start with what is primary, we are not likely to achieve what is secondary. For this is a resultant. If we try to maintain the far-flung social services, without the concern for the central message, the day may come when the services will be impossible because the central motivation will have been lost. The call to become fishers of men precedes the call to wash one another’s feet.” (Trueblood 97, 98, The Validity of Christian Mission)

II. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIMSELF - Psychology

If Sociology is the study of man in social relationships, then Psychology is the study of man in his internal relationships with himself.

Jesus is proving increasingly to be the King of Psychology. Secular psychology has done untold harm to man, because some of its basic assumptions are unbiblical and untrue. Secular psychology assumes that self-knowledge leads to self-healing. Christian psychology declares that self-knowledge may help in the healing process, but not automatically. To know thyself may result in destroying thyself, for such self-knowledge may reveal the corruptions of human nature. Christianity declares that self-knowledge must result in self-surrender, which leads to healing of the inner soul.

Secular psychology says first, 'Know Thyself'. But how can you know yourself except as you are in relation with your Creator and Heavenly Father?

Secular psychology says, second, 'accept thyself'. "But how can you accept an unacceptable self, a self full of conflicts and contradictions, full of guilt and frustrations, inferiorities and inhibitions, full of its self? To ask a man to accept himself - that kind of self - is to ask the impossible. If he does accept that kind of a self on that level, then he himself is unacceptable to himself." (Victory Through Surrender; pg. 23, 24)

Secular psychology says, third, 'Express Thyself.' "But if you have a dozen people together all of whom have been taught to express themselves - what have you got? You have the stage set for clash and confusion and jealousy and strife." (Ibid. 24)

One can only truly know himself, accept himself, and express himself if he has first surrendered himself to Christ. Self-surrender leads to self-realization. Wrote Paul, "*I have been put to death with Christ on his cross, so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me.*" (Galatians 2: 20, Today's English Version).

Psychology says that man has three basic needs of human personality - to belong, to have significance, to have reasonable security. Christ, as Creator and King of human personality, alone can adequately meet these needs.

The need to have significance is fulfilled when Christ gives a responsible and high call to a man. The ordinary man becomes an extraordinary person because he is connected with an extraordinary purpose. A Nobody becomes a Somebody through communion with Christ.

The need to have reasonable security is fulfilled in commitment to Christ. Assurance of sins forgiven, assurances of present strength, assurance of future life in heaven - these assurances gives security to the believer. The believer is not given a false security but a real security; he is secure as long as he remains in the company of Christ. No real harm shall befall the man who keeps his trust in the strong Christ. Said Christ, "*My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*" (John 10: 29)

The greatest soul need of man which psychology is increasingly emphasizing is man's deep need to love and to be loved. Only Christ can adequately meet this inherent need of man. Only Christ can give the divine-like love (agape) which enables a man to conquer hate and to care unconditionally for all men - the good, the bad, the indifferent.

Christ, then, is the King of life - including both the life of external relationships in society (sociology) and the life of internal relationships in the inner psyche (psychology).

III. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO THINGS - Economics

Economics appears to be incredibly complex and controversial, but one simple fact emerges. Christ's way of unselfishness and self-giving and cooperation and compassion - if applied on the economic level - produces a better world. Economics, based on greed, accumulation of wealth, cut-throat competition, undisciplined spending - produces bad relationships and thus a bad world. Christian economics is the only economics that will work.

IV. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIS BODY - Physiology

Notes E. Stanley Jones, "I am convinced that we are predestined by the very structure of our beings to be Christian...I believe that predestination is written not in the inscrutable will of God, as was once proclaimed, but written in our nerves, our blood, our tissues, our organs, our makeup. It is not merely written in the texts of Scripture, but into the texture of our beings." (Word Becomes Flesh; pg. 63)

V. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO RULING AUTHORITIES - Government

History has shown that successful Government is the result of seriously accepting the Biblical concept of man. Jesus, then, is the King of Government. The Bible declares that a man is a fallen creature and that he is capable of great evil. The Bible further declares that government control is needed to curb the evil tendencies in man. However, the Bible reveals that man is redeemable and capable of living an ordered life in society. Government is constituted by God for the good of man, and, because man belongs to the Creator and not to the State, government must reflect the nature of man, which nature is fallen, but nevertheless redeemable and valuable to God.

The democratic form of government is not without faults, but it is important to note that Democracy is rooted in spiritual and Biblical understanding of man. Notes Walter Lippman, "What separates us from the totalitarian regimes is our belief that man does not belong to the State - but to his Creator." And, being an immortal soul, he is possessed of "inalienable rights as a person, which no power on earth has the right to violate."

"This," contends Lippmann, "is the forgotten foundation of democracy in the only sense in which Democracy is truly valid and of liberty in the only sense in which it can hope to endure." But mark well his further conclusion:

“The decay of decency in the modern age, the rebellion against law and good faith, the treatment of human beings as things, as the mere instruments of power and ambition, is, beyond doubt, the consequence of the decay of the belief in man as something more than an animal animated by highly conditioned reflexes and chemical reactions. Unless man is more than that, he has no rights that anyone is bound to respect, and there are no limitations upon his conduct which he is bound to obey.”

(Faith & Freedom by Bready, pg. 45)

The famous statesman-scholar, Lord Tweedsmuir, wrote in his autobiography, “There have been high civilizations in the past which have not been Christian, but in the world as we know it I believe that civilization must have a Christian basis, and must ultimately rest on the Christian Church.” (The Validity of Christian Mission; Trueblood; pg. 95)

VI. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD OF MATTER - Science

Jesus is the Lord of Science. There are still secular scientists whose view of man is very belittling and inadequate. Notes E. Stanley Jones, “A very able man who was a chemist and the head of the chemistry department of a great university said to me that man is nothing but combustion, chemical combustion. He flares up for a few years and then dies down to an ash. I said to Dr. George Carver, the great Negro saint and scientist: ‘You are a chemist. What would you say in reply to this man - that we are nothing but chemical combustion?’ He said, ‘The poor man, the poor man.’ That is all he would say. It was a very adequate reply, because if you have a small view of life, a poor philosophy, you are going to be a poor man. If you believe that the end of life is only an ash, then you are going to live life as an ash. A Nothing.” (The Divine Yes, E. Stanley Jones, pg. 15) Science as method in great; as a Religion it is inadequate.

VII. MAN IN SEARCH FOR ULTIMATE MEANING - Philosophy

Jesus is the Lord of Philosophy. The world’s system of philosophy is based upon a naturalistic view of reality. The naturalistic philosophy of the worldly mind entertains a conception of Reality which believes that the universe is ‘mechanical’ and ‘close-ended’, and like a perpetual motion machine with fixed laws over which God has no control. Naturalism denies the possibility of any independent or spontaneous event that would supersede the fixed, interlocking ‘laws’ of Nature. Naturalism denies the possibility of Miracle. According to this view, prayer for healing is useless, for viruses and germs will follow their normal course that leads to infection and destruction. The Virgin Birth is impossible, for Nature’s ‘Laws’ demand the meeting of sperm and egg for fertilization and human conception. Resurrection is impossible,

for Nature's 'Laws' say that cessation of life spells death. Reports of Providence are untrue, for all events of history are predetermined by Nature ("whatever will be, will be".) Man is helpless to do anything about the circumstances of life.

The Christian system of Philosophy is based upon a supernaturalistic view of Reality. Supernaturalism is based on a purposive view of Reality which comprehensively includes Nature's 'Laws' (Mechanical), but also allows for novelties and irregularities as part of total Reality, if such uncommon occurrences are necessary to fulfill the goals of that larger purpose. Such a view allows the acceptance of both Nature's 'Laws' (which are uniform and regular) and also allows for Report of Miracles (which are uncommon and irregular) without necessary conflict and contradiction. The Purposive View of Reality is broader and more comprehensive; for Mechanism can be used to serve Purpose.

Just as the human body is the medium of expression for the rational mind, so the world with its uniform laws can be the medium for the activity of Divine Mind, Who can supersede nature's laws if it serves His Purpose. Nature is regular because Mind is self-consistent, but novelty is understandable when an intelligent adaptation to meet a changing circumstance is necessary to serve Purpose or Reason. This world, with its laws is a subsidiary system, subject to God's will and eternal purposes.

From the Christian viewpoint, Miracles are reasonable and feasible. For instance, the Incarnation (including Virgin Birth) is simply a divinely-wrought, intelligent adaptation of Nature's Laws to cope with man's failure in human history. The Resurrection is a divine superseding of Natural Law to accomplish God's purposive demonstration of His power over death and sin. From the Christian viewpoint, Miracle is simply a conspicuous exception to a natural law to achieve the eternal Purpose of God, and is therefore not supernatural (but normal), as seen from God's viewpoint. The Christian can accept the idea of Divine Providence in History. For the Christian, human history (which includes some irregularities and 'unexplainable' happenings from the viewpoint of Naturalism) is simply one of the several Stages where Divine Purposes and Activity are enacted and manifested.

VIII. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE PAST - History

The worldly view of interpreting History is influenced by philosophical determinism. "It assumes an unbroken chain of cause and effects in the flow of history. The Enlightenment assumed that human reason and observation were the measures of all historical reality. Thus the 'scientific' method excludes the possibility of the supernatural before it has studied the evidence. It is based on a philosophical presupposition about the nature of historical reality." (George Ladd)

“This utterly anti-miraculous, naturalistic approach to the biblical history is supposed to be more “scientific” and “objective” than a method that recognizes the reality of the supernatural. However, the exact opposite may be true. A truly scientific method is the inductive method which accepts as a working hypothesis the best explanation for the known facts. There are certain known ‘historical’ facts which we will shortly discuss; the death and burial of Jesus; the discouragement and disillusionment of the disciples; their sudden transformation to be witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection; the empty tomb; the rise of the Christian Church; and the conversion of Saul. The ‘historical method’ must come up with a satisfying, convincing ‘historical’ explanation for this set of facts. It is our contention that no such historical explanation has yet been produced, and that the best hypothesis to account for the known ‘facts’, indeed, the only adequate hypothesis, is that God raised Jesus from the dead in bodily form. However, the so-called ‘scientific’ method excludes the possibility of this hypothesis at the very outset. Far from being open-minded and ‘objective’, it is closed-minded to one of the most viable explanations. If there is a living God who is the Lord of history, who has chosen to act in historical events as the Bible witnesses, the ‘scientific method’ has no way of recognizing that fact. On the contrary, the very presuppositions of the scientific method makes it blind to one very live option. In other words, the scepticism of such scholars as Bultmann and Marxsen is not due to problems which arise as a result of an inductive study of the texts; it is due rather to the presupposition that a literal bodily resurrection to which our Gospels witness is excluded. The man of faith is therefore more open-minded than the so-called scientific historian.” (George Ladd)

The Christian way of interpreting History is the only adequate way, for it truthfully seeks to give the best explanation for all the known facts in history, even when that explanation assumes divine intervention and divine providence.

One of the leading historians of our day writes, “Faith...opens the mind towards the true understanding of history. That we fail to understand history is due to our lack of such a commitment. That we understand it partly but imperfectly arises from a commitment which is real but incomplete. No one of us has made a full commitment. If we are honest with ourselves we know how limited our commitment is. We should, therefore, never claim infallibility for our interpretation of history. Yet, so far as the faith which follows commitment has been given to us, we must seek in its light to perceive the road which man has thus far traversed.”

Kenneth Scott Latourette continues, “If it is complained that this is not an ‘objective’ approach, it must be remembered that pure objectivity does not exist, even in the natural sciences. One is either for or against Christianity: there is no neutral or strictly ‘objective’ ground. Reason has a legitimate place. We must employ it in testing what are presented to us as facts and in searching for other facts. But truth is not attained by reason alone. The insight that is born of faith can bring illumination.” (A History of Christianity; preface xxi)

IX. MAN IN SEARCH FOR STANDARDS - Religion

Jesus is the Lord of Religion.

“We want to live not only more fully but better; the moment we say better we have standards, and the moment we have standards we have religion. As long as people want to live fully and better we will be religious. In fact, we are incurably religious. Jesus is the divine Yes to that. He has at last sounded to that urge after life. He said, ‘I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.’” (John 10: 10) (The Divine Yes; Jones; pg. 17)

Christianity is Christ, and Christianity is the highest expression of religion; therefore, Christ is the Lord of Religion.

No other religion besides Christianity claims an empty tomb. “The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of Christianity.” (I Believe In The Resurrection; George Eldon Ladd; pg. 7)

In Christianity alone, the Divine ‘Yes’ to life has sounded forth. Buddhism says ‘No’ to life. “Buddha pondered deep and long on the problem of suffering. He came to the conclusion that existence and suffering were one. The only way to get out of suffering was to get out of existence...Buddha would get rid of our life problems by getting rid of life itself - get rid of your headache by getting rid of your heads.” (The Divine Yes; pg. 13, 14)

Christianity is the answer to man’s desire for guidance in life and assurance of a hopeful destiny. “Of all the foolish things that the newspapers print today, the most absurd is the horoscope business. Millions in America try to decide their destiny according to the position of the stars - as if lumps of matter floating in space could decide the destiny of a spiritual being made in the image of God and with the power of choice! When you haven’t got enough nerve to make your own choices, you turn to the stars and planets and let them make them for you. This is always a sign of decay.” (The Divine Yes, pg. 16, 17)

“The Christian faith is not just a little better than other faiths - a little more moral, more free from contradictory elements, more lofty in its conceptions. It is that, but it is more - it is different in kind. Religions are man’s search for God. The Gospel is God’s search for man; therefore, there are many religions, but only one Gospel. Religions are the Word become word; the Gospel is the Word become flesh.” (Word Become Flesh; Jones; pg. 8)

Jesus is the Lord of Religion, for only the religion of Jesus teaches that God became a man! “A little boy was in the States while his father and mother were across the

seas as missionaries. Christmas Day came and the principal of the school said to himself, 'That boy will be homesick for his parents.' So he went to see the little boy and said to him, 'What would you like most of all on this Christmas morning?' The little boy thought a moment and pointing to a picture of his father on his dresser he said, 'I would like most of all that my father would step out of that frame and come and be with me.' That is the homesick cry of humanity: 'I wish my heavenly father would step out of the frame of the universe and come down and be with me.' That has happened! God has stepped out of the frame of the universe, and we have seen him in the face of Jesus Christ. He is God with us. For Jesus Christ is our heavenly Father, personalized - with us. He is the Yes to that cry of humanity for some power over us." (The Divine Yes; Jones; pg. 18, 19)

CONCLUSION:

Jesus is the Lord of life and the Lord of all of life's categories of thought. Jesus is in the process of bringing every thought into captivity to His Kingdom!

He is the King of man's categories of Thought.

- I. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO OTHERS - Sociology**
- II. MAN IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIMSELF - Psychology**
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- IX. MAN IN SEARCH FOR STANDARDS - Religion**

CHAPTER 6

QUESTIONS

1. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christ's way is increasingly being proven to be the only effective way to live life - individually and corporately."
2. Is it possible for one to be a Christian in his "heart", and yet be rather "pagan" (or non-Christian) in his thinking? Why or why not?
3. In contrast to the worldly view which Sociology espouses regarding the nature of man and man's social environment, what does Christianity teach regarding these matters?
4. In seeking to upgrade and improve a society of persons in any cultural context, should believers in Christ start with the effort to change the civilization, as in the establishment of schools and hospitals, or should believers start with the Gospel message? Why?
5. Give your interpretation and response to the following statement: "The call to become fishers of men precedes the call to wash one another's feet."
6. What is your response to secular psychology's assumption that self-knowledge automatically and naturally and rather spontaneously will lead to self-healing? Tell what your response is to the following statement: "Christianity declares that self-knowledge must result in self-surrender, which leads to healing of the inner soul."
7. What is the response of Christianity to each of the following assertions made by Secular Psychology?

Secular Psychology

Christianity's Response

- | | |
|----------------------|----|
| a. "Know Thyself" | a. |
| b. "Accept Thyself" | b. |
| c. "Express Thyself" | c. |
8. Give Biblical support which documents the truth of the following statement: "Self-surrender leads to self-realization." (Note Galatians 2: 20; John 12: 23-25)

9. Tell how Christ is the "Answer" in meeting the three basic needs which secular psychology declares that each person has: (a) The need to belong, (b) The need to have significance, (c) The need to have reasonable security.
10. If it is true that man's greatest need is 'to love and to be loved', how can Christ minister to this need more adequately than any other way or by any other person?
11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Economics, based on greed, accumulation of wealth, cut-throat competition, undisciplined spending - produces bad relationships and thus a bad world. Christian economics is the only economics that will work."
12. Give your interpretation and response to the following statement by E. Stanley Jones: "I believe that predestination is written not in the inscrutable will of God, as was once proclaimed, but written in our nerves, our blood, our tissues, our organs, our makeup."
13. Is there evidence that physiological disorders are often the consequence of mental and emotional and spiritual stresses and dysfunctions?
14. What form of Government best reflects a Biblical understanding of the nature of Man? Why?
15. What basic belief regarding Man separates those who believe in a Democratic form of Government from those who believe in a Totalitarian form of Government?
16. When an increasing number of citizens in a so-called Democratic Society begin to believe that a human being is not really uniquely created by a Personal God, what consequences will inevitably take place in such a society?
17. Tell what your response or reaction is to the following statement by Lord Tweedsmuir: "There have been high civilizations in the past which have not been Christian, but in the world as we know it I believe that civilization must have a Christian basis, and must ultimately rest on the Christian Church."
18. Give your interpretation and explanation of the following statement: "Science as a Method is great; as a Religion it is inadequate."
19. Define and contrast the Naturalistic View of Reality with the Supernaturalistic View of Reality.

20. Give your interpretation and explanation of the following statement: "Just as the human body is the medium of expression for the rational mind, so the world with its uniform laws can be the medium for the activity of Divine Mind, Who can supersede nature's laws if it serves His Purpose."
21. In the light of Natural, predictable Laws, how can such miracles as the Virgin Birth of Jesus and the bodily Resurrection of Jesus be explained, from a Christian viewpoint?
22. How can so-called 'irregularities' and 'unexplainable happenings' in history be understood, from a Christian viewpoint of history and providence?
23. Give your interpretation and explanation of the following statement: "The man of faith is more open-minded than the so-called scientific historian."
24. As one who sincerely seeks to be an accurate researcher and interpreter as a historian, what would be your response or reaction to the following statements by Kenneth Scott Latourette (a famous Christian and Church Historian): "It must be remembered that pure objectivity does not exist, even in the natural sciences. One is either for or against Christianity: there is no neutral or strictly 'objective' ground. Reason has a legitimate place. We must employ it in testing what are presented to us as facts and in searching for other facts. But truth is not attained by reason alone. The insight that is born of faith can bring illumination."
25. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christianity is Christ, and Christianity is the highest expression of religion; therefore, Christ is the Lord of Religion."
26. What facts about the Religion of Christianity makes Christianity unique among all the religions of the World?

CHAPTER 7

SALVATION IS A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR

CHAPTER 7

SUBJECT: SALVATION IS A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR

SCRIPTURE: Psalms 32: 8

TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION: To experience the abundant life in its fullness involves the right emphasis upon Truth. An improper emphasis or a lack of emphasis altogether can distort the Truth, and a distortion of the Truth can be at times as bad as a denial of the Truth. Essential to living a meaningful and balanced life is a proper understanding of Salvation. Salvation is both an obtainable happening of a moment, and a maintainable condition of a lifetime. Salvation is both obtained and maintained by the cooperative work of both God and man. When this cooperation is not existent, then salvation is annulled or revoked. An over-emphasis upon either the work of man or the work of God in this cooperative endeavor is dangerous and leads to falsehood.

I. NATURE OF SALVATION

II. MAINTENANCE OF SALVATION

CONCLUSION: A Christian is a man of simple faith - neither an antinomian or a legalist. He is not a man of easy believism, but a man of simple wholehearted faith, a saving faith that is founded alone on Christ, but a faith nevertheless that issues forth continuously in works of righteousness.

CHAPTER 7

SUBJECT: SALVATION IS A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR

SCRIPTURE: Psalms 32: 8

TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION:

How true it is that the unexamined life is not worth living! Living the Christian life involves a sense of balance and moderation. It means avoiding all extremes and excesses, and walking in the middle of the road. There are many side roads which lead one astray into some type of excess. We must guard against going to the left or to the right.

Some are not really living - only existing. Christ came that man might have life and have it more abundantly. But this abundant life does not come automatically. It only comes when certain truths are acknowledged, appropriated, and practiced.

Both the acceptance and practice of false doctrines robs one of abundant life. So, in seeking for the abundant life, we must seek to eliminate from our lives and our conceptions all outright falsehoods.

Further, to experience the abundant life in its fullness involves the right emphasis upon the Truth. An improper emphasis or a lack of emphasis altogether can distort the Truth, and a distortion of the Truth can be at times as bad as a denial of the Truth.

A balance in the Christian life is what must be sought. The best place to begin is with an investigation of Salvation - that term which is inseparably connected with the term 'Christian'.

PROPOSITION:

Essential to living a meaningful and balanced life is a proper understanding of Salvation. Salvation is both an obtainable happening of a moment, and a maintainable condition of a lifetime. Salvation is both obtained and maintained by the cooperative work of both God and man. When this cooperation is not existent, then salvation is annulled or revoked. An over-emphasis upon either the work of man or the work of God in this cooperative endeavor is dangerous and leads to falsehoods.

I. NATURE OF SALVATION

Salvation is a work of God's grace, and as such is an obtainable happening of the moment. Salvation in its moral sense means salvation from sin. "Only in one passage (Matthew 1: 21) is salvation explicitly stated to be from sin...but this particular text does express the meaning of the New Testament as a whole. Salvation is from darkness to light (I Peter 2: 9), from alienation to a share in divine citizenship (I Peter 2: 10; Ephesians 2: 12-13), from guilt to pardon (Ephesians 1: 7; Colossians 1; 14), from slavery to freedom (Galatians 5: 1; II Corinthians 3: 17); from fear of hostile powers to liberty and assurance (I John 4: 18; II Timothy 1: 7)." (A Theological Word Book of the Bible; Alan Richardson, pg. 220)

There is a definite point at which one passes from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from doubt to assurance, from health to life, although the progress up to that decisive point may be gradual.

However, the New Testament shows that salvation is not only an obtainable happening of a moment, but that salvation is also a maintainable condition of a lifetime. The progressive aspect of salvation is brought out by the present tense in the Greek verbal system. The present tense of John 10: 28 gives a progressive quality: "My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them and they follow me. I am giving them eternal life..." Montgomery (Life In The Son, pg. 5) This gives the connotation of "being saved moment by moment through a maintained dynamic relationship."

I Peter 1: 8, 9 shows the progressive and dynamic qualities in the cooperative endeavor of salvation: "*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*" Note the present, progressive tenses: 'believing' and 'receiving'. As one continues to believe, he continues to receive. Salvation is a continuing and dynamic reality, not merely a once-and-for-all happening of the past.

"To think of the new birth exclusively as a transformation wrought by the Spirit at the moment of conversion is to have an inadequate concept of the doctrine as defined in the Holy Scriptures. There are two aspects of the new birth; the initial experience (conversion), and sustained relationship (perseverance). Of the twenty times in which the New Testament refers to the fact of being born of God, seven instances are perfect participles and three are perfect indicatives, emphasizing the sustained relationship aspect of the new birth." (Robert Shank; Life In The Son; pg. 93) Salvation is not only a point in time, but it is a continuing condition. God not only saved in the past but He continues to save moment by moment.

II. MAINTENANCE OF SALVATION

II. MAINTENANCE OF SALVATION

If salvation is a continual, progressive condition maintained through a cooperative endeavor between God and man, this means that it is possible for one's personal salvation to be revoked or annulled if man is not faithful in cooperating with God. We already noted in I Peter 1: 8, 9 that one is receiving salvation moment by moment as he continues to believe moment by moment. We noted the progressive aspect in John 10: 28. As the sheep listen (durative connotation) to the voice of the shepherd, the shepherd gives them eternal life.

John 7: 37, 38 brings out the progressive aspect of salvation and the conditions upon which it is maintained: "*On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried aloud, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever continues to believe in me will have, as the Scripture says, rivers of living water continuously flowing from within him.'*" (Williams) As the person continues to believe, he continues to have the living water flowing from within him. The converse is also true, however.

The Christian's inheritance is "*incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*" (I Peter 1:4) That's the promise of God, but the condition for receiving the promise must be met: "*Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*" (I Peter 1: 5) If a Christian discontinues to practice the exercise of faith, the promise is annulled. Salvation is maintained by the cooperation of both God and man.

God "*will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom*" if "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*" (II Timothy 4: 18, 17) If I don't do these things, then there is no prospect of a heavenly kingdom being granted to me.

No man can shut the door of God's kingdom to me (Revelations 3: 8) - *no man other than myself. The door remains open to me as long as I keep the word of God's patience.* (Revelations 3: 10)

The cooperative relationship is well brought out in Jesus' words to His disciples: "*Remain in me and I in you.*" If I do not remain in Christ, He cannot remain in me, for Christ only remains in me at the consent of my will - moment by moment.

I John 5: 18 shows a condition: God keeps the Christian from the destruction of Satan as long as the Christian does not practice sin.

In Thessalonians, Paul expresses confidence in God's keeping power: "*May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it*" (I Thessalonians 5: 23,

24). Earlier, Paul gave a lot of space in his letter to exhort the Thessalonians to continue in faith, and he even said, *“I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain.”* (3: 5). He exhorted them to *“stand fast in the Lord.”* (3: 8), knowing that it was possible to fall from grace, thus canceling the work of God in their lives. Man’s cooperation is vitally necessary in maintaining salvation.

God has promised in the book of Hebrews: *“I will never fail you nor forsake you.”* (13: 5b) God always keeps his part of the covenant. However, the Hebrew Christians are exhorted: *“See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth (the children of Israel), much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.”* (Hebrews 12: 25) It is possible to reject God and to be lost, after one has once known God. Salvation must be maintained as well as obtained.

“Consider John 1: 12, ‘But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, to them that believe on his name.’ It is significant that, in the Greek text, three successive aorists are followed, not by an aorist participle, but by a present participle.... The switch from a succession of aorists to the present tense in John 1: 12 may be considered deliberate for emphasis of the durative quality of the faith that makes men sons of God. That emphasis is especially vivid in Weymouth’s translation: ‘But to all who have received Him - that is, to those who trust in His name - He has given the privilege of becoming children of God.’” (Robert Shank; *Life In The Son*; 63, 64)

We have noted several Scriptures that point out the cooperative aspect of personal Salvation. There are those who say that man has nothing to do with his salvation - that, because Christ died for all men, therefore all men are automatically saved. Such advocates are called Universalists. They have failed to realize that, while salvation has been objectively purchased by Christ on the cross for all men, only those men who subjectively appropriate the benefits of Christ are saved.

Others there are who would say that man has something to do about personal salvation, but very little. Those who say that man has very little to do with his salvation, fall into the trap of ‘easy believism’.

What is ‘easy believism’? Simply an intellectual assent without a heart consent to the claims of Christ. There are many who advocate that if one simply says a creed to the effect, “I believe in Christ” that he immediately becomes a Christian. There are those who would never deny the historical existence of Jesus, and thus they say they believe in Christ. Such belief is little better than saying “I believe in George Washington.” There are those who say “I believe in democracy”, but many who make that claim would never be willing to fight and to die for democracy. Many who claim to be

Christians have no real understanding of what makes a person a Christian - commitment. Thus, there are many nominal Christians whose lives are not lived in conformity to Christ. Instead, they are living disobediently and carelessly, giving little heed to the commandments of God. Such easy believism only perpetuates antinomianism among professing Christians.

What is antinomianism? Robert Shank both explains and refutes it in the following paragraph: "In orthodox evangelical circles today, the popular conception of the nature of saving faith is tragically inadequate. 'By grace, through faith, plus nothing' has become the watch word. This is well and good, except for the fact that saving faith can never be 'plus nothing'. For saving faith cannot exist apart from repentance. And repentance is concerned, not only with the past, but even more with the present and the future. It involves not only sorrow for the sins of the past, but the submission of the soul and life to the lordship of Christ for the present and the future. There is a sense in which we must believe in Christ, not only 'with all our heart', but with all our life as well. We must believe with head, heart, and hand. To be hearers of the Word, but not doers, is to deceive ourselves (James 1:22). Faith without works is as dead and worthless as the body without the spirit (James 2: 14-26). 'Faith' in Christ which leaves the 'believer' free of any real allegiance and devotion to Him is sheer presumption. A 'plus-nothing' faith avails nothing. Only obedient faith is saving faith - living, conquering faith that 'overcomes the world'." (Life In The Son; pg. 218) "To believe in Christ as Savior requires that one obey Him as Lord." (219)

However, in refuting easy believism, the Christian must be careful not to fall into the trap of legalism. "It is essential that we 'try His works to do'; for any 'believing' which does not lead to doing is completely insincere. But our faith must never rest in all our doing. All our trust and hope must be 'in His redeeming blood' - in Christ alone, and not in other things to even the smallest degree, no matter how good and right they may be, of themselves. One dare not trust Christ - and baptism; or Christ - and Church membership; or Christ - and noble Christian living; or Christ - and faithful Christian service. All these things - baptism, Church membership, upright living, faithful service - are good and important and pleasing in the sight of God. They are obligations of every Christian according to the Holy Scriptures. The man who has no concern for such things has no saving faith in Christ and no warrant for assuming that he is a child of God on his way to the Father's House. But these important obligations are only the expression of faith. They must never become the objects of our faith. All our faith must rest in Christ alone." (Ibid; 264, 265)

The Christian is a man of simple faith. He does not encumber people with rules and regulations and extra requirements in becoming a Christian. He is not complex, prohibitive, and negative in presenting Christianity to people, but instead he is simple, clear, and positive in his presentation in becoming a Christian. The true Christian does not require more of the sinner than what God requires of the sinner. To expect

the sinner to agonize so long in prayer, or to manifest certain kinds of emotion, or to give up certain practices within a certain time limit, or to adopt certain standards and convictions, is to expect more of the sinner than what God Himself expects of the sinner. A matter-of-fact confession of faith, accompanied with little visible emotion, is just as real as a confession of faith, accompanied with a great deal of visible emotion. A Christian is a man of simple faith - neither an antinomian or a legalist. He is not a man of easy believism, but a man of simple wholehearted faith - a saving faith that is founded alone on Christ, but a faith nevertheless that issues forth continuously in works of righteousness. Man is not saved by works, but if he is saved, there will be works as an evidence of salvation. Note this: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2: 8-10) Not saved by works, but if one is saved, he is to perform works for Christ.

CONCLUSION:

For the Christian life to be an abundant life, it must be a balanced life. It is important that a Christian understand the relationship between faith and works as they relate to personal salvation. Man is saved initially by faith and he is kept saved by faith. The evidence that one has exercised saving faith in Christ alone is the presence of works of righteousness in one's life. An attempt at salvation primarily through works is a futile attempt as shown by the legalism of the Pharisees in Jesus' day. Salvation cannot be found through works, but personal salvation cannot exist apart from works either. The legalist wants salvation solely or primarily through works. The antinomian wants a salvation through easy believism with no subsequent works of righteousness as evidence of saving faith. Neither legalism nor antinomianism is the way of Christ and neither can produce a meaningful and balanced life. Let it be repeated: A Christian is a man of simple faith - neither an antinomian or a legalist. He is not a man of easy believism, but a man of simple whole-hearted faith - a saving faith that is founded alone on Christ, but nevertheless a faith that issues forth continuously in works of righteousness.

CHAPTER 7

QUESTIONS

1. Give your interpretation and response to the following statement: "The unexamined life is not worth living!"
2. In terms of God's part and of Man's part, what is involved in a person receiving and daily enjoying the "abundant life"?
3. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Salvation is both an obtainable happening of a moment, and a maintainable condition of a lifetime."
4. Check those statements which you most closely identify with, that express the meaning of your own personal transformation by God:
 - _____ a. Salvation is from darkness to light (I Peter 2: 9).
 - _____ b. Salvation is from alienation to a share in divine citizenship (I Peter 2: 10; Ephesians 2: 12-13).
 - _____ c. Salvation is from slavery to freedom (Galatians 5: 1; II Corinthians 3: 17).
 - _____ d. Salvation is from fear of hostile powers to liberty and assurance (I John 4: 18; II Timothy 1: 7).
5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There is a definite point at which one passes from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from doubt to assurance of forgiveness, from death to life, although the progress up to that point may be gradual."
6. Is it possible for a person to obtain personal salvation by repentance of sin and faith in Christ, and yet subsequently fail to maintain faith in Christ and ultimately to lose his relationship with Christ and lose his soul in the end? Why or why not? (Note John 10: 28; I Peter 1: 8, 9)
7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Salvation is a continuing and dynamic reality, not merely a once-for-all happening of the past."

8. According to John 7: 37-38, what condition must one meet if he is to continue to enjoy the “living water” flowing from within him?
9. After reading the following Scriptures, briefly note in writing what the promises are in relationship to the conditions which must be met, in order for one to continue to enjoy the fulfillment of the promises in his life as a Christian.

SCRIPTURES

PROMISE

CONDITIONS

- a. I Peter 1: 4-5
 - b. II Timothy 4: 7, 18
 - c. Revelations 3: 8, 10
 - d. John 5: 18
 - e. Hebrews 12: 25
Hebrews 13: 5
 - f. John 1: 12
10. What do advocates of “Universalism” believe?
 11. What is “Easy Believism?”
 12. Is it possible for “saving faith” to exist apart from “repentance?”
 13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: “Repentance is concerned, not only with the past, but even more with the present and the future. It involves not only sorrow for the sins of the past, but the submission of the soul and life to the lordship of Christ for the present and the future.”
 14. Tell what your response is to the following statements: “Only obedient faith is saving faith - living, conquering faith that ‘overcomes the world’. To believe in Christ as Savior requires that one obey Him as Lord.”
 15. Give your interpretation of the following statement: “We are saved by grace, through faith, for good works.” (Note Ephesians 2: 8-10)
 16. What is the difference between ‘Good Works’ being the ‘expressions’ of our faith and the ‘objects’ of our faith? When one says that all our faith must rest in Christ alone, does this exclude the need for good works in our lives? Why or why not?

17. Give your response or reaction or interpretation of the following statements: "A Christian is a man of simple faith - neither an antinomian or a legalist. He is not a man of easy believism, but a man of simple wholehearted faith - a saving faith that is founded alone on Christ, but nevertheless a faith that issues forth continuously in works of righteousness."

CHAPTER 8

INTROSPECTIVE HONESTY AND EXTROVERTIVE WITNESS

CHAPTER 8

SUBJECT: INTROSPECTIVE HONESTY AND EXTROVERTIVE WITNESS.

SCRIPTURE: Psalms 139: 1-16; Acts 26: 9-18

TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION: If personal salvation can be revoked by falling into disobedience and sin, it is important that a believer checks himself daily and guards against sin. A profession of faith without genuine possession of faith is hypocritical.

Enjoyment of personal salvation is not an end within itself. One is saved to see others saved. A beggar that finds abundance of bread is not meant to get fat on the bread by himself, but he is meant to tell other beggars where to find the bread.

Both are needed - a daily examination to check one's profession against his possession, and, secondly, through this examination, a renewed motivation to become a more effective witness in the world of lost men.

1. MAN OF INTROSPECTIVE HONESTY
2. MAN OF EXTROVERTIVE WITNESS

CONCLUSION: Are you willing to be open before God daily, in order that you might be effective in your outreach to the lost ones before you? Be both introspective in honesty before God, and extrovertive in your witness before your fellow men!

CHAPTER 8

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SCRIPTURE: Psalms 139: 1-16; Acts 26: 9-18

TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION:

Living the Christian life involves a sense of balance and moderation. It means avoiding all extremes and excesses, and walking in the 'middle of the road'. It means guarding against all falsehoods and also guarding against an over-emphasis upon only one facet of the truth.

We noted in the last chapter that living a balanced Christian life involves an understanding of salvation as a cooperative endeavor between God and man, cooperation both in obtaining salvation and in maintaining salvation. Faith, is man's part in receiving and keeping salvation. Saving faith that issues forth in repentance of sin and constant obedience to the claim of Christ.

An over-emphasis upon the work of God in salvation is seen in an attitude which says, "it is all up to God. I have nothing to do with my salvation." Such an attitude sometimes leads to a life of presumption and carelessness. This over-emphasis upon the work of God leads to the attitude which says, "Once I am saved, I am always saved, regardless of what I do." Such people fail to realize that one's salvation is conditionally maintained on the basis of one's daily obedience to Christ.

However, an over-emphasis upon the work of man in salvation leads to legalism - salvation by human works and achievements rather than by God's grace alone. One is saved by grace alone, not by works. The object of faith is Christ alone. However, the evidence of saving faith is a life of good works. One is not saved by good works, but if he is truly saved and continues to be saved, he will manifest a life of righteousness and good works. ~~Without~~^{Faith} without works is dead. Faith first, then works as an evidence of saving faith.

If personal salvation can be revoked by falling into disobedience and sin, it is important that a believer checks himself daily and guards against sin. A profession of faith without genuine possession of faith is hypocritical.

Enjoyment of personal salvation is not an end within itself. One is saved to see others saved. A beggar that finds abundance of bread is not meant to get fat on the bread by himself, but he is meant to tell other beggars where to find the bread.

PROPOSITION:

Both are needed - a daily examination to check one's profession against his possession, and, secondly, through this examination, a renewed motivation to become a more effective witness in the world of lost men.

1. MAN OF INTROSPECTIVE HONESTY

The Psalmist cried out, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalms 139: 23, 24) Because it is out of the heart that a man speaks, the heart is what needs daily examination. If the heart is wrong, all of life is wrong. Jesus made it clear that it is the motives, thoughts, and intents that shall praise or condemn a man in the end.

Take heed to the writer of Proverbs: "Above all that you guard, watch over your heart, for out of it are the sources of life." (Proverbs 4: 23, Berkeley) Wrote Paul, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves." (II Corinthians 13: 5, RSV) Note other Scriptures that show the importance of thorough examination of a believer's life: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip...How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation." (Hebrews 2: 1, 3a) "I therefore a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." (Ephesians 4: 1) "And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1: 9, 10) "Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more." (I Thessalonoians 4: 1) "So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober." (I Thessalonoians 5: 6) "See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled." (Hebrews 12: 15)

The great Christians of history took daily and personal inventory of their lives. Taking an honest look at ourselves daily will keep us from falling into the trap of self-deception. "The Synod of the Church in Uganda drew up the following four tests by which a man may examine himself and test the reality of his own Christianity.

- a. Do you know salvation through the Cross of Christ?

- b. Are you growing in the power of the Holy Spirit, in prayer, meditation and the knowledge of God?
- c. Is there a great desire to spread the Kingdom of God by example, and by preaching and teaching?
- d. Are you bringing others to Christ by individual searching, by visiting, and by public witness?"

Norman Vincent Pearle notes the importance of daily confession or, as he calls it, 'Mind Drainage'. "Practice emptying the mind daily. This should be done preferably before retiring at night to avoid the retention by the consciousness of worries while you sleep. During sleep, thoughts tend to sink more deeply into the subconscious. The last five minutes before going to sleep are of extraordinary importance, for in that brief period the mind is most receptive to suggestion. It tends to absorb the last ideas that are entertained in waking consciousness." (Power of Positive thinking: 124) The blood of Jesus constantly cleanses all sin, so avail yourself of it constantly to maintain a vital relationship with Christ. To maintain relationship with Christ. To maintain personal mental health. To prepare one's self for vital witness to others.

2. MAN OF GOD WITNESS

Introspective honesty is very important, but to become overly introspective can lead one to discouragement and despair. The purpose of introspective examination is to enable a Christian to be a man of greater God witness. Jesus commanded his followers to be his representatives in the world of men. A Christian is not to be of the world but he is to do his greatest work in and among the world of men.

"He has no hands but our hands
To do His work today:
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way:
He has no voice but our voice
To tell men how He died:
He has no help but our help
To lead them to His side."

Notes Barclay: "God cannot work without men. If God wants a word spoken, He has to get a man to speak it. If God wants a deed done, He has to get a man to do it. If God wants a person cheered, encouraged, strengthened, helped, He has to get a man to do the lifting up. God, as it has been said, is everywhere looking for hands to use." (Romans; pg. 87, 88)

While the disciples were enjoying the Lord's presence in the Upper Room of Jerusalem, Christ said, "That the world may know...Arise, let us go hence." George Delamarter imagines Peter thinking or saying something like this: "No, Master, let's stay here. Your words have blessed our souls tonight. Never has our fellowship been more precious. Speak on, tell us more; our souls are being fed. Besides, the hour is late and the streets of Jerusalem are dangerous tonight. Master, the Jews even seek thy life. Master stay here." (GO, pg. 31) Christ has called us to leave our comfortable abodes and our beautiful churches, and to go out into the highways and byways of life, to lift men out of the abyss of sin, and to share God's love with them.

"I said, "Let me walk in the field."
He said, "No, walk in the town."
I said, "There are no flowers there."
He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black,
There is nothing but noise and din."
And He wept as He sent me back.
"There is more," He said, "There is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick
And fogs are veiling the sun."
He answered, "Yet, souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone."

I said, "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say."
He answered, "Choose tonight
If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given,
He said, "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in Heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide."

I cast one look at the fields,
Then set my face to the town;
He said: "My child, do you yield?
Will you leave the flowers for the crown?"

Then into His hand went mine;
And into my heart came He;

And I walk in a light divine,
The path I had feared to see.

By George Mac Donald, from Christ and Fine
Arts; pg. 14)

Christ's love constrains us to go even to the undesirable places. This love is not theoretical but practical. In her study of the early Methodists Dr. Alice Tenney observes: "Perfect Love operates in two directions: vertically toward God, horizontally toward man. Early Methodists really loved men. They did not sign a check for Community Chest Drives; they went into dirty garrets and nursed sick old women. Even noblemen did that sort of thing, denying themselves luxuries in order to do it. It got right down among the needy, the evil, even the criminals, and showed them what real friendship and compassion are. People still need friends more than clothing. More than money they need the News that inner resources are theirs for the asking. The usual social worker knows nothing about this. A twenty dollars a week contribution leaves the hungry essentially as hungry as before, for the heart is still starving. If Love could be allowed to work in the world today among the great Hungry here and overseas, as it was released by the Methodist Revival, the ground work for world change would be laid." (Living In Two Worlds; 112, 113)

CONCLUSION:

Are you willing to be open before God daily, in order that you might be effective in your outreach to the lost ones before you? Be both introspective in honesty before God, and extrovertive in your witness before your fellow men!

CHAPTER 8

QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the consequences when one over-emphasizes the work of God in salvation?
2. What are the consequences when one over-emphasizes the work of man in salvation?
3. Give your response or reaction to the following statements: "Because it is out of the heart that a man speaks, the heart is what needs daily examination. If the heart is wrong, all of life is wrong. Jesus made it clear that it is the motives, thoughts, and intents that shall raise or condemn a man in the end."
4. What Scriptural support is there for practicing self-examination as believers, on a regular basis? What is involved in such examination? (Note Psalms 139: 23-24; Proverbs 4: 23; II Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 2: 1, 3; Ephesians 4: 1; Colossians 1: 9-10; I Thessalonians 4: 1; I Thessalonians 5: 6; Hebrews 12: 15)
5. As you examine your own life, how would you answer the four following questions (as given by the Synod of the Church in Uganda)?
 - (a) Do you know salvation through the Cross of Christ?
 - (b) Are you growing in the power of the Holy Spirit; in prayer, meditation and the knowledge of God?
 - (c) Is there a great desire to spread the Kingdom of God by example, and by preaching and teaching?
 - (d) Are you bringing others to Christ by individual searching, by visiting, and by public witness?
6. What is meant by daily 'Mind Drainage', and why is this practice so vital in maintaining a vital Christian life?
7. In seeking to practice introspective honesty, what danger must a sincere believer avoid?
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the concepts, presented in the following poetry:

"He has no hands but our hands
To do His work today:

He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way:
He has no voice but our voice
To tell men how He died:
He has no help but our help
To lead them to His side.”

9. Give your personal response or reaction or interpretation to the following statements: “God cannot work without men. If God wants a word spoken, He has to get a man to speak it. If God wants a deed done, He has to get a man to do it. If God wants a person cheered, encouraged, strengthened, helped, He has to get a man to do the lifting up. God, as it has been said, is everywhere looking for hands to use.”
10. Are your hands, eyes, feet, voice, heart, talents, spiritual gifts available for God to use to help accomplish His eternal purpose here on earth? What specifically do you believe God has entrusted to you, for Him to use to help build His spiritual kingdom? What is your response to the following Scriptures? Matthew 25: 31-46; James 1: 27; 2: 14-20; I John 3: 17-19; Ezekiel 33: 1-12.
11. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe in (and practice the truths of) the following statements: “Christ has called us to leave our comfortable abodes and our beautiful churches, and to go out into the highways and byways of life, to lift men out of the abyse of sin, and to share God’s love with them.”
12. Are you willing to be open before God daily, in order that you might be efective in your outreach to the lost ones around you?

CHAPTER 9

MAN OF DOCTRINE AND MAN OF CHARACTER

CHAPTER 9

SUBJECT: MAN OF DOCTRINE AND MAN OF CHARACTER

SCRIPTURE: I Timothy 3: 16; II Timothy 2: 14-15; II Timothy 3: 14-17

TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION: Living the Balanced Christian Life means guarding against falsehood and earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. This means that an effective Christian is a man of doctrine. A balanced person, however, is not one who only knows right doctrine, but he is one who also lives a right kind of life. Right doctrine must find expression in right living. The balanced Christian is both a man of doctrine and a man of character.

I. MAN OF DOCTRINE

- a. God
- b. Man
- c. Sin
- d. Jesus Christ

II. MAN OF CHARACTER

CONCLUSION: Knowing and obeying sound doctrine leads to sound and godly living.

CHAPTER 9

SUBJECT: Man of Doctrine and Man of Character

SCRIPTURE: I Timothy 3: 16; II Timothy 2: 14-15; II Timothy 3: 14-17

TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION:

Living a Balanced Christian Life first involves a proper understanding of the meaning of 'salvation'. Salvation is both an obtainable experience and a maintainable relationship. Salvation is received through repentance of sin and exercise of faith in Jesus Christ. Saving faith is an obedient faith - a faith that issues forth in moment by moment obedience to the commandments of God. One is saved as long as he continues to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His commandments. An over-emphasis upon the part of man in salvation leads to legalism. An over-emphasis upon the part of God in salvation can lead to antinomianism. Both are extreme positions and both are un-Christian.

If salvation is a moment-by-moment cooperative relationship, then salvation can only be maintained through man's earnest effort. A Christian can become complacent and negligent and fall into sin. The Scriptures repeatedly warn the Christian to guard against falling into sin. To guard against sin, one must guard his heart, for out of the heart are the issues of life. A Christian then is a man who tests and examines himself, to see if he is in the faith, a man of introspective honesty. The purpose of daily examination is to maintain a vital and winsome witness to the world of men, whom the true Christian is seeking to win to Christ. The balanced Christian is both a man of introspective honesty and a man of extroverted witness.

PROPOSITION:

Living the Balanced Christian Life means guarding against falsehood and earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. This means that an effective Christian is a man of doctrine. A balanced person, however, is not one who only knows right doctrine, but he is one who also lives a right kind of life. Right doctrine must find expression in right living. The balanced Christian is both a man of doctrine and a man of character.

I. MAN OF DOCTRINE

A Christian is a man of doctrine. He knows what he believes. He is ready to give an account of what he believes to any man. He knows what is truly Christian doctrine and what is heretical doctrine. Paul wrote, *"Be ready at any time to give a quiet and reverent answer to any man who wants a reason for the hope that you have within you."* (I Peter 3: 15, Phillips) Paul exhorted Christians to *"earnestly contend for the*

faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3b) Paul described the mature Christian as one who is stable and steadfast even amidst the storms of heretical teaching. Wrote Paul, *“We are not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching and the jockeying of men who are expert in the crafty presentation of lies. But we are meant to hold firmly to the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ, the head.”* (Ephesians 4: 14, 15, Phillips)

There are certain movements today which seek to challenge the importance of Christian doctrine.

(1) Relativism - All knowledge is relative; there is no such thing as objective or absolute Truth. (Gives no place to stability over and above man’s opinion, majority rule, or mere convenience.)

(2) Positivism - the only truth that we can have is that which can be perceived through our five senses (see, hear, smell, feel, taste). Therefore, anything else is even non-sense to talk about. (Fails to take into account the larger context of knowledge which is perceived only by faith; believing is seeing.)

(3) Mysticism - An emotional experience - oriented philosophy. An emotional experience which is meaningful to the individual is all that is important, regardless of whether the experience is rationally consistent or objectively definable. (Appeals to the baser instinct of man and fails to recognize that truth must pass the tests of reason, for man is a creature of intelligence and God-given reason.)

(4) Syncretism - All religions have good in them and therefore let us take the best of each and come up with a universally appealing religion. (Fails to realize that the most dangerous falsehood is falsehood that gains much appeal because there is much truth mixed with it. Truth is not a system of ethics and philosophy, but rather a relationship with a person. Jesus said, ‘I am the Truth’.)

Jesus and the early Christians considered doctrine to be very important. On one occasion Jesus warned His followers: *“Beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees.”* (Matthew 16: 12) Paul warned Timothy against false teachers and Paul gave a very vivid description of them: *“...if anyone tries to teach some doctrinal novelty which is not compatible with sound teaching (which we based on Christ’s own words and which leads to Christ-like living), then he is a conceited idiot!”* (I Timothy 6: 3, Phillips) Paul predicted the coming and activity of false teachers: *“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings.”* (II Timothy 4: 3, RSV) Paul gave command to teach sound doctrine: *“But as for you, teach what befits sound*

doctrine." (Titus 2: 1) "*Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching.*" (I Timothy 4: 13)

Let us look at some of the Biblically-based doctrines which a Christian will earnestly contend for. Let us look at highlights of Christian doctrine in terms of five major categories: God, Man, Sin, Jesus, Church.

a. God

Unity - "One Living and True God". Trinity - "Father, Son, Holy Ghost."

(Important because there are those, just like the ones in ancient times - Arians - who say that the Son of God was not eternally existent with the Father but was created by Him. - Deny the Trinity. The movement of Jehovah's Witness denies the Trinity - Say they, "The plain truth is that this is another of Satan's attempts to keep God-fearing persons from learning the truth of Jehovah and his Son, Christ Jesus. No, there is no trinity.") (The Chaos of Cults, pg. 268)

Holy Spirit is distinct person of the Godhead and has personality traits. The Holy Spirit is a divine person. God's Revelation - Through Old and New Testaments. Any religion or movement which denies the authority of the Holy Spirit is in error. The Holy Bible is the final voice of authority, for it is the revelation of God to man.

b. Man

Original Sin - "It is that evil tendency with which every individual is born, a tendency which disposes him to no wrong and thus to become not only by nature, but by personal choice a sinner." (Bastian)

Man is infected in every part of his being by sin, but man still remains in his fallen condition the image of God and the craving for God. "Man is totally depraved in that every part of his being is affected by sin, but he is not totally depraved in that he is as wicked as he could be." Although man is fallen from God, man is still in a savable or redeemable relationship to God, that is, it is possible for man to be saved because of Christ's death on the cross.

Freedom of the Will - "Because of man's fallen and depraved condition and his resulting strong inclination to evil, the grace of God is absolutely necessary to begin, to continue, and to end the work of salvation." (Bastian; page 33)

Man has power to choose right or wrong, and this power is given to man by God.

Man is Justified - made righteous, and given peace upon his confession of sin and faith in Jesus Christ. It is by faith alone - faith alone in Christ - that man is saved. "Saving faith is at the same time the gift of God and the going out of the whole person - intellect, heart, and will - to trust is the saving work of Calvary." (Bastian, 34)

Entire Sanctification - "Entire Sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to regeneration, by which the fully consecrated believer, upon exercise of faith in the atoning blood of Christ, is cleansed in that moment from all inward sin and empowered for service. The resulting relationship is attested by the witness of the Holy Spirit and is maintained by obedience and faith. Entire sanctification enables the believer to love God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind, and his neighbor as himself, and prepares him for greater growth in grace." (Mature Church Member, Bastian, pg. 38)

"There is general agreement in all Christendom that only those who are fully cleansed from sin may enter heaven. But how and when is this full cleansing effected? In Roman Catholic teachings, the work of sanctification is completed by the fires of purgatory. In Calvinistic teachings, the work is generally declared to be finished in the hour of death. Methodism has taught that if the purification of the soul from sin is a work of God's grace, then it may be completed in this life in response to the consecration and faith of the believer." (Bastian; pg. 38, 39)

c. Sin

Definition of Sin -

Sins of ignorance - but the will is not involved and, while the Blood of Jesus must cover them, one is not morally guilty or condemned.

Sins of Choice - willfully break a known law of God. Sin is centered not in the body; the body is merely the instrument through which the will expresses itself, rightly or wrongly.

Error regarding Sin - That it is impossible to backslide and to lose your relationship with God. But this is an error, for Scriptures warn many times against the danger of "departing from the Living God."

There is abundant forgiveness to all who repent, however. It is not God's intention that any believer sin, but there is provision for the one who does sin. (I John 2: 1, 2)

d. Jesus Christ

Truly God - Co-existent and co-eternal (John 8: 23, 58; 10: 36.)

Truly Man - Born of a virgin, had human mother, genuine temptation, truly died, and arose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, and remains eternally identified with the human race since He still retains "all things pertaining to the perfection of man's nature.

Perfect Atonement - for original sin and actual sins. (No need for Catholic mass which has become oft-repeated oblation for daily sins; Catholics believe Christ's atonement is sufficient only for original sins, not actual sins).

e. Church of Christ

Invisible - Made up of all true believers

Visible - organized Church must give freedom - freedom to live only according to Scriptures but not extreme individualism, that is, setting at nought all rites and ceremonies, making every Christian a law unto himself in deciding that rites are to be observed. The Scripturally-based ceremonies which are authorized by the visible Church are not to be set lightly aside or disregarded at the whim of any individual.

III. MAN OF CHARACTER

While it is true that a Christian is to be a man or doctrine, it is also true that a Christian is to be a man of character. The Christian is to be man of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, tolerance, and self-control. It is possible to be very orthodox in doctrine and yet be quite unattractive in character. It is possible to contend for Christian doctrine and to be quite unloving with those with whom you differ. There are those who can be fiery hot in their contention for Christian doctrine, but who can strangely remain rather icy in their response to human need around them. Such should take heed to Paul's words: "If I have the gift of foretelling the future and hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but the very secrets of God, and if I also have that absolute faith which can move mountains, but have no love, I amount to nothing at all." (I Corinthians 13: 2, Phillips) "Your life speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you are saying." Does your life consistently 'speak' of God's love?

A Christian is a transformed man. Old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new. (II Corinthians 5: 17) A Christian is a man who is Christ-like in character. Christ was holy, righteous, pure, compassionate and faithful and so also will the true Christian.

CONCLUSION:

Sound doctrine is very important, especially when there are many anti-Christ's in the world. A Christian must face the storms of heretical teaching and refute those who contradict the doctrine of Christ. Knowing and obeying sound doctrine leads to sound living. Jesus said, "*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*" Free from what? Free from sin, free from selfish living, free to live the abundant life which is the life of discipline, self-control, and positive involvement and purpose. The balance person is a person of sound doctrine and winsome character.

CHAPTER 9

QUESTIONS

1. Is it possible for a person to espouse right doctrine, and yet fail to be a true Christian in personal life experience? Why or why not?
2. Is it possible for one to have a personal relationship with Christ, as his personal Savior, and, at the same time, fail to have an accurate intellectual and doctrinal understanding of the propositional truths of Christianity? Why or why not?
3. According to I Peter 3: 15, what should a Christian be able to do at any time?
4. What do you believe it means for a Christian to “*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*” (Jude 3)
5. In terms of dealing with various and sundry doctrines of religion, what is a maturing Christian expected to do, according to Ephesians 4: 14-15?
6. What is involved in a Christian holding “*firmly to the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4: 15)? Is it possible for a Christian to know and to declare the truth of the Bible, and yet to be harsh and judgmental and condemnatory in his attitudes and actions and words toward those persons whom he disagrees with or believes to be heretical in their doctrines and beliefs and religious practices? Why is it so important for Christians to “speak the truth in love” rather than in harshness?
7. Tell how each of the following philosophies are a serious and potentially damaging influence on the cause of Christian truth (Doctrines):
 - a. Relativism; b. Positivism; c. Mysticism; d. Syncretism.

Tell how you would, from a Christian understanding of Truth, refute each of the above non-Christian philosophies.
8. How important was the teaching of Christian Doctrine in the Early Church? (Note Matthew 16: 12; I Timothy 6: 3; II Timothy 4: 3; Titus 2: 1; I Timothy 4: 13)
9. What beliefs (doctrines) regarding God are essential for a true believer to accept, in order for him to be ‘orthodox’ rather than ‘heretical’.
10. What is original sin?

11. Do you believe that every human being, without exception, is savable or redeemable because of what Christ did on the Cross? Why or why not.
12. Give your response or interpretation of the following statement: "Man is totally depraved in that every part of his being is affected by sin, but he is not totally depraved in that he is as wicked as he could be."
13. Do you believe that every human being has been given, as a gift from God, the capacity genuinely to exercise his free will, either to choose to do right or to do wrong? Why or why not?
14. Is "faith" a gift from God to humans, or is "faith" an exercise of man, or is "faith" both of the above?
15. How would you decide and define the doctrine of "Entire Sanctification?"
16. How and when is the "full cleansing" of entire sanctification to take place according to (a) Roman Catholic Doctrine, (b) Calvinistic teaching, (c) Methodist teaching?
17. How would you distinguish between "Sins of Ignorance" and "Sins of Choice?"
18. What provision has God made for Christians who morally fail and sin against God? (Note I John 1: 9; 2: 1-2)
19. What facts about Jesus Christ should be universally accepted by all Christians in all Churches?
20. How important is the "visible Church" of Jesus Christ?
21. Is it possible for one to be very orthodox in doctrine, and yet to be quite unattractive in character? Have you ever known persons who were 'fiery hot' in their contention for Christian doctrine, but who seemed rather 'icy' in their response to human need around them?
22. What indictment must a loveless person face, according to I Corinthians 13: 2?
23. What do you believe it means for a person to be Christlike in character? (Note I Corinthians 13: 4-7; Galatians 5: 22-23; Philippians 2: 1-8; Ephesians 5: 1-2; I Peter 3: 8-12)

CHAPTER 10

MAN OF GRACE FIRST AND MAN OF GIFTS SECOND

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SUBJECT: Man of Grace First and Man of Gifts Second

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 12: 27 thru 13: 1-8

TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION: One consideration in living a balanced Christian life is an understanding of the relationship between gifts and grace. A balanced Christian is a man of grace first and gifts

I. MAN OF GIFTS SECOND

II. MAN OF GRACE FIRST

- A. Humility
- B. Gentleness
- C. Longsuffering
- D. Love

CONCLUSION: The exercise of Christian graces in daily living is far more important than the display of great gifts before the hosts of men.

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TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION:

We have thus far noted that salvation is an obtainable happening and a maintainable relationship, and that such a relationship of salvation is maintained by man's obedient cooperation with God. Thus, the believer needs to examine himself to see if he is obediently following Christ. Looking inwardly to check himself, he is able more effectively to work outwardly in witnessing to a world of lost men.

For a Christian to live in a world of godless movements, threats, and philosophies, he must be a man who knows and earnestly contends for Christian doctrine. A man's actions are molded by what he thinks. Thus, Christian doctrine must find expression in Christian character and action. A balanced person is a man of both Christian doctrine and Christian character.

PROPOSITION:

Another consideration in living a balanced Christian life is an understanding of the relationship between gifts and grace. A balanced Christian is a man of grace first and gifts second.

■ MAN OF GIFTS SECOND

Because there seems to be a tendency to put more emphasis upon gifts than upon grace, let us look at gifts from the Biblical perspective. In looking at gifts from the Biblical perspective, we will see the desirability of possessing and using gifts, but we will also see the tragic mistake of putting more emphasis upon gifts than upon grace.

Gifts are God-given. *"It is the same and only Holy Spirit who gives all these gifts and powers deciding which each one of us should have."* (I Corinthians 12: 11, Living New Testament) There is, therefore, no place for boasting. The Corinthians who possessed many gifts forgot that these gifts were God-given, not humanly achieved. Paul had to rebuke them: *"What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though*

you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?"
(I Corinthians 4: 7, Living New Testament)

God gives different gifts to different people. *"Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are His. The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire Church. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; someone else may be especially good at studying and teaching, and this is his gift from the same Spirit. He gives special faith to another, and to someone else the power to heal the sick. He gives power for doing miracles to some, and to others power to prophesy and preach. He gives someone else the power to know whether evil spirits are speaking through those who claim to be giving God's messages - or whether it is really the Spirit of God who is speaking. Still another person is able to speak in languages he never learned; and others, who do not know the language either, are given power to understand what he is saying."* (I Corinthians 12: 4-10)

Each gift is to be used to mutually benefit the Church and to serve others. *"The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire Church."* (I Corinthians 12: 7) *"God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings."* (I Peter 4: 10, Living New Testament)

God's gifts are good and are to be desired. In light of all the gifts mentioned, Paul exhorted the Corinthians to *"try your best to have the more important of these gifts."*
(I Corinthians 12: 31a)

Paul respected and honored the gifts and talents which the Corinthians possessed in such abundance: *"I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you to Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge - even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you - so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (I Corinthians 1: 4-7, RSV)

Paul also recognized that the possession of talents and gifts did not guarantee the presence of unity and of love in the Church. Just following his recognition of the rich possession of gifts in the Corinthian Church, Paul noted the pathetic disunity that existed in the Church. *"But, dear brothers, I beg you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so that there won't be splits in the Church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose."* (I Corinthians 1: 10, Living Bible)

This contentious, competitive spirit comes from a carnal nature. *“Dear brothers, I have been talking to you as though you were still just babies in the Christian life, who are not following the Lord, but your desires; I cannot talk to you as I would to healthy Christians, who are filled with the Spirit. I have had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn’t digest anything stronger. And even now you still have to be fed on milk. For you are still only baby Christians, controlled by your own desires, not God’s. When you are jealous of one another and divide up into quarreling groups, doesn’t that prove you are still babies, wanting your own way? In fact, you are acting like people who don’t belong to the Lord at all. There you are, quarreling about whether I am greater than Apollos, and dividing the Church. Doesn’t this show how little you have grown in the Lord? Who am I, and who is Apollos, that we should be the cause of a quarrel? Why, we’re just God’s servants, each of us with certain special abilities, and with our help you believed.”* (I Corinthians 3: 1-5)

What the tongues-speaking, eloquent, knowledge-oriented, miracle-hungry Corinthians needed was a Baptism of Love which would result in an inner cleansing from carnality and outward redirecting of their particular gifts from selfish use to Christ-honoring use. It is possible to have several gifts without being Spirit-Baptized with love (I Corinthians 13: 1-3). The presence of love was in the lives of the Corinthians by virtue of their conversion, but not the supremacy of love. The Holy Spirit was Resident but not President of their lives. The Corinthians were too gift-oriented and not enough Giver-oriented. They had not yet experienced the Giver - The Holy Spirit - in all of His fullness.

There are those yet who are more interested in developing and displaying a spectacular and coveted gift than in quietly and unobtrusively loving their fellow men. Christians are to develop their God-given talents and to use them publicly and privately, but, while gifts are very important, graces in the Christian life are far more important. It is possible to have the gifts of tongues, prophecy, etc., but if one does not have love, he has nothing. Paul itemized several gifts in I Corinthians 12, but at the conclusion of the chapter, he writes: *“Covet - earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.”* (I Corinthians 12: 31) What is the more excellent way? The way of love. Thus, a Christian is to be a man of grace first and a man of gifts second.

II MAN OF GRACE FIRST

Gifts are limited and differ according to each person. Grace is unlimited and can be the equal possession of every Christian. In his epistles, Paul repeatedly emphasizes the importance of exercising Christ-like virtues in one’s life. As an example, note Ephesians 4 1-3. *“I beg you - I, a prisoner here in jail for serving the Lord - to live and act in a way worthy of those who have been chosen for such wonderful blessings*

as these. Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Try always to be led along together by the Holy Spirit, and so be at peace with one another." (Living New Testament) Let us look briefly at these great Christian virtues which are emphasized.

A. Humility

Humility is the result of an honest evaluation in the light of comparing one's self with the standard and demands of Christ, and sensing one's own dependence upon God for life sustenance.

"Tis Thou preservest me from death
And dangers every hour;
I cannot draw another breath
Unless Thou give me power.

My health, my friends, and parents dear
To me by God are given;
I have not any blessing here
But what is sent from Heaven."
(Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 161)

B. Gentleness

Gentleness comes from a word which means the ability to control oneself, especially in the area of anger. True self-control comes when God is directing and controlling a life. The God-controlled man knows when to get angry and when not to get angry. Such a man gets angry at the wrongs and the sufferings of others, but is never moved to anger when others insult him or do wrong to him. Thus, the God-controlled man (or, in other words, God's gentleman) is like Christ, knowing when to be angry and when not to be angry.

C. Long-Suffering

This God-like quality - a quality often ascribed to God - is a most beautiful quality of grace given by God to man. Long-suffering is the quality of endurance which enables the Christian never to give up but to persist in faithfulness to God regardless of circumstances. The man with this quality refuses to accept defeat regardless of the degree of adversity surrounding him. Such a man is faithful to the end, and, therefore, to such a man God will grant a gracious reward. "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*"

A further characteristic of this quality is patience with men. Just as God faithfully deals with men and takes so much from unbelievers, so a man of God with this quality will also bear the insult and injury of godless persecutors without bitterness. The man of long-suffering suffers long with his fellow men and does not seek revenge.

D. Love

This is the Gift of God shed abroad in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5: 5). Love is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). It is the evidence that a man is God-controlled. Love is the fulfillment of all other laws (Romans 13: 10), and love was considered by Jesus to be the greatest of all the commandments (Matthew 22: 37-40). The fullness of God in a man's life is equated with the fullness of love (Ephesians 3: 19.) To abound in holiness is to abound in love (I Thessalonians 3: 10-13). Purity of soul and love exist together (I Peter 1: 22). Love is absolutely imperative, for without love a person is nothing, regardless of how many gifts and talents he may possess (I Corinthians 13).

What is this love that is emphasized repeatedly in the New Testament? It is the highest type of love and can be defined as unconquerable benevolence. Regardless of how one is treated by others, the man of love will express only good-will towards others. He will desire nothing but the highest good for every man regardless of what other men do to him. Such love exists because of two factors—the impartation of God's love as a gift and the development of this love through the exercise of the human will.

It is easy to judge the worth of a Christian on the basis of his obvious gifts, instead of on the basis of his degree of love. Gifts are greatly needed in the Church, but more than this, the fruits of Christian grace are needed.

“John McKenzie, young missionary candidate, was turned down by a missionary board. He went to an adjoining room to pray. Two members of the board overheard him praying: ‘Use me, O Lord, even if you have to send me to the poorest place and darkest spot on earth. I am willing to go without much money or anything if I can be used, O God.’ The Board reconsidered his case and sent him. He proved to be a great missionary.” (Story by Myron Boyd in *The Message and Program For Our Day*; No. 111) Why did he prove to be a great missionary? Not because he was the most gifted, but because he was most greatly graced by God. He possessed the fruits of Christ-likeness in great degree, and this enabled him to use whatever gifts he had in a significant way.

MY SERVICE

I asked the Lord to let me do
Some mighty work for Him;
To fight amid His battle hosts,
Then sing the victor's hymn.
I longed my ardent love to show,
But Jesus would not have it so.

He placed me in a quiet home,
Whose life was calm and still,
And gave me little things to do
My daily round to fill;
I could not think it good to be
Just put aside so silently.

Small duties gathered round my way,
They seemed of earth alone;
I, who had longed for conquests bright
To lay before His throne,
Had common things to do and bear,
To watch and strive with daily care.

So then I thought my prayer unheard,
And asked the Lord once more
That He would give me work for Him
And open wide the door;
Forgetting that my Master knew
Just what was best for me to do.

Then quietly the answer came,
'My child, I hear thy cry;
Think not that mighty deeds alone
Will bring the victory.
The battle has been planned by me
Let daily life thy conquests see.'

(Poems With Power, compiled by James Mudge; pg. 58)

CONCLUSION:

The exercise of Christian graces in daily living is far more important than the display of great gifts before the hosts of men. My dear friend, Rev. E. H. Humphreys, while he was sitting in an annual Free Methodist conference one year (1969), not knowing where he

would be appointed to preach and to pastor the coming year, wrote this little verse as I was sitting beside him, and handed it to me:

“Not the greater place desired
With far more in the host,
Perhaps it is the smaller place
Where we are needed most.”

I repeat: A Christian is a man of grace first and a man of gifts second.

CHAPTER 10

QUESTION

1. Do you believe that, generally speaking, there is a tendency among many Christians today, to put more emphasis upon spiritual gifts than upon spiritual grace? Why or why not?
2. Who is the source of all spiritual gifts? (Note I Corinthians 12: 11)
3. With what attitude should a believer exercise his spiritual gifts? (Note I Corinthians 4:7)
4. Do all Christians possess all the spiritual gifts? Why or why not? For what purpose are the spiritual gifts given to believers? (Note I Corinthians 12: 4-10 and I Peter 4:10)
5. Does the possession of spiritual gifts by a believer guarantee the presence of unity and love in that believer's life? Why or why not? (I Corinthians 1: 10)
6. According to I Corinthians 3: 1-5, what are the characteristics of a "carnal" Christian?
7. What was the primary need in the lives of the tongues-speaking, eloquent, knowledge-oriented, miracle-hungry Corinthians? (Note I Corinthians 13: 1-3)
8. Is it possible for a believer to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit, without the fullness of the Holy Spirit, in his life? Why or why not?
9. Give your response or reaction to the following statement: "There are those yet who are more interested in developing and displaying a spectacular and coveted gift than in quietly and unobtrusively loving their fellow men."
10. According to Ephesians 4: 1-3, what are the characteristics (virtues and spiritual graces) which each Christian is to cultivate in his life?
11. Give your interpretation and application of the following definition of 'Humility': "Humility is the result of an honest evaluation in the light of comparing one's self with the standard and demands of Christ, and sensing one's own dependence upon God for life sustenance."
12. How does the quality of "Gentleness" relate to anger and self-control?

13. Why is the characteristic (virtue) of “Longsuffering” so very important in a believer living a meaningful and victorious Christian life?
14. What is the Biblical definition of ‘Love’, and what are some of its primary characteristics?
15. Put a T by those statements which you believe to state the Truth (according to the Bible), and put a F by those statements which you believe to be inaccurate or False.
 - a. Love is a quality which all persons may develop through much self-discipline and practice.
 - b. Love is a gift of God which is shed abroad in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit.
 - c. It is not the presence of love, but it is the ability to speak in unknown tongues, which is the primary and universal evidence (sign) that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - d. It is possible to speak in tongues and yet not to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - e. Love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and is not humanly achievable.
 - f. The exercise of love in one’s life is the greatest evidence that a person is a God-controlled person.
 - g. Love is the fulfillment of all the laws of God.
 - h. If one exercises love toward his fellow men, he need not be concerned to observe and to obey the Old Testament Ten Commandments.
 - i. To abound in holiness is to abound in love, for one cannot live a holy life without practicing Christ like love in his relationships with his fellow men.
 - j. Purity of soul and love exist together.
 - k. Love is absolutely imperative, for without love a person is nothing, regardless of how many gifts and talents he may possess.
16. Do you think that there is a tendency in our celebrity-oriented society for christians to judge the worth of a leader on the basis of his obvious and very spectacular gifts, instead of on the basis of his degree and practical expressions of love?

17. Is it possible for a believer NOT to be greatly gifted, and yet to be greatly graced by God?
18. In terms of Christian ministry and service, do you believe God is looking more for Christians who have great ability or great availability, great gifts or great grace? Why?
19. Do you know personally of any believer who was not greatly gifted or highly educated, but who, nevertheless, was a very godly person (greatly graced by God) and was, therefore, greatly used by God to accomplish great things in God's Kingdom?
20. In the midst of an ecclesiastical environment in which "Church Growth" is greatly admired and esteemed as the epitome of "success in pastoral ministry", tell how you react or respond to the following:

"Not the greater place desired
With far more in the host,
Perhaps it is the smaller place
Where we are needed most."

21. Are you willing (if you are a "layman") to serve the Lord in a small Church, and (if you are a pastor) are you willing to be the pastor of a small congregation? Why or why not? Without making "smallness" an inherent virtue, what do you believe are some of the "advantages" of serving in or pastoring a small congregation?
22. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The exercise of Christian graces in daily living is far more important than the display of great gifts before the hosts of men."

CHAPTER 11

A CHRISTIAN LIVES IN TWO WORLDS

CHAPTER 11

SUBJECT: A CHRISTIAN LIVES IN TWO WORLDS

SCRIPTURE: John 17: 18-19; Colossians 3: 1-4

TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION: The balanced person is the one who is living for two worlds - the world of prayer and the world of action, the world of heavenly vision and the world of earthly concerns.

I. MAN OF PRAYER - MAN OF ACTION

II. MAN OF HEAVENLY VISION - MAN OF EARTHLY CONCERN

CONCLUSION: God has promised to enable the cooperative Christian to live a balanced life.

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TEXT: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go."* (Psalms 32:8)

INTRODUCTION:

In our consideration of how to live a Balanced Christian Life, we have noted that salvation is an obtainable happening and a maintainable relationship, and that such a relationship of salvation is maintained by man's obedient cooperation with God. Thus, the believer needs to examine himself to see if he is obediently following Christ. Looking inwardly to check himself, he is able more effectively to work outwardly in witnessing to a world of lost men.

For a Christian to live in a world of godless movements, threats, and philosophies, he must be a man who knows and who earnestly contends for Christian doctrine. A man's actions are molded by what he thinks. Thus, Christian doctrine must find expression in Christian character and action. A balanced person is a man of both Christian doctrine and Christian character.

The balanced person is the one who is a man of gifts second and a man of grace first. Gifts are God-given and are to be desired and used to help all in the Church. However, to put undue emphasis on gifts could result in a Church like the Corinthian Church which had an obsession for gifts but a depletion in love for one another. Paul showed that the possession of talents and gifts does not guarantee the presence of unity and love in the Church. The united and happy Church is the one whose members are first people of grace - humility, gentleness, long-suffering, and love - and then, secondly, people of gifts.

PROPOSITION:

Today we note that the balanced person is the one who is living for two worlds - the world of prayer and the world of action, the world of heavenly vision and the world of earthly concerns.

I. MAN OF PRAYER - MAN OF ACTION

A Christian is a man of prayer. Jesus *"spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* (Luke 18: 1) Wrote Paul, *"Give yourselves wholly to prayer and entreaty; pray on every occasion in the power of the Spirit. To this end keep watch and persevere, always interceding for all God's*

people.” (Ephesians 6: 18, NEB) It is not just a motto but a statement of fact: “More is wrought through prayer than this world dreams of.” It is true that every spiritual awakening has been preceded by prayer. No significant spiritual progress can take place independent of prayer. Those men who have been most influential in God’s Kingdom have been those who have known the power of prayer. Prayer is the golden key for the bending knee. It is the greatest power in the universe, and therefore Christians ought “to pray without ceasing.”

Consider the great Asbury Revival that began at Asbury College on February 3, 1970. “By the summer of 1970 at least 130 colleges, seminaries and Bible schools had been touched by the revival outreach, and witnesses continue to go to other schools and local churches.” (One Divine Moment; pg. 55). Much prayer preceded that revival. “For some time a small group of students had been involved in a vigorous devotional discipline. It included getting up a half hour earlier than usual each morning for prayer, Bible study and to plan specific ministries during the day. Many of these persons had entered into more meaningful experiences with God, and their witness was having an effect upon others in the college. In addition, various groups - large and small - had been meeting at different times to pray for spiritual awakening. All of this had contributed to an air of expectancy on the campus. A few students were even stating prophetically that a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit was imminent...” (Pg. 18) “Much prayer had been offered for revival at Asbury. For years some had been fervently interceding. A time of turmoil on the campus two years before accentuated this concern. In addition to the thousands of God’s people holding up the schools in their private devotions, there were numbers of prayer groups in the community Church, and on both college and seminary campuses...As events have unfolded since February 3, it has become apparent that the extent of prayer for revival was far greater than anyone then knew. Again and again persons have told of unusual prompting to pray for Asbury, some in most unexpected places. For example, a pastor of a small Quaker Church in Ohio related how early this year this impulse suddenly came upon him. It was strange because neither he nor his family have any direct relation to Asbury. Yet so persistent was the impression that he mentioned it to his wife, and the two took the burden to the Lord. A few days later he read in the newspaper of the mighty revival at Asbury. Checking back he found that it began soon after he felt the burden to pray. If the full story were ever to be known, doubtless there were hundreds, if not thousands, of burdened people like this around the world on their knees pleading for Asbury. The same could be said of every other place that has known great revival. They will never be known on this earth, but their prayers have been heard in heaven. That is the way revival comes. IT STARTS AS PEOPLE PRAY. Their numbers may not be large in the beginning. In schools and churches across the land, it has been shown that revival begins with the few who care. But as they get the channels open to the throne of God, and share His love with others, revival spreads from the center to the circumference in an ever-widening circle of flaming witness.” (Pg. 102, 103)

A balanced Christian is not only a man of prayer, but also a man of action. The Asbury Revival was characterized by much action. Hundreds of Gospel Teams spread throughout the U.S. and even other countries to share the Good News. It is good for us to realize, as E. Stanley Jones reminds us, that "God answers the prayer, not for you, but with you. The answering of prayer is a cooperative endeavor." (Abundant Living; pg. 230) "It is said that Martin Luther was close friends with another monk. The other monk was as fully persuaded of the necessity of the Reformation as Luther was. So they made an arrangement. Luther would go down into the world and fight the battle there; the other monk would remain in his cell praying all the time for the success of Luther's labors. But one night the monk had a dream. In it he saw a single reaper engaged on the impossible task of reaping an immense field unaided and alone. The lonely reaper turned his head and the monk saw his face, and it was the face of Martin Luther; and he knew that he must leave his cell and leave his prayers and go to help. It is, of course, true that there are some who, because of age or bodily weakness, can do nothing other than pray and their prayers are indeed a strength and a support. But if any normal person thinks that prayer can be a substitute for effort, then his prayers are merely a way of escape. Prayer and effort must go hand in hand." (Barclay's James; pg. 91)

II MAN OF HEAVENLY VISION - MAN OF EARTHLY CONCERN

A Christian is a man with a heavenly vision. He longs for heaven and pictures himself as a pilgrim on earth just passing through on his journey to his true home. It is written of Abraham that "*it was faith that kept him journeying like a foreigner through the land of promise, with no more home than the tents which he shared with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs with him of the promise. For Abraham's eyes were looking forward to that city with solid foundations of which God himself is both architect and builder.*" (Hebrews 11: 9, 10, Phillips) Abraham looked forward to heaven and lived for heaven, and so will every true Christian. The reward motive in the Christian life is Biblically-grounded. Jesus said in Matthew 6 that the right kind of alms giving, and the right kind of prayer, and the right kind of fasting will all have their reward. To those who bear suffering and persecution for his sake, Jesus said, "*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.*" (Matthew 5: 12). Said Jesus in Matthew 10: 42, "*Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*" The parable of the talents teaches that faithful service will receive its reward. (Matthew 25: 14-30)

The Christian is a man with a heavenly vision, but the true Christian is also a man with an earthly concern. In fact, the man who is most living for heaven ought to be most living for his fellow men. "That is why the moral earnestness of revival converts had much to do with the abolition of slavery, the temperance movement, a growing concern for child welfare, medical aid for the sick, education for all, women's

suffrage, the reclamation of the socially lost such as the prostitute and the criminal, and the giving of the gospel to those where its truth had never gone.” (One Divine Moment; pg. 107) He whose head is in heaven ought to have his hands and feet most actively at work on earth. A Christian is a man who is living in two worlds. He who is most alive to spiritual visions ought to be most responsive to human need, for the man with the heavenly vision is seeing Reality from a broader perspective. Being alive to the spiritual ought to automatically include all of the material. Said one to Wesley, during Wesley’s search for spiritual reality: “Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.” (Blueprint For A Christian World; pg. 83)

A Christian should be both a man of heavenly vision and earthly concern. The tragic thing is this: Many who are most concerned about heaven today seem to be most complacent about social problems. Why is this so? Let us first say that it should not be so. It was not so during the days of early Christianity, or during the days of Wesley. Among several reasons, two reasons may be given for this perversion. (1) Evangelical Christianity has overly reacted to Liberal Christianity which has preached a social gospel with minimum concern about the hereafter. In reacting against the social utopias which the Liberals are seeking to build upon earth through human reformation and human progress, Evangelicals have sought to re-emphasize regeneration and the spiritual Kingdom of God, with a consequent de-emphasis upon human needs and social problems. (2) Evangelicals have emphasized the importance of escaping “the corruption that is in the world through lust”, and thus well-meaning Christians have separated themselves from everything that might pollute their pure and spotless lives. “Does not the Scripture say ‘Come out from among them and be ye separate and I will receive you, saith the Lord,’?” reasons the sincere Christian. Such a Christian has forgotten that, while he is not to be ‘of’ the world, he is to be ‘in’ the world. In other words, a Christian is to separate himself from the world of sinful practices, but he is not to remove himself from the world of sinful men. Jesus was a man of heavenly vision, but he was also a friend of publicans, harlots, and sinners of all kinds. The Christian must be both a man of heavenly vision and a man of earthly concern.

CONCLUSION:

What is a Balanced Christian? A balanced Christian is one that realizes that Salvation is a cooperative endeavor, both in obtaining and in maintaining it; a balanced Christian is a man of both introspective honesty and extrovertive witness; a balanced Christian is a man of Doctrine and a man of Character; a balanced Christian is a Man of Grace first and a man of Gifts second; a balanced Christian is a man of prayer and a man of action, a man of heavenly vision and a man of earthly concern. In our considerations, we have seen that it is not a case of ‘either-or’. Rather it is a case of ‘both-and’. God has promised to enable the cooperative Christian to live a balanced life: “*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.*” (Psalms 32: 8)

CHAPTER 11

QUESTIONS

1. Tell what the following statement means to you: "A Christian is a person who lives in two worlds."
2. According to Ephesians 6: 18, how often and for whom should Christians pray?
3. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statement: "More is wrought through prayer than this world dreams of."
4. Is it possible for a genuine spiritual awakening and revival to take place without faithful participation in earnest prayer by God's people?
5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "God answers the prayer, not for you, but with you. The answering of prayer is a cooperative endeavor. Prayer and effort must go hand in hand."
6. According to Hebrews 11: 9-10, what was the "secret" to the success of Abraham's life?
7. Is it Biblically justifiable for a Christian to have a "reward motive" in his life? Why or why not? (Note Matthew 6; Matthew 5: 12; Matthew 10: 42; Matthew 25: 14-30)
8. Is it possible for a person to be a Christian, without becoming involved in the lives of needy persons, with the motive of helping to heal the hurting, of befriending the lonely, of comforting the sorrowing, and of rescuing the perishing? Why or why not?
9. Is it possible for a Christian to be so "heavenly-minded" that he is of no "earthly good"? Do you believe that the person who is most living for heaven ought to be the one who is most involved in meeting the needs of persons on earth? Do you closely identify with the following statement? - "He whose head is in heaven ought to have his hands and feet most actively at work on earth."
10. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "You wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion."
11. Why is it that some Christians seem to be rather complacent about the social problems of our modern society?

12. What does it mean for a Christian to be “in” the world, without being “of” the world? Is it possible for Christians to be involved in the lives of sinners (as ‘lights in a darkened world’), and yet remain “unsoiled” by his contacts with the world (James 1: 27)? Is it possible for a Christian to come out from among the evil things of the “world”, and yet to meaningfully relate to sinners with practical compassion and personal involvement? How does looking at the life of Christ (as recorded in the Gospels) help one to answer these questions?

PART III

LIVING THE LIFE OF STEWARDSHIP

CHAPTER 12

THE STEWARDSHIP OF MONEY

CHAPTER 12

SUBJECT: THE STEWARDSHIP OF MONEY

SCRIPTURE: Malachi 3: 10

TEXT: *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so that there will be food enough in my Temple; if you do, I will open up the windows of heaven for you and pour out a blessing so great you won’t have room enough to take it in!”* (Malachi 3: 10)

INTRODUCTION: A Christian is a person who manages God’s property. All of the world’s resources are God’s, but God has entrusted them to us to use to glorify Him.

I. USE TO SUPPLY PERSONAL AND FAMILY NEEDS.

II. USE TO SERVE FELLOW MEN.

CONCLUSION: Are you a master of things, or are things a master of you? Money is a useful servant but a cruel master. When a man makes money, either God gains a fortune or God loses a man. Make God the Master of your life - including your time, talents, influence, and money.

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INTRODUCTION:

A Christian is called a steward. What is a steward? According to the dictionary, a steward is one “who manages another’s property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others.” Thus, a Christian is a person who manages God’s property. What a responsibility! What is God’s property? It takes in everything, for *“the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”* (Psalms 24: 1) All of the world’s resources are God’s, but God has entrusted them to us to use to glorify Him. The money which we gain from use of the world’s resources is not ours, but God’s. In fact, we are not our own. Our time, talents, personality, and influences are all gifts from God to us. Therefore, the subject of the stewardship of money is very important.

PROPOSITION:

If the money is not ours to begin with, but God’s property entrusted to us, then how shall we use God’s money? That is the simple question to which we seek to give a simple answer.

I. USE TO SUPPLY PERSONAL AND FAMILY NEEDS

The Scripture says that the man who does not provide for his family is worse than an infidel. Money is to be used to supply the common necessities of life - food, clothing, shelter, and health needs. Most people desire a few luxuries besides the basic needs. God often times permits us to have a few conveniences and even luxuries. However, we must always guard our desires. Our desire for things can become an obsession, and we can misspend our money, with the result of robbing both family and God. “Robertson Nicholl, the great editor, was born in a manse in the north-east of Scotland. His father had one passion, to buy and to read books. He was a minister and he never had more than 200 pounds a year. But he amassed the greatest private library in Scotland amounting to 17,000 books. He did not use them in his sermons; he was simply consumed to own and to read them. When he was forty he married a girl of twenty-four. In eight years she was dead of tuberculosis; of a family of five only two lived to be over twenty. That cancerous growth of books filled every room and every passage in the manse. It may have delighted the owner of the books, but it killed his

wife and family. There are possessions which can be acquired at too great a cost. A man must ask himself: 'How do I acquire the things which I possess?'" (Barclay's Matthew, 256).

Many have a weakness for a certain thing. That weakness may be books, furniture, expensive cars, clothes, shoes, sports equipment, food, etc. It is at the point of desire, which can easily get out of hand in this materialistic age, that we must always keep on our guard. Millions of dollars are spent annually in advertising for the purpose of simulating our desire for things. Charge accounts make impulsive buying easy, with the result of plunging thousands of families into deep and despairing debts.

The Christian is living in an age of great discontent. A Christian must guard against discontent. "Wesley declared emphatically that whoever has sufficient food to eat and raiment to put on, with a place where to lay his head, should be content. To desire more, he said, is to desire 'to lay up treasure on earth.'" (Living In Two Worlds: pg. 49)

A Christian must agree with Paul, the Apostle: "I have learned the secret of facing either plenty or poverty." (Phillips 4: 11, 12; Phillips) The story is told of one who was taken to the City to view all of the conveniences, and luxuries, and glamour that the world could offer, the possession of which makes it hard for many men to die. When the man who had taken the tour in the city had returned to his motel room, he thanked God that he did not have any desire for any of the City's riches which he had seen. That man was far richer than those who owned all the wealth and enjoyed all the glamour of the City. "There are two ways to be wealthy - one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants. In taking the latter way to be wealthy you transfer to the inside of you the real wealth that cannot be taken away by depression or death." (E. Stanley Jones, Abundant Living; pg. 300)

A Christian must find utility in things. We must give an accounting to God for the way we use our possessions: "Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so to preserve thy body in health...a fit instrument of thy soul? Didst thou use thy apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from injuries of the weather. Didst thou prepare and use thy house, and all other convenience, with a single eye to my glory? In every point seeking not thy own honor, but mine...?" (Blueprint; pg. 124)

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

II. USE TO SERVE FELLOW MEN.

A Christian must live “loose to things.” That is to say, a Christian must realize the purpose of things. Things are to be used in service to our fellow men, for a Christian is a man possessed with love, and love expresses itself tangibly and materially as well as intangibly and spiritually. Wesley believed that “we have no right to dispose of anything we have, but according to His will, seeing we are not proprietors of any of these things; they are all, as our Lord speaks...belonging to another person; nor is anything properly our own.... We shall not receive...our own things, till we come to our own country. Eternal things only are our own; with all these temporal things we are barely entrusted by another, the Disposer and Lord of all.” (Blueprint For a Christian World, pg. 123)

Note the principles of Wesley that he felt should guide every Christian in the use of money: “Gain all you can without hurting either yourself or your neighbor, in soul or body, by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you; - save all you can, by cutting off every expense which serves only to indulge foolish desire; to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life’ waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children’ - and then, give all you can, or, in other words, give all you have to God....Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God’s, be it more or less; by employing all, on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner that you may give a good account of your stewardship.” (Sermons; pg. 447, 448)

Wesley was a most generous man. Through the sale of his many books, he could have hoarded money and become rich. Instead, he gave to help others. His life-long attitude is expressed in what he said to his sisters:....”money never stays with me; it would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find a way into my heart.” (Blueprint; 225) Dr. Tenney reports, “Wesley at his death possessed nothing but his furniture at the City Roadhouse, six pounds for his pall bearers and a few shillings in change.’ (Ibid; 208)

When a Christian must decide between a service profession and a monied profession, a Christian must choose the service profession. Money must not be the first consideration of a Christian in choosing a profession. A service profession may have large monetary benefits, but it is not the money itself that should attract a Christian into a certain profession. A Christian is a man who is committed to make a life, not a large living. To make a life involves service to one’s fellow men, which may or may not result in large monetary gain. Oftentimes such service does not produce great material wealth, but the benefits from such service are infinitely greater than any monetary gains. Asked Wesley, “Dare any of you, in choosing your calling or situation , eye the things on earth, rather than the things above?” (Ibid; 192)

Wesley believed that with one’s increase of money, one should not increase his standard of living above the level of need. To those who said that they could afford a higher standard of living since they had an increase in salary, Wesley replied, “Who gave you this addition to

your fortune; or (to speak properly) lent it to you.....informing you at the same time for what purposes he entrusted you with it? And can you afford to waste your Lord's goods, for every part of which you are to give an account?" (Ibid; pg. 222) "When Wesley was at Oxford he had an income of 30 pounds a year. He lived on 28 pounds and gave 2 pounds away. When his income increased to 60 pounds, 90 pounds and 120 pounds a year, he still lived on 28 pounds and gave the balance away." (Barclay's Luke, pg. 168) E. Stanley Jones agrees very much with Wesley: "While you are lifting your economic level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn...When the level of your needs has been reached, then all you earn belongs to the needs of others, not as charity, but as right and justice." (Abundant Living; pg. 301)

What then should one do with surplus money? Listen to some of the great masters of both the past and of the present, who have made money their servants. B. T. Roberts: "Use your money for the promotion of the cause of God, and do not hoard it up for your children." Oswald J. Smith: "You should make money for Him: use what you need to live on and give as much as you can for the work of evangelization." E. Stanley Jones: "Keep your needs down to needs, not luxuries disguised as needs...If you have too much, then invest it in persons. It is the only bank that will not break. The bank of human character will pay dividends through eternity. Invest all surplus in that bank."

CONCLUSION:

How is a Christian then to use money? To supply personal and family needs. To serve fellow men. A Christian is a man of simple, pious living. The "tradition for simple living is more than a tradition. It has a double justification, in that the rejection of luxury serves, on the one hand, to release the mind from worldly interests, and on the other hand, to release income for the service of God and man." (Trueblood, quoted in Blueprint; pg. 58)

Are you a master of things, or are things a master of you? Money is a useful servant but a cruel master. When a man makes money, either God gains a fortune or God loses a man. Make God the Master of your life - including your time, talents, influence, and money.

CHAPTER 12

QUESTIONS

1. What is a steward?
2. Does a human being really own anything, or is he simply a God-created being who is entrusted with many things (time, talents, treasures, personality, influence, body, mind, family, etc.) which he has received as gifts from God, all of which are to be used for the glory of God?
3. Is there anything (or anyone) in your own personal life which you have not yet yielded or surrendered to God? Who is the rightful owner of everything which you are and which you have?
4. According to I Timothy 5: 8, what indictment rests upon a person (a professing Christian) who fails to take care of the basic needs of his family?
5. In the materialistic society in which believers find themselves living, against what tendency must Christians constantly be on their guard? (Note I John 2: 15-17; I Timothy 6: 6-10, 17-19; Matthew 6: 19-21)
6. What suggestions would you offer a young believer on how to learn to be content in life, whether he has little or much of this world's possessions? (Note Philippians 4: 11-12; Luke 12: 15; Hebrews 13: 5; Matthew 16: 26)
7. Give your interpretation and application of the following statement: "There are two ways to be wealthy - one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants."
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following convictions, as stated by John Wesley, regarding financial stewardship: "If a man pursues his business, that he may raise himself to a state of figure and riches in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment, and has no more title to reward from God, than he who gives alms that he may be seen, or prays that he may be heard, of men."
9. Do you believe a Christian must live "loose to things"? Why or why not?
10. Give your interpretation and application of the following statement by John Wesley: "Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God's be it more or less; by employing all, on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner that you may give a good account of your stewardship."

11. Tell how you personally would apply the following “formula” for financial stewardship, as a sincere follower of Christ: (a) Gain all you can; (b) Save all you can; (c) Give all you can. How do you personally make a decision as to how much of God’s money (all of the money which you have received from God) you should retain for your own personal use? After you give your tithe (your 10% of your total income), do you tend to think that the remaining 90% of your money belongs to you, for you to choose to spend as you desire? Why or why not?
12. As a Biblical steward, does a Christian have a right to “accumulate wealth” throughout his life, or does he have a responsibility to regularly distribute his earned income (and wealth) to the work of God throughout his lifetime?
13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Money must not be the first consideration of a Christian in choosing a profession.”
14. What is the difference between “making a living” and “making a life”?
15. When a believer’s income gradually or suddenly increases, should this believer automatically increase his “standard of living” in accordance with his increase in personal income? Why or why not?
16. How often, and at what times, should a believer re-evaluate his practices of financial stewardship, and especially his plans for so-called “charitable giving”?
17. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements by E. Stanley Jones: “While you are lifting your economic level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn...When the level of your needs has been reached, then all you earn belongs to the needs of others, not as charity, but as right and justice.”
18. Tell why you agree, or disagree with the following statement by B. T. Roberts (founding leader of the Free Methodist Denomination in 1860): “Use your money for the promotion of the cause of God, and do not hoard it up for your children.”
19. Do you believe it is permissible and right for believers to spend some of their money on luxuries, not simply on the meeting of the very basic personal and family needs of food, clothing and shelter? Why or why not?
20. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: “If you have too much, then invest it in persons. It is the only bank that will not break. The bank of human character will pay dividends through eternity. Invest all surpluses in that bank.”

21. Tell to what extent you personally identify with the following conviction, as stated by Elton Trueblood: “The tradition for simple living is more than a tradition. It has a double justification, in that the rejection of luxury serves, on the one hand, to release the mind from worldly interests, and on the other hand, to release income for the service of God and man.”
22. Do you have (as an individual or as a Christian family) a financial plan, based on a commitment to a basically “simple lifestyle”, whereby you would be able to release more and more income for the service of God and men? (Would you feel comfortable to openly and humbly share your plan with others in your group, for the purpose of encouraging fellow believers and for the purpose of glorifying God?)
23. Are you a master of things, or are things a master of you?
24. Give your interpretation of the following statement: “Money is a useful servant but a cruel master.”
25. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement; “When a man makes money, either God gains a fortune or God loses a man.”
26. According to I Timothy 6: 10, what is “the root of all evil”, that which is “the first step toward all kinds of sin”?
27. What principles should guide a sincere Christian in the purchases of his basic necessities - food, clothing, housing?
28. Should a believer expect to live, materially-speaking, as a ‘king of the earth’, or as ‘the King’ Himself (Jesus) when He dwelt on this earth, or is there a ‘Middle-of-the-road’ alternative (that is Biblically-supportable)?
29. If “Simplicity” (as a way of life) is the proper and Biblically-supportable goal for a believer to be committed to, what guidance is available for a believer in helping to determine what “a simple lifestyle” really means to him?
30. Do the blessings which God promises to give to tithers (as recorded in Malachi 3: 8-10) always (or most of the time) refer to material blessings or to other types of blessings? Should conscientious tithers expect God to “open the windows of heaven” and pour out material blessings as a “reward” for faithfulness in tithing? Why or why not? When Jesus said, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”, what do you think the “all these things” includes?

CHAPTER 13

THE STEWARDSHIP OF TIME

CHAPTER 13

SUBJECT: THE STEWARDSHIP OF TIME.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5: 15-21

TEXT: *“Use your time with all economy for these are evil days.”*

INTRODUCTION: Because man is the creature and God is the Creator, man is both privileged and obligated to submit his total life to the Almighty. Man is accountable to God.

I. ATTITUDE TOWARD TIME

A. Time Is God-Given

B. Time Is Brief

II. USE OF TIME

A. Christian’s Job

B. Christian’s Leisure

CONCLUSION: The Christian knows that time does not belong to himself, but is rather a God-given gift to be used for God.

CHAPTER 13

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SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5: 15-21

TEXT: *“Use your time with all economy for these are evil days.”*

INTRODUCTION:

God is the Creator; man is the creature. God is the Giver of all good and perfect gifts; man is the recipient of God's gifts. Man is made by God and is made for God. It is to God that man is ultimately accountable. Because man is the creature and God is the Creator, man is both privileged and obligated to submit his total life to the Almighty. Because God made the total personality of man, God is in a position to demand the total allegiance of man. Man is accountable to God. There is no more serious word in the English language than the word accountability. Man is accountable to God for all things, for man is in the position of a steward. Man is a steward of all things including his possessions, talents, influence, and time.

PROPOSITION: It is the stewardship of time that we are interested in discussing today. Let us discuss (1) Man's proper Attitude toward Time, and (2) Man's proper Use of Time.

I. ATTITUDE TOWARD TIME

A. Time is God-given.

Time is not the property of man to squander or trifle with. To kill time, is to misuse the gift of God. Time is allotted to every man to be used constructively in fulfilling God's purpose. Time has a limit; eternity has no limit. God is eternal and thus He is timeless. Man is finite and earthly and thus measures his life by time. It is not how long one lives, but how well one lives that is vitally important.

Man has no control over the time in history in which he is born. God has a purpose for every age and for every man, and gives each man a limited number of years to fulfill his distinctive mission in the unique age in which he lives. When man views time in the light of eternity, life takes on a new meaning and a great sense of urgency. The footprint of every man is either marked on the sandy beach of time or on the Rock of Ages. The footprint on the sandy beach is put there by the man who is only living for time, and thus his footprint will soon be vanished by the wave of death. The footprint which is stamped on the Rock of Ages is put there by the man who is living for eternity, and the wave of death cannot efface the footprint of life. The influence

and memory of the righteous man remains even after death. "He being dead, yet speaks."

Man must give an account to God for the manner in which he uses his time. Says one unknown author in a poem:

"I have only just a minute
Just sixty seconds in it;
Forced upon me - can't refuse it,
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
I must suffer if I lose it,
Give account if I abuse it;
Just a tiny little minute,
But eternity is in it." (Author Unknown)

Someone once said, "We should live each day as if it were a life time." (Barclay's Hebrews; pg. 29) When one is convinced that time is God-given, there is no presumption or carelessness in the use of this most valuable possession - time. Rather, there is diligence to make the most of time, to "use it with all economy." The Christian must always view time as the gift of God, and life as preparation for heaven. Time is very sacred. It is the dressing-room for heaven. Writes Barclay, "If life is only a day to day doing of the routine things, then we may well sink into a policy of drift; but if we are on the way to heaven and heaven's crown then life must always be at full tension and effort always at full pitch." (Barclay's Hebrews; pg. 143)

John Wesley was one great man in history who had an unusual consciousness of the stewardship of time. In Wesley's early life he wrote the following to his mother, "Leisure and I have taken leave of one another; I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged to me." (Blueprint For A Christian World; pg. 142) (Mary Alice Tenney)

Wesley realized that time was God-given and, therefore, he carefully used time and sought to glorify God in all that he did. It seemed that his life was always "at full tension and at full pitch." Dr. Tenney describes the discipline of Wesley in the use of his time when she writes that "in 1727, on the eve of finishing his reading for the Master's degree, he drew up a scheme of studies for several years to come, carrying out the principle of strictly useful employment by excluding from the list of books all those which appealed only to his curiosity." (Ibid, pg. 142) Wrote Wesley concerning the reading of books merely for curiosity, "Curiosity might be a sufficient plea for one laying out some time upon them, if we had half a dozen centuries of life to come, but me thinks it is a great ill-husbandry to spend a considerable part of the small pittance now allowed us in what makes us neither a quick nor a sure return." (Ibid, pg. 142)

Wesley's consciousness that time is God-given not only guided Wesley in his reading, but also in his conversation. Wesley had a full knowledge of a wide scope of subjects, and often times enjoyed conversation with Dr. Johnson, one of the greatest conversationalists of all times. However, Wesley was a man of action as well as a man of thought, and therefore he felt compelled to divide his time between the two. Wrote Dr. Johnson, "John Wesley's conversation is good but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk as I do." (Tenney's, *Living In Two Worlds*; pg. 79)

It is recorded of Wesley that he arose at four a.m. and prepared to read his Bible and read early Church history from five to seven in the morning. Oftentimes he was preaching to a large crowd of workers at five in the morning. Barclay writes of the amazing accomplishments of Wesley and the all-sufficient grace of God that enabled him to achieve such success. "John Wesley preached 42,000 sermons. He averaged 4,500 miles a year. He rode (by horse) 60 to 70 miles a day and preached three sermons a day on an average. When he was 83 he wrote in his diary, 'I am a wonder to myself. I am never tired, either with preaching, writing, or traveling'." (Corinthians, pg. 289)

Wesley realized that time was God-given, and therefore he could not use time only for himself, either in his reading, in his conversation, in his writings, or in his travels.

B. Time Is Brief

The Bible exhorts man to learn to number his days. That means, to realize the brevity of life. Said the Psalmist, "The days of our years - there are seventy of them, and if there is great strength, eighty years - yet their best involves toil and grief, for it is soon gone, and we vanish." (Psalms 90: 10, Berkeley)

Says the Scriptures, "A man's days resemble grass. He blossoms like a flower in the fields; the wind blows over it, and it is gone, with not a sign that it has ever been there." (Psalms 103: 15, 16) James uses another analogy: "What is your life? A vapor you are, that appears for a little while and disappears." (James 4: 14) As a child, we wished away time; couldn't wait until next birthday, or until teen years or until marriage, or until first child walked or went to school. But as time goes on, and we grow older, we value time above all other gifts.

One unknown poet concisely describes the brevity of life in these words:

"When as a child, I laughed and wept,
Time crept;
When as a youth, I dreamed and talked,

Time walked;
When I became a full grown man,
Time ran;
When older still I daily grew,
Time flew;
Soon I shall find in traveling on
Time gone." (Author Unknown)

Because our days are few, we should make the most of time. Paul said that Christians should be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Phillips translation is "Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days." Says the New English Bible Translation: "Use the present opportunity to the full, for these are evil days."

How tragic it is that too many times we as Christians have not made use of the present opportunities to the full. There is a poem which speaks pointedly to the subject of redeeming the time.

"The days go by, the weeks how fast,
And all at once the year is past!
And oh, how much we meant to do
Before another year was through-
That Bible class we meant to teach,
The boys and girls we planned to reach
But some of them have slipped away
And we never found the time to say
A word for Christ; ah! had we known,
How eager then our hearts had grown!
And some whose hearts were warm to hear
The name of Him we love so dear,
Have since grown cold and hard in sin,
And now they will not ask Him in,
For Satan found them prey indeed
Because we failed to sow the seeds.
God's time is now, this day, this hour,
To rescue souls from Satan's power.
Our most sincere repentant sigh
Will not recall the years gone by,
Oh, there are boys and girls today
Who wait for you to point the way.
So forget the things that lie behind
And press ahead, with yielded mind
And heart and hands and feet and eyes,

To reach God's goal, to gain His prize.
Barbara Cornet Ryberg

II. USE OF TIME

Time is one of the greatest gifts that man has received from God, and yet this gift is abused and misused perhaps more than any other gift. A disciplined Christian has firm convictions of how his time should be used, and realizes that his times are in God's hands. He knows that whatever he does, or wherever he is, he must do all things to the glory of God. The two major blocks of man's waking time are spent on his job and in leisure. The true Christian commits both his job to God, and his leisure time to God.

A. Christian's Job

1. In The Choice Of A Christian's Job

The major factor that most people consider in choosing a job is money. Money seems to speak, and most people will go to any ends to obtain the qualifications that will enable them to make more money.

In choosing a job, occupation, or profession, the Christian should not primarily be motivated by money. To make money the primary goal of life is to lower oneself to the worship of an inferior idol, a god which gives no satisfaction in life. Says William Law, a man who greatly influenced John Wesley, "If a man pursues his business, that he may raise himself to a state of figure and riches in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment, and has no more title to reward from God, than he who gives alms that he may be seen, or prays that he may be heard, of men. For vain and earthly designs are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions...our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to him when it is not performed with the same piety of heart." (Tenney's Blueprint For A Christian World; pg. 191)

The major motivation of the Christian in choosing a job is the ideal of service to one's fellow man. The world is greatly in need of those who will give their lives for the betterment of mankind, without any mixed motives or selfish goals. If many young people were willing to give time and effort in service to the Peace Corp Program, how much more should young people be willing to give time and effort to an infinitely greater cause - the salvation not only of men's bodies but also of their souls!

The world needs more young people who are willing to give all of their life, talent, and influence in serving God and helping their fellow men. Albert

Switzer, an unusually talented and brilliant man who earned several doctorate degrees, could have stayed in the United States and made a fortune and enjoyed great popularity. Instead he surrendered his life and many talents to God, and blessed Africa with his life as a missionary.

2. In the Performance of a Christian's Job

The Bible tells us that whatever our hand finds to do, we should do it heartily as unto the Lord. Paul gave the following advice to the slaves of the Roman Empire: "Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as you would Christ Himself. Do not work only when you are being watched. Do not work only to satisfy men. But work as the slave of Christ, doing God's will heartily. Let your service be given with good-will as to Christ and not to men." (Ephesians 6: 5-7, Barclay)

The attitude with which we carry out our work is very important. A famous story is told of Sir Christopher Wren when he was building St. Paul's Cathedral. "On one occasion Sir Christopher Wren was making a tour of the work in progress. He came upon a man at work and asked him: 'What are you doing?' The man said: 'I am helping Sir Christopher Wren to build St. Paul's Cathedral.'" (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 142) There is a great need in our technological age for Christians to realize that they are not primarily working to supply a living, or to earn a fortune, but that they are working to glorify God. Thank God for the many workers in today's Church who answer, "I am helping to build the Kingdom of God."

Says Barclay regarding work: "The conviction of the Christian workman is that every piece of work he produces must be good enough to show to God... We will never make men good workman by increasing pay, or bettering conditions, or heightening rewards... The only secret of good workmanship is that it is done for God. It is only when a man is taking all his work and showing it to God that work can be good." (Ephesians, pg. 215)

How can the Christian best express his love to Christ? By faithfully fulfilling his God-given task in life. An African-American poet writes:

"There's a king and a captain high,
And he's coming by and by,
And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.
You can hear his legions charging in the regions of the sky,
And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.
There's a man they thrust aside,
Who was tortured till he died,

And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.
He was hated and rejected,
He was scorned and crucified,
And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.
He'll be crowned by saints and angels when he comes,
They'll be shouting out Hosanna! to the man that men denied,
And I'll kneel among my cotton when he comes."
(Barclay's Matthew, Vol.2; pg. 361)

B. Christian's Leisure

1. In the Enjoyment of Leisure

The Bible says that God gives us all things to enjoy (I Timothy 6). The Christian is not one who is enduring life with a long-drawn face, but he is one who is living the full and abundant life of joy. In fact, the Christian's aesthetic appreciation for the beauty around him is heightened and intensified. Wesley wrote that the Christian sees "with unspeakable pleasure, the order, the beauty, the harmony, of all creatures; of all animated, all inanimate nature; the serenity of the skies; the sun walking in brightness; the sweetly variegated clothing of the earth; the trees, the fruits, the flowers, and liquid lapse of murmuring streams." (Tenney's Blueprint; pg. 158)

One poet speaks of the aesthetic heightening of the Christian in these words:

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

(Barclay's Hebrews, pg. 57)

The Christian does not seek to escape this world, but rather drinks in of the beauty of the world. The world and the fulness thereof is made by God and is therefore intrinsically beautiful.

2. In the Discipline of Leisure

The Christian takes time from his work for relaxation, refreshment, amusement, and enjoyment. However, the Christian is one who is disciplined

in the type of diversion he involves himself in. The Christian must ask certain questions when he is deciding upon the desirability of a certain amusement. Such questions as the following are good: "First, Does my love for this amusement surpass my love of God and does the time spent upon it rob me of time or energy I should spend in His service? Secondly, Does this amusement contribute directly or indirectly to the development of my Christian character? Thirdly, Does this amusement have in it any element that will harm either myself or another?" (Tenney's Blueprint For Christian World; pg. 159)

It is very important that leisure provides means of mental, physical, and social refreshment. It is therefore essential that we be careful in the selection of entertainment. Entertainment should directly or indirectly contribute to ones spiritual well-being. What one likes most to do during his leisure time, is often an indicator of his loyalties.

Discipline is necessary even in the use of leisure time. Can the disciplined Christian spend hours each day watching television and maintain a clear conscience and a vibrant witness? Should not leisure time also be used to do service to our fellow men?

The story is told that one day John Wesley's carriage was delayed beyond the appointed time. While Wesley was waiting at the door for his carriage ride, he was heard to say by one nearby, "I have lost ten minutes for ever." (Ibid, pg. 143) What a contrast is Wesley's attitude toward time and the attitude of one who kills time with no apparent sense of moral responsibility.

The Christian should receive genuine enjoyment from leisure time, but he must also learn to exercise discipline even in the use of time for entertainment and amusements.

CONCLUSION:

The Christian knows that time does not belong to himself, but is rather a God-given gift to be used for God.

"My times are in Thy Hands
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or Painful, Sad or Glad,
As Best may seem to Thee."

The Christian chooses an occupation in life on the basis of the ideal of service. He seeks to glorify Christ in all. In work or play, he is disciplined and he seeks the Mind of Christ.

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 13

1. In seeking to understand the meaning of Stewardship, what is the relationship between God and Man?
2. Do you believe that one of the most “serious” words in the English language is “Accountability”? Why or why not?
3. Give your interpretation of the following statement: “It is not how long one lives, but how well one lives.”
4. Do you believe that God has a purpose for every age in history, and a distinctive and good purpose for every person on the face of the earth, and that God gives each person a limited number of years to fulfill his distinctive mission in the unique age in which he lives? Why or why not?
5. What greater significance does time have for a person who views time in the “light of eternity”, in contrast to the person who believes that his life is merely temporal and material, and that there is no life (eternity) after he dies?
6. Do you believe that you should live each day of your life as if it were a “life time”? Why or why not?
7. What, practically-speaking, does it mean to you, for you to make the most of your time - to use your time “with all economy”?
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “If life is only a day to day doing of the routine things, then we may well sink into a policy of drift; but if we are on the way to heaven and heaven’s crown then life must always be at full tension and effort at full pitch.”
9. Give your personal interpretation of the following Scripture and how you think it applies to your own personal life, in terms of the stewardship of time: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” (Psalms 90: 12)
10. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statement: “Because life is so brief, a Christian must be very selective in the choice of activities, reading, conversation, and specific employments.”
11. What should be the greatest motivation in the life of a Christian, in his selection of a job?

12. Share how you personally have been successful in serving God through your employment (job).
13. With what attitude should a sincere Christian perform his tasks in his everyday employment (job)? (Note Ephesians 6: 5-7)
14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: “We will never make men good workmen by increasing pay, or bettering conditions or heightening rewards. The only secret of good workmanship is that it is done for God. It is only when a man is taking all his work and showing it to God that work can be good.”
15. In terms of work, how can a Christian best express his love to Christ?
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “The Christian is not one who is enduring life with a long-drawn face, but is one who is living the full and abundant life of joy.”
17. Is it possible for a Christian thoroughly to enjoy the beauty of the earth, without worshipping the things (pleasures) of the world?
18. Is it ‘right’ for a Christian to take time from his work for relaxation, refreshment, amusement, pleasure, entertainment, and enjoyment? Why?
19. As you personally take inventory and evaluation of your hobbies and recreation and amusement and entertainment, tell how you would answer each of the three following questions:
 - (a) Does my love for this amusement surpass my love of God and does the time spent upon it rob me of time or energy I should spend in His service?
 - (b) Does this amusement contribute directly or indirectly to the development of my Christian character?
 - (c) Does this amusement have in it any element that will harm either myself or another?
20. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “What one likes most to do during his leisure time is often an indication of his loyalties.”
21. Can the disciplined Christian spend hours each day watching television and maintain a clear conscience and a vibrant witness? Should not leisure time also be used to do service to ones fellow men?

CHAPTER 14

HOW TO SAVE TIME

CHAPTER 14

SUBJECT: HOW TO SAVE TIME

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5: 15-17

TEXT: *“Make the most of every opportunity you have for doing good.”* (Ephesians 5: 16)

INTRODUCTION: Our society is so fast-moving that it is hard to comprehend. There are countless time-saving devices. Man is time conscious and on the move, and yet people say they have less time than ever. The Scriptures too are concerned that man make the best use of his time, and they give some suggestions to modern man on how to save time.

- I. PRAYER IS ONE OF THE BEST TIME SAVERS.
- II. GOD ENABLES US TO SAVE TIME BY GIVING US GOALS AND POWER TO KEEP GOING TOWARDS THE GOALS WE SEE.
- III. TIME CAN BE SAVED IF PRIORITIES ARE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED.
- IV. TIME CAN BE SAVED BY MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BODY.
- V. TIME CAN BE SAVED BY DAILY EXPERIENCING GOD’S INNER SPIRITUAL RENEWAL.

CONCLUSION: There are effective ways to save time and to do more for Christ. Let’s redeem the time this year!

CHAPTER 14

SUBJECT: HOW TO SAVE TIME.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5: 15-17

TEXT: *“Make the most of every opportunity you have for doing good.”* (Ephesians 5: 16)

INTRODUCTION:

Writes W. E. Sangster: “A friend of mine told me once that he had reduced a normal life to the length of one day in order to test how far he was forward on the pilgrimage of life. He assumed that life was seventy years and that a normal day runs from seven o’clock in the morning till eleven o’clock at night. That being so, he worked it out roughly like this: At 20 years of age it is half-past eleven; at 30 it is two o’clock; at 40 it is four o’clock; at 50, half-past six; at 50 a quarter to nine. What time is it with you?” (Daily Readings; pg. 102)

Our society is so fast-moving that it is hard to comprehend. There are countless time-saving devices. Man is time conscious and on the move, and yet people say they have less time than ever. The Scriptures too are concerned that man makes the best use of his time, and they give some suggestions to modern man on how to save time.

I. PRAYER IS ONE OF THE BEST TIME SAVERS.

Luther said that he was so busy that he had to spend three hours daily in prayer. Luther also said, “He that has prayed well has studied well.” Prayer without study is vain; study without prayer is also vain. Prayer and work must go hand and hand.

God can perform more in one divine moment than man can in months or years. “Turning to God does ^{save} ~~saves~~ time. By giving perspective and pose, it keeps a person from going around in circles and wasting his time in trifling details. Witness the case of Marshal Foch going daily to morning prayers during the crucial campaign of World War I.

“People complain that their busy lives give them no time for prayer, but it is usually a shallow evasion because they clearly find time for less important things - the newspaper and amusements. No one deeply in love would fail to find time for a daily word with the loved one, if the loved one lived at hand.” (Sangster’s Daily Readings; pg. 298)

II GOD ENABLES US TO SAVE TIME BY GIVING US GOALS AND POWER TO KEEP GOING TOWARDS THE GOALS WE SEE.

“Look at the schoolboy moving restlessly about the house. It is Saturday and it is raining. He had planned a trip and the weather has made it impossible. He goes to the window. He picks up a book, thumbs a few pages and puts it down. He turns on the radio, dials two or three programs and switches it off. He kicks the door open or shut, or perhaps both. He throws himself on the bed, stares vacantly into space. His mother, after watching him a while, says to herself, ‘John doesn’t know what to do with himself today.’ The lad has himself on his hands. He has time on his hands. And he does not know how to use them.” (Sockman; *The Fine Art of Using*; pg. 11)

Having no real and live goals in life results in dissipation of energy, and the misuse of time.

Shortly after the bombing of Shanghai (World War II) Robert Abrahams wrote these lines in the *Saturday Evening Post*:

“Tonight Shanghai is burning
And we are dying too.
What bomb more surely mortal
Than death inside you?
For some men die by shrapnel,
And some go down in flames,

But most men perish inch by inch
In play at little games.”

No great goals equals slow but sure perishing.

God not only enables us to have goals, but He gives vision and power, in order that worthy goals may be reached. What enabled the frail little figure of William Wilberforce in his long struggles to abolish the African slave traffic, to march on to eventual victory? Wilberforce testified that it was his regular hours of worship which enabled him to endure.

III TIME CAN BE SAVED IF PRIORITIES ARE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED.

“Jesus simplified life by selecting the essentials and letting the rest go.” “Ah saving time does not mean merely cutting short some things; it means cutting out some things. Some things may not be wrong in themselves, but they are simply not worth doing.” (Ibid; 65, 101)

Someone said that the worst enemy of the best is the good. Life is too short to do everything we would like to do, therefore we must choose what we will do and what we will restrain ourselves from doing.

Suppose one works 40 hours a week. “What are you and I going to do with the other one hundred and twenty-eight hours? Suppose we should sleep eight hours a day, which is more than some of us do. We still have over seventy hours a week. Shall we fritter these away in trifles or worse? God forbid.” (Sockman; pg. 105)

“I have only just a minute
Just sixty seconds in it;
Forced upon me - can't refuse it,
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
I must suffer if I lose it,
Give account if I abuse it;
Just a tiny little minute,
But eternity is in it.”
(Author unknown)

Wrote Paul, “Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days.” (Ephesians 5: 16, Phillips)

Some one said, “The idle mind is the devil's workshop.” Having goals and establishing priorities will enable us to keep our mind occupied with worthwhile pursuits.

“Only one life to live,
T'will soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ
Will last.”

Because life is so brief, a Christian must be very selective in the choice of his activities – reading, conversation, and specific employments. What are you specifically going to do for Jesus this coming year?

IV TIME CAN BE SAVED BY MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BODY.

Your body is given to you by God, and is not really your own. You are a steward of it, and God expects you to use it to glorify Him and to help others. A sick body may contain a sanctified soul, but a sick body can keep a sanctified soul from being as active for God as it should. Some ailments cannot be avoided, and God can use us in spite of these sicknesses. However, God expects us to do our best to maintain good physical health, and thus to be of more service to God, by saving time from hospital beds.

1. By Exercise - exercise is recuperative to both body and mind. Be sure to regularly exercise.

2. Proper Diet - will help the body to keep in tone and healthy. One great Christian said his formula was threefold (for spiritual and physical health) - "Grace, Grass, Gumption."

3. By laughter and merriment - "A merry heart doth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones." (Proverbs 17: 22)

4. By proper rest. Overwork and under work are both harmful to man's well being.

V. TIME CAN BE SAVED BY DAILY EXPERIENCING GOD'S INNER SPIRITUAL RENEWAL.

At eighty-two Wesley declared, "Mr. Henry said 'I bless God that I am never tired of my work, yet I am often tired in my work.' By the blessing of God, I can say more: I am never tired in my work. From the beginning of the day or the week or the year to the end I do not know what weariness means. I am never weary of writing or preaching, or traveling; but am just as fresh at the end as at the beginning. Thus it is with me today, and I take no thought of tomorrow."

Writes E. Stanley Jones: "That passage was open for me on my desk, opened by my son-in-law, Bishop J. K. Mathews, when I returned from a six-month evangelistic tour abroad. He said he opened it for me, for it reminded him of me, that I could say that too. I could humbly and gratefully. I have been speaking from two to five times a day, sometimes more, for half a century, and taking no vacations except to write on a book, and yet, at seventy-eight I find no sense of tiredness at all. At this writing I am in Cochin, India, having just come out of the Mar Thoma Convention where for a week the crowds would go up to fifty thousand, and beyond, and yet, speaking to them up to four times a day. I find no sense of weariness at the close at all. After speaking to the crowds you do not walk away from them - they crowd your veranda, peep through the curtains, and throng around you everywhere. But no strain, no drain! There is the built-in reactivator, the Holy Spirit, source of life and strength and renewal." (Word became Flesh; pg. 230)

Wrote Paul, "This is my work, and I can do it only because Christ's might energy is at work within me." (Colossians 1: 29, Living Bible)

O' for that flame of living fire,
Which shone so bright in saints of old;
Which bade their souls to heaven aspire,
Calm in distress, in danger bold.

Where is that Spirit, Lord, which dwelt
In Abraham's breast, and sealed him thine?
Which made Paul's heart with sorrow melt,
And glow with energy divine?

That Spirit, which from age to age
Proclaimed thy love, and taught thy ways?
Brightened Isaiah's vivid page,
And breathed in David's hallowed lays?

Is not thy grace as mighty now
As when Elijah felt its power;
When glory beamed from Moses' brow,
Or Job endured the trying hour?

Remember Lord, the ancient days;
Renew thy work; thy grace restore;
And while to thee our hearts we raise,
On us thy Holy Spirit pour.

By W. H. Bathurst
(taken from an old Hymnal of The Free Methodist Church;
published in 1883 by B. T. Roberts, Number 619)

CONCLUSION:

(1) Prayer, (2) Setting meaningful goals, (3) Establishing Priorities, (4) Maintaining a healthy body, (5) Experiencing God's inner spiritual renewal. These are effective ways to save time and to do more for Christ. Let's redeem the time this year!

CHAPTER 14

QUESTIONS

1. How does the Bible describe the life of man, in terms of time? (Note Psalms 90: 10; Psalms 103: 15, 16; James 4: 14)
2. What is the relationship between prayer and works?
3. In what specific ways can a life of prayer actually help one to save time?
4. What response would you give to a person who declares that he is too busy to find time for prayer?
5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Having no great goals equals slow but sure perishing."
6. From whence does a Christian receive the needed energy and motivation and vision to carry out his work for God, especially in his battles against injustice in a corrupt society?
7. Why is it important to "simplify" one's life, especially as it relates to establishing and fulfilling goals in life? How does a sincere Christian learn to "select the essentials and let the rest go"?
8. Give your personal interpretation and application of the following statement: "The worst enemy of the best is the good."
9. From the life and ministry of John Wesley, what can you learn in your attempt to understand the relationship between actions (Good deeds in interpersonal relationships) and conversation (Verbalizing your ideas with people)?
10. How can the "balanced Christian" best express his faith in God and his love for mankind, in his demonstration of "a tough mind", "a tender heart", and "a decisive will"?
11. As an earnest Christian, share how you have attempted to "make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days" (Ephesians 5: 16)?
12. Do you believe there is much truth or relevance in the old-fashioned statement "The idle mind is the devil's workshop"? Why or why not? What is the difference between illegitimately having an "idle mind", and legitimately having a "relaxed mind that is engaged in laughter"?

13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement;

“Only one life to live,
T’ will soon be past,
Only what’s done for Christ
Will last.”

14. In the proper use of time, as a steward of God, have you found that in your personal life it is much too easy to have “good intentions” which never become “good actions”, in terms of demonstrating your commitments to God and to needy people? What do you think is the “secret” of activating one’s faith as a Christian?
15. In terms of goals, what specifically do you plan to do for Jesus and for His Kingdom, during these next twelve months?
16. In terms of the stewardship of time, how can a believer “save time” by maintaining a healthy body? How important is it for a believer to give his attention and effort to maintaining physical health through proper diet, sufficient rest, vigorous exercise, and avoidance of hurtful habits? Tell what is meant by the statement “If you don’t keep in touch with your body, your body will get in touch with you”.
17. According to Colossians 1: 29, what is the Christian’s “secret” to maintaining vitality in Christian ministry (both as vocational ministers and as lay ministers)?

CHAPTER 15

THE STEWARDSHIP OF INFLUENCE

CHAPTER 15

SUBJECT: THE STEWARDSHIP OF INFLUENCE

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 6: 19-20

TEXT: *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”* (Romans 14: 7)

INTRODUCTION: Influence is that intangible communication of an idea or personality trait from one person to another, with a result in a change of behavior or a change in a way of thinking. Christians have a responsibility to use their influence for good and for God. The spread of Christianity depends largely upon how influential Christians are. If enough Christians can exert a strong enough influence for Christ, the world can be saved.

I. POWER OF INFLUENCE.

- A. Influence - either for good or for bad - is very powerful.
- B. If influence can be powerful for evil, it can also be powerful for good.

II. TYPES OF INFLUENCE.

- A. We Can Exercise Influence Through Our Words.
- B. We Can Exercise Influence Through Our Actions.
- C. We Can Exercise Influence Through Our Prayers.
- D. Our Influence Can Live On Even After We Have Died.

CONCLUSION: No one knows how far-reaching his influence is. As a steward of God you are responsible for the way you use your influence. As a Christian you have an awesome responsibility to exercise a powerful influence for good and for God.

CHAPTER 15

SUBJECT: THE STEWARDSHIP OF INFLUENCE

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 6: 19-20

TEXT: *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”* (Romans 14: 7)

INTRODUCTION:

How can you measure influence? Can you put it in a test tube or weigh it on scales? Can you measure how far-reaching a person’s influence is? Can you always tell who is most influential? Is influence dependent upon the amount of words one speaks? Can one always tell when he is being influenced or when he is influencing another? Just what is influence?

Influence is that intangible communication of an idea or personality trait from one person to another, with a result in a change of behavior or a change in a way of thinking. When you throw a large rock in the middle of a lake, the ripples from the impact of the rock sometimes reach to the very edge of the lake. You never know how far reaching your influence may go in touching the lives of other people!

Christians have a responsibility to use their influence for good and for God. The spread of Christianity depends largely upon how influential Christians are. If enough Christians can exert a strong enough influence for Christ, the world can be saved.

I. POWER OF INFLUENCE.

Our text says, *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”* (Romans 14: 7) Everyone of us is exerting an influence on someone. No man is an island to himself. One’s words and actions are helping to mold another person’s life.

One’s influence goes out far beyond the personal contacts one makes. Your idea may actually circle the entire globe and reach people whom you will never see in person. Your influence cannot be measured. Thus, through your influence, you help shape the destiny of the world.

A. Influence - either for good or for bad - is very powerful.

Consider someone so wise and so strong as Solomon, eventually being influenced for evil by his heathen wives. Could it be possible that someone so wise as to write the Proverbs could be influenced for evil? Solomon was! *“When Solomon became old, his wives turned his heart to other gods, so that his heart was no longer true to the Lord his God.”* (I Kings 11: 4)

Ahab influenced Israel to sin. "Truly there never was a man like Ahab who committed himself to evil in the sight of the Lord, seduced by Jezebel his wife." (I Kings 21: 25) A pagan wife produces a pagan husband, who, as king, influences Israel to go pagan. How devastating is the evil influence of an evil wife! One woman - Jezebel - influenced thousands in Israel to go wrong. The daughter of Jezebel and Ahab was influenced to do evil by her parents and she in turn influenced her husband to do evil, reminding us of the Scriptural lesson that evil is perpetuated to the third and fourth generations. "Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he remained king in Jerusalem for eight years. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, doing as the dynasty of Ahab had done, for Ahab's daughter had become his wife." (II Chronicles 21: 5, 6)

A man of powerful but evil influence can sway a mob to violent action. Think of the high priest who persuaded the crowd to ask for the release of the murderer Barabbas instead of the release of Jesus. Think in our modern age of the terrifying evil influence of a Hitler who succeeded in inciting the mobs to believe that they could conquer the world through military power. The terror of such evil influence is seen in its power to realize demonic goals. Hitler's demonic influence resulted in him almost realizing his dreams.

B. If influence can be powerful for evil, it can also be powerful for good.

Jesus recognized the power of good influence when he said, "*Ye (Christians) are the salt of the earth.*" In other words, the world has been preserved from total destruction because of the goodly influence of godly men.

Consider how influential the early Christian Church was. In three centuries the once-persecuted Christian sect had become the officially recognized religion of the Roman Empire! What accounts for this spectacular advance? "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church." Dying for Christ with prayers for one's enemies on the lips of the martyrs could only result in influencing thousands of men to turn to Christ.

Consider the powerful influence of Martin Luther, who, after four hundred years, still lives on in the movement of Protestantism. Protestantism with its cardinal belief of "The Just Shall Live by Faith," encircles the globe. One man stood up for Christ and said, "Here I take my stand, I cannot do otherwise."

Consider the influence of the great social reformers who, in the name of Christianity, fought against wrongs until right triumphed. Their influences produced social changes. Democracy is the product of strong Christian influence. Our democratic processes have a Biblical Footage. The great literature of Western civilization has obviously been largely shaped by the Biblical ethic. All of the freedoms which we richly enjoy are results of a strong belief in the dignity of man, which in turn is a

central belief of Christianity. If there is a powerful influence for evil, then there is also a powerful influence for good. Which will win out - good or bad? Good ultimately will, because God has the final word. But what about the immediate situation - will good or bad win out? That depends upon you and me, and thousands of others like us. If right is to win, then it will depend upon people who exercise a strong influence for good.

II TYPES OF INFLUENCE.

How can we be good stewards of God? Partly by using our influence for good and for God. How can we exercise influence?

A. We Can Exercise Influence Through Our Words.

Paul complimented the Thessalonian Christians for their very powerful verbal influence for Christ. "For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything." (I Thessalonian 1: 8) These Christians were verbal witnesses - so strong in their witness that Paul did not have to preach to certain persons. This is always the strongest and the best sermons - the informal verbal witnesses of Christian laymen. The Church and the Gospel will go forward best, through the verbal witness of laymen, because more people can be reached than are reached through a well-prepared sermon from the pulpit.

The influence of a pastor and a sermon is important but it is so limited. The influence of the Gospel depends upon the verbal witness of thousands of Christian laymen, or more properly called, lay ministers.

Who is a minister? You are a minister - that is, if you are a believing Christian. "Once it was widely supposed that the pastor of a Church had a program to put into effect and that the ordinary members of the congregation perform their function by helping with this program...The new and revolutionary idea is that the ordinary member, because he is a servant of his fellow men, begins to have a program in the world and the pastor becomes his helper, in order to increase the value and probable success of the program...Since the ordinary Christian soldier is on the front line, he needs times of renewal in order to get ready for his task. His greatest support, intellectually and morally, must come from those operating chiefly in rear areas, who exist in order to strengthen the ones on the front lines. These supporters are the men who, in the New Testament, are called Pastors and Teachers." (You are a Minister by Elton Trueblood)

The key point in this discussion is this: If the world is to be influenced for Christ, it depends upon the verbal witness of thousands of lay ministers. We can influence

people for Christ through our letters and correspondence. Writes William Sangster: "Let me tell you a little of this obscure disciple and something of his secret service for our Lord. He is a shy man. It would be wrong to say that he has no gift in public speech, but he has a great gift in writing. Years ago he went to God for guidance, asking how best he could serve the coming of the Kingdom, and it was revealed to him that a ministry awaited him in correspondence...He accepted the commission. For years he has been fulfilling it. He does it with prayer and (as he believes) under guidance. The number of people he has encouraged must, by now, be immense. He writes to all kinds of folks - to friend, to acquaintances, to entire strangers; to the authors of books which have helped him; to people in public life who are carrying great responsibilities; to high and humble, known and unknown, rich and poor.

"He writes to sick people and speaks of his admiration in their courage. He lets the lonely know that he remembers them. He backs up those who are battling for social righteousness, especially when they are maligned. A letter of comfort from him has soothed a hundred broken hearts...He is a quietly happy man; happy with the happiness of those who have found their work...and do it...He offers no advice in his letters and makes it plain that he expects no reply. He specializes in appreciation. There are enough critics, he believes, eager to tell a man where he is wrong...So often has he been assured of the timeliness of his letters' arrival that he cannot possibly doubt that he is working with Another.

"Hugh Price Hughes is judged by some denominational historians to have been the most influential Methodist preacher after John Wesley himself. Do you know that he once resigned from the ministry? It was in the heat of an unpleasant controversy...He took it back because of a letter he received; a warm, loving, constraining letter from Dr. Ebenezer Jenkins who, in the controversy, was actually on the other side! But the letter melted the heart of Hugh Price Hughes. It was found in his desk when he died." (Sangster; 46, 47, Daily Readings)

B. We Can Exercise Influence Through Our Actions.

Who can measure the power of a godly lifestyle, lived humbly yet boldly in the midst of a godless society? William Sangster, the great Methodist preacher from London, illustrates this truth from the life of a common laborer from many years ago. Writes Sangster, "I knew a young, unmarried man who fell out of work during the long trade depression between the wars. He was a skilled workman and fine Christian, but how he lived during those lean years I hardly know. His joy when, at last, he got a job in a wireless factory it would be difficult to describe. There was, however, a fly in the ointment. He soon found that the men with whom he was working regularly used the most filthy language and it was impossible all the time to close his ears to their obscenities. He was a gentle soul and yet bold with the boldness of those who belong to our 'royal priesthood'. He could not feel that it was right to make no protest...At

the beginning of his second week he told a few of them gently, affectionately, but plainly, how he felt. A word, he hoped, would be enough. It was a vain hope. They laughed till they cried and blasphemed the more. So he got a collecting box from the local infirmary - and put a penny in whenever they swore...When they first realized what he was doing, they swore the harder...They said that it was their first opportunity to curse for the cure of the sick. After being out of work for years, that poor, brave, obscure disciple put, by his own act, nearly all his first week's wages in that box. But he broke them. When they saw what he had done, something happened. The Spirit of God used the simple artifice of it. They saw how much it hurt him and the blasphemy died down. In the passing of time, when it happened, it happened only by accident, and it was followed immediately by an apology, and the offender himself paid the 'fine'. He was a plain working man, speaking with a provincial accent, but he belonged to the royal priesthood." (Daily Readings; William Sangster; pg. 242)

Never minimize the power of your influence in the life or lives of others! By your words and by your actions, you are creating either a positive or a negative world around you.

Words, not backed by consistent actions, lose their power to influence or persuade. One who declares that he believes in racial equality and then goes out and discriminates against a member of a racial minority group, obviously will be wasting his words. There is the favorite saying which we know so well: "Your actions speak so loud that I cannot hear your words." In fact, at times the only effective way to influence another is through actions - not words. Wrote Peter to Christian wives who were married to non-Christian husbands: "Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives." (I Peter 3: 1) The influence which loving action has on an unsaved husband is more powerful than the influence which debate and persuasive tactics have on an unsaved husband.

The parent who teaches by example, as well as by precept, is the most effective parent. Words are important and are powerful to influence, but they must be coupled with loving actions. Children are probably shaped more by the silent attitudes of their parents, lived before them daily, than they are by the words of instruction which their parents give. Words and actions must be coupled together if either is to be truly effective. Parents have a responsibility to influence their children for God and righteousness. "Some parents say, 'We will not influence our children in making choices and decisions in matters of religion.' Why Not??? The ads will! The press will! The radio will! The T.V. will! The movies will! The neighbors will! The politicians will! The forces of evil will! We use our influence over flowers, vegetables, cattle, grass, etc. Shall we ignore our children? May God forgive us if we do!" (Shoeleather Faith; by Merv Rosell; No. 21) Not "Do as I say" but "Do as

I Do.” “Follow me as I follow Christ.” Many children drop out of Church during teenage years because their parents’ religion was not integrated into their total daily life-style in their home. The percentage of children who continue to attend Church as adults is greatly dependent upon the example of parents. The children who were taken with parents to Sunday School became regular in attendance in adulthood themselves. (Don’t send child to Sunday School; take child to Sunday School).

C. We Can Exercise Influence Through Our Prayers.

There is evidence that prayer actually influences people to turn to God. How is this possible? Certainly we do not understand all of the workings of prayer, but it seems that prayer is like mental radio waves which are beamed out across the miles and picked up by the unconscious mental receiving sets of people who are open to receive the persuasive prayer message. Thus, the Christian who is praying for the unsaved very likely is sending out beams of persuasive messages which are being received unconsciously by other minds, perhaps hundreds of miles away. Notes Frank Laubach, “If you pray for a man a thousand miles away, his unconscious mind may at that very moment be attuned outward toward you. If so, he will get your prayer and that may start in him a desire for God. Desire is what tunes men in to God. If you thus help turn a man toward God, you perform the service of a telephone operator, you connect the man with God. That helps God to speak to him directly.” Prayer then has much of the same effect that a verbal witness, or a sermon, or a book, or a letter, or a telephone call, or a telegram has - it communicates a message to another and persuades another to take a certain course of action, in this case, to turn to God. God has not called all Christians to preach a sermon from behind a pulpit, but God has called every Christian to pray. Probably the most effective way to help God carry out His redemptive purpose for this world is to pray, for through prayer, more people can be influenced to turn to God than through any other method. There are only a few thousand preachers, but there are millions of Christians, throughout the world. Imagine each Christian as a radio, beaming out the message of salvation through prayer. Millions of unbelievers would then pick up these beams of message unconsciously, through their mental radio receiving sets.

D. Our Influence Can Live On Even After We Have Died.

Of Abel it is recorded, “*Though he died, by faith he is still speaking.*” (Hebrews 11: 4b) Doubtless all of us are being influenced in our decision-making and personal behavior by someone who has already died. That person who is dead is really still living in us, because that person’s attitudes have become our attitudes.

My great-grandmother died in 1950 at the age of 89 when I was only 5 years old, but she still lives on because of her influence in my life. Her quiet trust in God, her faithfulness in Church attendance, her good humor in the face of life’s circumstances

have influenced me in my outlook on life. She being dead, yet speaketh. At times I ask, "What would I do in this particular situation if my great grandmother were alive. She is still influential although she has been dead for many years!

What we do today may influence our great-grandchildren! Our text says, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." (Romans 14: 7) "A man is not a self-contained individual unit; he is a link in a chain. Someone tells of a youth, who lived carelessly, and who began to study biology. Through a microscope he was watching certain of these living things which you can actually see living and dying and begetting in a moment of time. He rose from the microscope. 'Now I see it', he said. 'I am a link in the chain, and I will not be a weak link any more.' It is our terrible responsibility that we leave something of ourselves in the world by leaving something of ourselves in others." (Barclay's Romans, pg. 203)

I like this poem which speaks of one's responsibility to those who come after him:

An old man traveling a lone highway,
Came at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
For the sullen stream had no fear for him,
But he turned when safe on the other side
And builded a bridge to span the tide.
"Old Man", cried a fellow pilgrim near,
"You're wasting your time in building here.
Your journey will end with the closing day:
You never again will pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm deep and wide,
Why build you this bridge at eventide?"
The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come", he said
There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way,
This stream which has been as naught to me,
To that fair-haired youth may pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building that bridge for him."

(Will Allen Dromboole in "Shoeleather Faith" by Merv Rosell; No. 70)

No, influence cannot be measured or weighted. No one knows how far-reaching his influence is. You may help shape the lives of literally hundreds and hundreds of people - either for good or for bad. The decision is yours. Others are looking to you for guidance and for an example. You can help make or break another person or persons. Nietzsche (whose philosophy Hitler believed in and

acted on) one time felt the appeal of the Christian faith and “set himself to study it in the lives of some Christians he knew. He was acutely disappointed in their joyless natures and finally said, ‘These Christians will have to look more redeemed before I can believe in them.’” (Daily Readings; Sangster, 202)

We influence others for or against Christianity, according to the degree of genuine joy we manifest in our lives.

CONCLUSION:

As a steward of God you are responsible for the way you use your influence. Your influence may be one of the greatest powers you will ever possess - power for unlimited good or power for unlimited bad. As a Christian steward of influence, what you do to other people must be your main consideration. Will your actions lead others to fruitful living or to futile living? Will others be the better or the worse for having known and associated with you? Are you leading people to Christ or away from Christ? There is no middle ground. You are doing one or the other! You exercise an influence whether you like it or not - either for good or for bad. As a Christian you have an awesome responsibility to exercise a powerful influence for good and for God. You can do this through your words, through your actions, and through your prayers. If you exercise a godly influence by your words, actions, and prayers throughout life, you are sure to exercise a continuing influence even after you die. Of you it will be said, as it was said of Abel: *“Though he died, by faith he is still speaking.”* (Hebrews 11: 4b)

CHAPTER 15

QUESTIONS

1. Can one always tell when he is being influenced or when he is influencing another person? Just what is influence?
2. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The spread of Christianity depends largely upon how influential Christians are."
3. Is it possible for your influence to go out far beyond the personal contacts which you make with other persons?
4. From your knowledge of the Bible or from examples in past history or from contemporary life, share how influence for evil can be so terribly devastating to a family and/or to an entire nation.
5. What do you think Jesus meant when He said that His followers were the "salt of the earth"?
6. Share examples from your own life and your own experiences, how others have exercised a godly and positive influence on you - resulting in significant changes in your attitudes or actions or habits or decisions.
7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The Church and the Gospel will go forward best through the verbal witness of laymen, because more people can be reached than are reached through a well-prepared sermon from the pulpit." (Note I Thessalonians 1: 8)
8. Is it Biblically-supportable to say that "Every Christian is a Minister?"
9. In light of Scriptural teaching and in light of the widespread needs of the multitudes in our contemporary world, what should be the relationship between local Church Pastors/ Teachers and Lay Persons in the local Church?
10. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "Your actions speak so loud that I cannot hear your words."
11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The influence which loving action has on an unsaved husband is more powerful than the influence which debate and persuasive tactics have on an unsaved husband." (Note I Peter 3: 1)
12. From your own personal experience and observations, do you identify with the following statement? - "Children are probably shaped more by the silent attitudes of their parents, lived before them daily, than they are by the words of instruction which their parents give."

13. Tell why the statement expressed in the following words, made by well-meaning parents, is so erroneous and dangerous: “We will not influence our children in making decisions and choices in matters of religion?”
14. Is there objective evidence that prayer actually influences people to turn to God?
15. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statement: “God has not called all Christians to preach a sermon from behind a pulpit, but God has called every Christian to pray.”
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Probably the most effective way to help God carry out His redemptive purpose for this world is to pray, for through prayer, more people can be influenced to turn to God than through any other method.”
17. Do you believe that your life-style and attitudes and decisions will likely strongly influence your grandchildren and great-grandchildren, long after you have died? (Note Hebrews 11: 4 and Romans 14: 7)
18. Is there someone right now, among your family or friends or acquaintances, who is “standing at the crossroads of life” whom you could powerfully influence for good and for God?
19. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “We influence others for or against Christianity, according to the degree of genuine joy we manifest in our lives.”
20. In terms of your character, personhood, and influence, what would you most like people to say about you, after you die?

CHAPTER 16

THE STEWARDSHIP OF WORK

CHAPTER 16

SUBJECT: THE STEWARDSHIP OF WORK

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1: 27-31; 2: 15, 19-20

TEXT: *“This should be your ambition: to live a quiet life, minding your own business and doing your own work, just as we told you before.”* (I Thessalonians 4:11 , Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION: What is the Christian view of work? Work is not a necessary evil, the penalty for being a man. Work is not a mere nuisance or intrusion. Work is not meant to be an unbearable load, an unending drudgery. Work certainly is not meant to be avoided, avoided because of indolence and indifference and laziness. And never is man to make work his God. What then is the Christian attitude towards work? In brief, Christians are to see work as a gift from God.

- I. GOD CREATED WORK FOR MAN’S GOOD.
- II. WORK IS MAN’S OPPORTUNITY TO PERFECT GOD’S GOOD CREATION.
- III. WORK IS A SACRAMENT TO GOD.
- IV. THE REWARD FOR WORK WELL DONE IS MORE WORK TO DO.
- V. MAN IS TO WORSHIP GOD THROUGH HIS WORK.
- VI. MAN IS NOT ALWAYS TO WORK, BUT TO TAKE TIME FOR LEISURE AND RECREATION.

CONCLUSION: Let’s remind ourselves that we labor with God, and for God. May God take delight in all your labors!

CHAPTER 16

SUBJECT: THE STEWARDSHIP OF WORK

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1: 27-31; 2: 15, 19-20

TEXT: *“This should be your ambition: to live a quiet life, minding your own business and doing your own work, just as we told you before.”* (I Thessalonian 4:11, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION:

Work - people respond to it in many different ways. Some see work as a necessary evil, something that must be done in order to earn money to exist. Some say, “I have to work to keep the ‘wolf’ of poverty off my doorstep!” There are those who feel that work is the penalty of being a man!

Some see work as a nuisance and intrusion, something that interferes with their real interests in life. No enthusiasm in going to work! No creativity and no challenge!

Some see work as an almost unbearable drudgery. The modern industrial system is partly to blame for this attitude. Says C. S. Lewis, “My own idea is that modern industry is a radically hopeless system. You can improve wages, hours, conditions, etc., but all that doesn’t cure the deepest trouble; i.e., that numbers of people are kept all their lives doing dull repetition work which gives no full play to their facilities.” (God In The Dock; pg. 48)

Some see work as something to be avoided. Many in our society are basically lazy, as reflected in the fact that they have no desire to seek employment. They would rather live on welfare! They are not among the many worthy welfare recipients. They are glad to receive handouts - and that on a regular basis! They are the people who say (not jokingly, but rather seriously): “I love work. I can sit and watch people work all day long!” While others are working, these kind are sleeping! Wrote Paul about these idle persons, “Even while we were still there with you we gave you this rule: ‘He who does not work shall not eat.’” (II Thessalonian 3: 10, Living Bible) Notes John Stott, “Some people are very negative towards their job and give the impression that, if possible, work is something to be avoided. This view has been well expressed in this doggerel:

I don’t mind work
If I’ve nothing else to do
I quite admit it’s true
That now and then I shirk
Particularly boring kinds of work;
Don’t you?
But, on the whole,
I think it’s fair to say

Provided I can do it my own way
And that I need not start on it today--
I quite like work!

The same rather casual attitude to work was illustrated by the following message, which the head of a New York firm put on its notice board: 'Some time between starting and quitting time, without infringing on lunch periods, coffee breaks, rest periods, story-telling, ticket-selling, holiday planning, and the rehashing of yesterday's television programs, we ask that each employee try to find some time for a work break. This may seem radical, but it might aid steady employment and assure regular paychecks.'"

On the other end of the continuum, there are people who, far from avoiding work, overwork. They are workaholics. All they do all their waking time is work. They have an obsession. It is a work obsession. These persons worship work. They work through lunch hours, and are not satisfied to rest until a work project is completed. When one project is completed, they start another project, and often they have many projects going on simultaneously. They don't know how to relax. They work long hours, and seldom, if ever, take off a day for rest or recreation. They don't know the meaning of meaningful vacations. Work has become their god, and they even neglect their families because of their work.

Some workaholics are using their work as an escape from their homes. Because they are unhappy at home, they seek fulfillment through peer praise on their jobs. Others seek to escape their loneliness through their work. They reason, "What else is there in life. I might as well be working. At least when I am working I am not all alone!" Others are workaholics because they are trying to work off their sense of guilt in some area of their lives. They nearly kill themselves doing hard work, hoping that the labors of their hands will resolve the guilt of their hearts. Work becomes a form of substitute atonement, atoning for some failure in some private area of their life. Or some become workaholic to prove, either to themselves or to someone else, that they are worthy or powerful or successful.

What is the Christian view of work? Work is not a necessary evil, the penalty for being a man. Work is not a mere nuisance or intrusion. Work is not meant to be an unbearable load, an unending drudgery. Work certainly is not meant to be avoided, avoided because of indolence and indifference and laziness. And never is man to make work his God.

PROPOSITION:

What then is the Christian attitude towards work? In brief, Christians are to see work as a gift from God. In saying this generally, we can specifically say several things about work, from a Biblical viewpoint: (1) God created work for man's good; (2) Work is man's opportunity to perfect God's good creation; (3) Work is a sacrament to God; (4) The reward for work well done is more work to do; (5) Work is man's opportunity to worship God, for work is one important form of worship. (6) Man is not always to work, but to take time for leisure and recreation.

I. GOD CREATED WORK FOR MAN'S GOOD.

Work is a necessity, because of the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.." (Genesis 3: 17, 19) However, before the Fall responsibility was given to man: "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." (Genesis 2: 15) "In Eden, Adam tilled and tended the garden as the Lord had instructed him because he wanted to; although he perspired and needed rest, necessity and desire were one thing to him. In exile, Adam worked because he had to. He toiled as before, but the joy had gone out of it, and only necessity was left." (Christianity Today; August 27, 1971; pg. 7)

Work can be transmuted from a mere necessity for earning a living into an opportunity for realizing personal selfhood, and personal fulfillment. Through the redeeming grace of Christ, man can come to see work as a means of making and fulfilling himself, and not merely as a means of earning a livelihood. Work is for the purpose of fulfilling man. God created a world filled with raw products which man is to creatively work on, and , through working on them, to make himself. "The highest reward that a man can receive for doing his best for the glory of the Lord and for the good of his fellow men is not what he gets for his work, but what he becomes by it." (Sermon Builder; Sept. 1971, pg. 23)

Character comes through God working on us, and us working for God, and character is the only thing that we can take with us into eternity; therefore, work actually helps prepare us for eternity. "Discipleship is the 'work' for which we were created. The effects of discipleship are the only rewards from our time on earth that we can take with us into the next world. Our growth in character, energized by the Light over us, will endure. It is designated for life in eternity...There is no salvation from work; there is only salvation in work - work, that is, caught up in discipleship." (Christianity Today; Aug. 27, 71; pg. 8)

It cannot be denied that, because of the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden, work has become more difficult. Genesis 3: 17-19 records: "To Adam he (God) said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, "you must not eat of it,"

'Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it
all the days of your life.
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.'"

Man still works by the sweat of his brow to make a living. And anyone who tries to raise a garden knows all about the thorns and thistles which grow faster than the bean plants.

But even though the challenge and affects of work have been changed since the Fall of man, the fact still remains that work was a part of God's original intention for man - ever before the Fall. Our Scripture reading today (Genesis 1: 27-31; 2: 15, 19-20) points this out.

Work was given to man by God before man fell into sin. Therefore, in spite of the affects that the Fall has had upon work, we must conclude that work is not a penalty from God for being a man. If work is God-given, then this means that work is sacred. Notes Dr. Howard Hendricks, "The average layman has the idea that his vocation is his penalty. That's what he does five days a week in order to 'serve the Lord' on Sunday. Actually, what takes place on Sunday should equip him for the service he's going to perform all week." (Leadership Magazine; Summer 1980; pg. 109)

II WORK IS MAN'S OPPORTUNITY TO PERFECT GOD'S GOOD CREATION.

God created a good world, but not a perfected world. God created raw products in order that man may use the raw products to produce a completed product. God is the great Creator. Man is created in God's image and likeness. Therefore, man is a little creator, created by God to create good out of nature's raw materials. God pronounced His world as good but not perfected. It is left to man to perfect God's incomplete world.

Work is one way in which man experiences the purpose of his unique creation - namely to glorify God by being creative. The result of man and God working together in creation is fellowship. Man is totally dependent upon God, but God has chosen to be dependent upon man as well, if God's creation is to be completed!

God did not create finished products. He leaves this up to man! God didn't create houses; he created trees. God could have created ready-made houses for man to live in, but, instead, God gives man trees from which man builds houses.

God intends for man to subdue the earth, that is, to use the raw materials to create good and useful tools and products. However, while man is to subdue the earth, man is not to exploit the earth's resources. Those resources are God-given to be used for God's glory and for man's good. To waste the earth's resources and to pollute the earth's atmosphere is to sin against the Creator who intended the earth to be a blessing to mankind, not a curse!

Man's call to domination over the earth is not a call to careless exploitation but to responsible stewardship. The God-granted power to dominate can become a temptation to 'lord over' other people and to exploit the world's resources for selfish use. Man's lordship over the earth is subject to God's lordship over all of created matter.

III. WORK IS A SACRAMENT TO GOD.

“The world is one, secular and sacred, and the chief way to serve the Lord is in our daily work.” (The Common Ventures of Life; Trueblood) Wrote Paul, “Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Ephesians 4: 26) Our eating, our drinking, our playing, our work must all be done for the glory of God.

The work we do must contribute to God and man and the world, and not take away from any of these relationships. “There is no substitute for work for those who are physically and mentally capable. But we must re-emphasize the reason for labor. It must be unselfish in its motive. It must contribute to the community and the world rather than take away from it. Each one must be challenged to render his unique service.” (Sermon Builder; Sept. 1971, pg. 17)

It is for this reason that Christians should not sell or deal with spirituous liquors or with tobacco, for neither of these things contribute to God or man, and neither make for a more beautiful world.

Work should not only bring glory to God and contribution to the world’s betterment, but work should give a sense of dignity to the worker. “The tragedy of so many millions in our modern age is that they have lost most of the sense of the dignity of the day’s work. They have no sense of its dignity because the principle of division of labor has been carried to such a degree that it is extremely hard for each individual to feel that his small part has any meaning in the whole. Of all the evil things that industrialism has done to the human race, this is one of the worst.” (The Common Ventures of Life; pg. 94)

Finding no reward of joy in work, many seek a sense of satisfaction and reward from the spending of money. But mere spending of money often does not bring personal satisfaction. True satisfaction comes by creative involvement in a worthwhile job, and by liberally giving of one’s material means to help meet the necessity of those in dire need.

“There are two ways to be wealthy - one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants.” (E. S. Jones in Abundant Living; pg. 300) Blessed is the man who has fewness of wants.

What is the Christian’s responsibility toward the money he earns? “While you are lifting your economic level to the level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn. The tithe is a token - a token that you are not owner, but over. Just as you pay rent as a token of acknowledgment of the ownership of another, so you pay a tithe to acknowledge the ownership of God over the nine tenths. When the level of your needs has been reached, then all you earn belongs to the needs of others, not as charity, but as right and justice.” (Abundant Living; pg. 301)

How should a Christian choose his life's work? "The concept of vocation changes radically and crucially the way in which a young person approaches his life work or preparation for it. Apart from this concept his manor question often have to do with probable income, personal advancement, manner of living and choice of location. There is no doubt that many now choose their work with these specific considerations uppermost in their minds, for this is the 'natural' way. However, one who chooses in the light of vocation has a wholly different standard. His central interest is not in money or professional advancement, but in how he can make the best strokes to help clean up the mess of the world before it is too late. His motto is, 'Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.' The young person who has caught the vision implicit in the idea of vocation looks out at the world and tries to see how its need can be matched by his own latent powers. This, as millions know, is the way in which Albert Schweitzer determined to study medicine after he had already proved himself successful in another profession. The man who lives by the principle of vocation has substituted concern for advancement." (Common Ventures of Life; pg. 88, 89)

IV. THE REWARD FOR WORK WELL DONE IS MORE WORK TO DO.

In the parable of the Talents, the two stewards who faithfully invested their God-given talents, received this blessing from God: "Well done, good and faithful servants; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matthew 25: 22) Reward for work well done in little things is increased responsibility and work in greater things. He who invests few talents will receive more talents, to do more work.

"Our happiest moments are not those in which we ask how to be happy, but rather those in which we so lose ourselves in some creative task, which seems to us important, that we forget to take our own emotional pulse. When we plant trees, write books, build houses or make roads, we often find that we have been having a wonderfully good time and that we are not immediately driven to do something to have 'fun'. We have had, all along, something better than anything which commercialized and self-conscious entertainment can ever provide." (Ibid; pg. 93)

The worldly-minded man "says that leisure is man's true end, and so he builds one labor-saving device after another, shortens the work week, lengthens the pay and vacations, and waits for the day when machines will do all the work." (Christianity Today; Aug. 27, 1971; pg. 7) And yet, with increase in leisure and commercial entertainment, there is an increase in boredom, which is another way of saying that life does not consist in the abundance of leisure and entertainment a man can consume, but rather in the amount he can give to his fellow man by means of the creative labors of his hands. Happiness comes not by grasping but rather by giving. Man is built to work, not to be idle.

Scriptures look upon the idle man with scorn: "Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." (Proverbs 6: 6). "A son who gathers in summer is prudent, but a son who sleeps in harvest brings shame." (Proverbs 10: 5)

“Even while we are still there with you we gave you this rule: ‘He who does not work shall not eat’ Yet we hear that some of you are living in laziness, refusing to work, and wasting your time in gossiping. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we appeal to such people - we command them - to quiet down, get to work, and earn their own living.” (2 Thessalonian 3: 10-12, Living Bible)

Christ came to save man - not merely from his sins - but in order that man might serve. The Scriptures often speak of “the labor of love”, which means that the true Christian often labors for God, man, and the Church with no expectations of monetary benefits. Far from expecting monetary reward, he gives not only his talents to the Church but also his money. Wrote Paul, “On the first day of the week let everyone put so much by him, according to his financial prosperity, so that there will be no need for collections when I come.” (I Corinthians 16: 2, Phillips) “After all, the important thing is to be willing to give as much as we can - that is what God accepts, and no one is asked to give what he has not got. Of course, I don’t mean that others should be relieved to an extent that leaves you in distress. It is a matter of share and share alike. At present your plenty should supply their need, and then at some future date their plenty may supply your need. In that way we share with each other, as the Scripture says:

‘He that gathered much had nothing over,
And he that gathered little had no lack’.”
(II Corinthians 8: 13-18, Phillips)

God asks us not only to give our money to Him, but He asks us to give our time and talents to Him. “Tony Hart, a twenty-eight year old social worker in the city of Los Angeles has been called a one-man peace corps. For nine years he has helped blind, crippled, and deformed children. A few weeks ago an article appeared in the Los Angeles County employee magazine that said, ‘The real story of Tony Hart is told in the shining eyes of a crippled child as he takes his first step or in the tears of joy in a mother’s eye as her son walks into her arms. Tony Hart may never become rich and famous, but he is already a true success - - just ask the children who will never forget him.’” (Sermon Builder; pg.3; Sept. 1971)

V. MAN IS TO WORSHIP GOD THROUGH HIS WORK

Man is not to worship work, but man is to worship God through his work. How do you worship God in your work?

First, by communing with God as you carry on your daily work. To ‘pray without ceasing’ is to commune with God as your closest Friend throughout your day, through all the changes and chances of life. This certainly includes the time you are working. Although your conscious mind must be on your work, your subconscious mind can be saturated with God!

Know that God is your constant companion while you work! Learn to walk and to talk with

God as you carry on your daily work. Learn to “practice the presence of God”, as a Brother Lawrence would say. “Brother Lawrence, a French monk who lived some centuries ago, spent ten years in rugged, rigid devotional discipline; then, he found himself released to the ever-present Christ. Always Christ was with him, Brother Lawrence said, just as much in the kitchen of the monastery (where he did the pots and pans) as at the Blessed Sacrament.” (A Faith To Grow By; pg. 36)

Wrote Brother Lawrence, “The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.” (The Practice of the Presence of God; pg. 6)

Do you sense God as close to you in the office or the factory or at home as you do at the blessed sacrament? Work is as sacred to God as the blessed sacrament, for God is present in both!

Susanna Wesley had a prayer: “Help me, Lord, to remember that religion is not to be confined to the Church or the closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation, but that everywhere I am in Thy presence.”

Remember, God is with you just as much as you work on Monday as when you worship on Sunday. And you can worship God as earnestly through your work on Monday as through your prayers on Sunday. (Don’t misunderstand, we are not meant to use this argument to neglect attendance at God’s house of worship. We are clearly commanded to worship regularly with God’s people - Hebrews 10: 25).

Work and prayer are simply two ways in which man and God cooperate together to change the world. Someone said, “Prayer is work; prayer works; prayer leads to work.” Seldom does God answer prayer for a person, but rather with a person. God’s power is coupled with man’s availability to accomplish a great miracle of love. God and man work together to accomplish the seemingly impossible!

Says C. S. Lewis, “We know that we can act and that our actions produce results...Most of the events that go on in the universe are indeed out of our control, but not all. It is like a play in which the scene and the general outline of the story is fixed by the author, but certain minor details are left for the actors to improvise. It may be a mystery why He should have allowed us to cause real events at all, but it is no odder that He should call us to cause them by praying than by any other method...He made His own plan or plot of history such that it admits a certain amount of free play and can be modified in response to our prayers...The two methods by which we are allowed to produce events may be called work and prayer. Both are alike in this respect - that in both we try to produce a state of affairs which God has not (or at any rate not yet) seen fit to provide ‘on His own’.” (God In The Dock; pg. 105, 106) Not only can you worship God in your work by communing with God throughout the day,

but also you can worship God in your work, secondly, by allowing God to be your partner in all of your work. Whether you are working in a factory or walking in your garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3: 8 implies that, before Adam's fall into sin, God and Adam walked together in the garden of Eden in blessed communion), God wants to be your companion and partner.

Work is not a penalty for being a man. Sometimes I view our house cat lying around, and I momentarily become jealous. In fact I sometimes say to our cat, 'Muffin, you surely have an easy life. All you seem to do is eat and sleep!' But then I think of how miserable it would be to only eat and sleep, and never to work! I begin to see that work is not a curse but a blessing! No opportunity for Creative Involvement in work may be one of the unbearable penalties of hell.

Smith died and regained consciousness in the next world. He looked out over a vast expanse of pleasant country. After resting comfortably for a while in a delightful spot, he began to get a little bored. He called out, "Is there anybody here?"

An attendant, appropriately dressed in white, appeared and said gravely, "What do you want?"

"What can I have" asked Smith

"Whatever you want."

"May I have something to eat?"

They brought him delicious dishes, even the things he liked best on earth. Smith was having a wonderful time eating, sleeping, and calling for more good things.

But presently he wanted something more. He called for games. They came in profusion. Then he called for books and read with excitement and pleasure. He called for anything that struck his fancy and received it in abundant measure. But at last the final boredom caught up with him, and he shouted, "I want something to DO!"

The attendant appeared and said, 'I am sorry, but that is the only thing we cannot give you here.'

By this time Smith was frantic for something to do and in his terrible frustration cried out, "I'm sick and tired of everything here; I'd rather go to hell!"

"Where do you think you are?" asked the attendant.

God gave Adam work to do before Adam fell into sin. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it...Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field." (Genesis 2: 15, 19-20)

The Scripture indicates that God and Adam were partners. God created the animals and man named the animals (Genesis 2: 20). God also gave man the responsibility to rule the animals. "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1: 28).

God did not do for Adam what God equipped Adam to do for himself! Adam is not to work independently of God, however, any more than God works independently of man. God has chosen to be dependent upon man. Man is to acknowledge his total dependance upon God. In fact God says to man, "Without me you can do nothing." God and man are to be partners in all of life and in all of work.

Stanley Tam is a modern-day Christian, an unusual witness, and a very successful businessman. When he started his business years ago, he determined to make God his 'senior' partner. No decisions would be made without consulting God, his 'senior' partner. God honored this partnership, and Stanley Tam, now a multi-millionaire, continues to prosper in his business, but more than this, Stanley Tam has used his business as his opportunity to witness and to share Christ with many unsaved persons. He has won scores to Christ, right in his executive office! Stanley Tam worships God in his work, in both of the ways thus far outlined; He communes with God as he carries on his daily work, and also he is serious in allowing God to be his partner in all of his business transactions. We too, whether we are an employer or an employee, must allow God to be our partner in all of our work.

When God is our partner in our work, the quality of our work will be increased. Why? Because if God is truly our partner in all our work, then work is significant. Work becomes, not only an opportunity to earn money but also an opportunity to please our employers and most of all to please God who oversees and evaluates our work! Wrote Paul to the mass of workers in his day (workers who were slaves in those early days of Christianity - the counterpart to employees today): "Slaves, obey your masters; be eager to give them your very best. Serve them as you would Christ. Don't work hard only when he is looking; work hard with gladness all the time, as though working for Christ, doing the will of God with all your hearts. Remember, the Lord will pay you for each good thing you do." (Ephesians 6: 5-8, Living Bible)

If we work as if we were working for Christ, then we will receive our salary as if receiving it from Christ! Diligence in the working, and gratitude in the receiving of the pay!

Notes John Stott, "The story is told of man who was taking a walk down a country lane, when he came across a stone quarry in which a number of men were working. He questioned several of them about what they were doing. The first replied irritably, 'Can't you see? I'm hewing stone.' The second answered without looking up, 'I'm earning f 100 a week.' But when the same question was put to the third man, he stopped, put his pick down, stood up, stuck out his chest and said, 'If you want to know what I'm doing, I'm building a cathedral.'

So it is a matter of how far we can see. The first man could not see beyond his pick, and the second beyond his Friday paycheck. But the third man looked beyond his tools and his wages to the ultimate end he was serving. He was cooperating with the architect. However small his particular contribution, he was helping to construct a building for the worship of God.

So ~~laborers~~, 'work is worship,' provided that we can see how our job contributes, in however small and indirect a way, to the forwarding of God's purpose for mankind. Then whatever we do can be done for the glory of God (I Corinthians 10: 31)."

We are trying to answer the question: "How can man worship God through his work?" So far, we have said, first, that man can worship God in his work by communing with God throughout the day as he is working. In other words, practicing the presence of God like Brother Lawrence did as he communed with God while he did his kitchen work. Second, man can worship God in his work by allowing God to be his partner in all his work, like Stanley Tam does when he carries on his business with God as his 'senior' partner.

Third, man can worship God in his work by sharing God with others as he works. There are two main places where every believer is to work - the local Church and the place of his employment. God intends for every Christian to work as a volunteer within the Church, and also to work as a wage earner in a chosen vocation.

Each Christian is a minister. Each Christian is to minister God's love to others, through the special gifts and abilities and talents which God has given. This ministry of love and labor is to be carried on both in the local Church and in the world of so-called secular employment.

Every Christian should be involved in a definite task in the local Church. "Every Christian a worker" is a good motto. Says the young Christian, "Use me or lose me." The Church is not to be a spectator sport, with the majority sitting on bleachers 'cheering on' the over-worked minority. Don't be a one-hour-a-week 'pew warmer'; become an active participant in the action of the Church. Christians are happiest when they find their spiritual gifts and begin using them within the local Church. The happiest Christians are the most involved and committed Christians - involved in redemptive work within the Church. The uninvolved, spectator Christian, sitting on the sidelines, eventually becomes the unhappy, depressed, and critical Christian.

Make yourself available to the Church's leadership. Satisfied Christians are serving Christians - serving gladly and eagerly. Their rewards come in satisfaction because of a job well done, and in knowledge that God's truth is being shared. It is this which gives motivation to a worker in the local Church. Says famous Christian educator, Dr. Howard Hendricks, "The time to give members some responsibility is when they join the Church. People need to know we're not operating the Church of the Sacred Rest." (Leadership; Summer 1980; pg. 110)

But not only is man to share God with others in his work within the Church, but man is to share God with others in his work outside of the Church - in what is commonly called 'secular' work.

Is life really to be divided into the 'secular' and the 'sacred'? Is life meant to be compartmentalized? Is God more near and dear on Sunday in Church than He is on Monday in the office? Is God confined to a 'box', formed by the four walls of a Church Building on Sunday morning? To be sure, God is in His holy sanctuary, and we ought to be regularly in the sanctuary to meet the Lord! But is this the place of God's abode? Is the Temple of the Lord a building?

What saith the Scriptures? "Ye are the temple of the Lord", says God to His people. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (I Corinthians 6: 19, 20)

How can we honor God in our bodies? By allowing God to dwell in us and to express Himself through us at all times - on Sunday morning in the Sunday School class that we teach and on Monday morning in the business meeting that we lead.

The Church is not a building. God does not dwell in buildings, but in human hearts. You are the Temple of God! So wherever you go, God goes. God goes with you everywhere - into the sanctuary, into the out-of-doors, into your home, into your business. And whether you are at Church, or at school, or at home, or at business, or at recreation, God is in you and wishes you to share Him with others.

Thus, work is as important as worship! In fact, work is a form of worship! Work is where you worship God! Work is where you share God!

"The Great Commission given by Jesus Christ to His Church now appears broader and more magnificent than ever before...He is telling us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel.

"Does not all the world have more than a geographical reference? Christians are to penetrate with the Gospel of Jesus Christ every area of the world's life and activity - the worlds of politics and government, of economics and industry, of education and science, of the arts and literature, and of leisure time and entertainment.

"Jesus said that Christians are 'the salt of the earth'. 'Salt' will save society from insipidity and putrefaction. 'Salt' will preserve the moral values upon which society rests and depends for survival. 'Salt' will give taste to whatever it touches. 'Salt' will make human existence meaningful and worthwhile." (Herald magazine; July/Aug. 1980; pg. 8)

VI. MAN IS NOT ALWAYS TO WORK, BUT TO TAKE TIME FOR LEISURE AND RECREATION.

It is probably only a legend, but it has a lot of truth in it to ponder. The story is told of a man who came upon the Apostle John (the beloved disciple whom Jesus loved deeply) and found this beloved apostle playing with a bow and arrows. "What!", said the man to John, "you are spending your time playing rather than meditating on the Scriptures and serving humanity!"

John the apostle defended his play by pointing to the bow. Said John to the man, "What would happen to the strength and the power of the bow string if it were always stretched and tense and were never released?" "Well", said the man to John, "the bow string would lose some of its power and its ability to send the arrow!"

"Yes", said John, "and all study and all service without periods of play, causes one to lose strength and effectiveness in that study and service. The bow string must sometimes be released."

Someone wisely said, "A strained piety is a dangerous piety." Holiness and joy are not contradictory but compatible. All work and no play makes one strained and stressful.

It is important that one guard against 'workaholism'. Yes, laziness and indolence must be avoided like the plague, but so must 'workaholism'. As in so many areas of life, there must be a balance between work and play in life.

Be sure to set time aside for play. Bear cubs and tiger kittens play. Children play. Healthy adults play too - whether touch football or table games. Play should be to the Christian life what dessert is to a good meal. Every family should play together - for this draws the whole family together. It is true that the family that prays together and the family which plays together, stays together. Don't get too involved in spectator sports, however; rather, get involved in play together as a family.

Laughter in the home is so important and therapeutic. The Bible says: "A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones." (Proverbs 17: 22)

Says E. Stanley Jones: "There are three levels of laughter: the lowest level, the one who laughs only at his own jokes; a little higher, the one who laughs at the jokes of others; third, the one who can laugh at himself. I would add as the highest, the one who laughs at the rhythm of things - a constitutionally happy laugh."

Someone asked the sainted Rufus Moseley, "Did Jesus ever laugh?" And Rufus replied, "Well, I don't know, but he certainly fixed me up so I could laugh."

Wholesome laughter has a cleansing affect and relaxing affect upon the nervous system. It is healing and imparts joy to others. Always take time to laugh and to play

SLOW ME DOWN, LORD

Give me, amidst the confusion of my day,
the calmness of the everlasting hills.
Break the tension of my nerves and muscles
with the soothing music of the singing streams
that live in my memory.
Help me to know
the magical restorative power of sleep.
Teach me the art of taking minute vacations...
of slowing down to look at a flower,
to chat with a friend,
to pat a dog,
to read a few lines from a good book,
Slow me down, Lord,
and inspire me to send my roots deep
into the soil of life's enduring values,
that I may grow
towards the stars of my greater destiny.

Amen

(Daily Readings from William Sangster; pg. 368)

CONCLUSION:

How are Christians to view work? Christians must see work as something created by God for man's good.

Christians must see work as man's opportunity to perfect God's good creation. Believers see work as a sacrament to God. Reward for work well done is more work to do!

Christians must see work as man's opportunity to worship God. Christians worship God in their work when they commune with God throughout their daily work. Practicing the presence of God as they are working! Christians worship God in their work when they allow God to be their partner in all their work. And also, Christians worship God in their work when they share God with others while they work, when they share God with the words of their mouths and with the actions of their lives.

Let's remind ourselves that we labor with God, and for God. May God take delight in all our labors! God also is pleased when believers take time for play and for recreation.

It is not only prayer that gives God glory, but work as well.

“Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, white-washing a wall,
Driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God
some glory if being in His grace you do it as your duty.

To go to communion worthily gives God great glory, but
to take food in thankfulness and temperance gives Him glory too.

To lift up the hands in prayer gives God glory, but a man
with a dungfork in his hand, a woman with a sloppail, give Him glory too.

He is so great that all things give Him glory if you mean they should.”

Gerard Manley Hopkins

CHAPTER 16

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the basic attitudes of persons who see “Work” as:
 - a. A necessary evil
 - b. A nuisance and intrusion
 - c. An unbearable drudgery
 - d. As something to be avoided
2. Describe the basic attitude of a “Workaholic”, and share several various motivations (both conscious and subconscious) for “Workaholism”.
3. Why should Christians view “Work” as a Gift from God?
4. How did Adam view “work” after the historic Fall in the Garden of Eden, in contrast to the way he viewed and experienced “work” before the Fall?
5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “The highest reward that a man can receive for doing his best for the glory of the Lord and for the good of his fellow men is not what he gets for his work but what he becomes by it.”
6. Give your interpretation and application of the following statement: “Character comes through God working on us, and us working for God, and character is the only thing that we can take with us into eternity; therefore, work actually helps prepare us for eternity.”
7. Should a believer look at his daily job (work) as a penalty from God because of the entrance of sin into the world because of the Fall, or should he look at his work as an opportunity to serve God and his fellow men and as an opportunity to perfect his character and to prepare himself for eternity in heaven?
8. Tell what is meant by the statement: “Work is man’s opportunity to perfect God’s Good Creation.”
9. Give specific illustrations to demonstrate the truth of the following statements: “Man is created in God’s image and likeness. Therefore, man is a little creator, created by God to create good out of nature’s raw materials.”
10. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “The world is one, secular and sacred, and the chief way to serve the Lord is in our daily work.”
11. What is one of the greatest evils which industrialism has done to the human race?

12. If having abundance of material possessions is one way to be wealthy, what is the other (and far better) way to be wealthy?
13. Tell how you respond or react to the following statement by E. Stanley Jones, regarding a Christian's financial stewardship: "When the level of your needs has been reached, then all you earn belongs to the needs of others, not as charity, but as right and justice."
14. What does it mean for a Christian young person to choose his life's work in the light of 'vocation', rather than in the light of 'probable income' or 'a personal advancement' or 'manner of living' or 'choice of location'?
15. From the Christian viewpoint illustrate the truth of the following statement: "Reward for work well done is more work to do". (Note Matthew 25: 23)
16. Illustrate from your own personal life, the truth of the following conviction: "Our happiest moments are not those in which we ask how to be happy, but rather those in which we so lose ourselves in some creative task, which seems to us important, that we forget to take our own emotional pulse."
17. As a Christian believer who seeks to live by the truths of the Christian value system, tell how you would respond to a person who declared the following: "Leisure is man's true end, and therefore it is important to build many labor-saving devices and to shorten the work week and to lengthen the pay and vacations, and to anticipate the day when machines will do all the work."
18. According to Matthew 28: 19-20, what is the greatest work which Christ has assigned to every true Christian?
19. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statements: "Happiness comes not by grasping, but rather by giving. Man is built to work, not to be idle. Life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesseth. It is more blessed to give than it is to receive. The more one gives himself away to others, the more he finds himself and the more he truly is fulfilled." (Note Proverbs 6: 6; 10: 5; 2 Thessalonian 3: 10-12; I Corinthians 16: 2; II Corinthians 8: 13-15)
20. Share how you have practiced and are "practicing the presence of God", as you are involved in your daily work. Do you sense God as close to you in your office or in your factory or in your shop or in your home, as you do at the blessed sacrament in your local Church? Do you believe that work is as sacred to God as the blessed sacrament?
21. Do you identify with the following prayer (by Susanna Wesley) so much that you would be willing often to make it your own personal prayer? - 'Help me, Lord, to remember that religion is not confined to the Church or closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation, but that everywhere I am in thy presence.'

22. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement: "Work and Prayer are simply two ways in which man and God cooperate together to change the world."
23. Give your personal interpretation and application of the following statements: "Prayer is work; prayer works; prayer leads to work."
24. From your own personal experience or from your observation of the life of another person, give an illustration that demonstrates the truth of the following statements: "God's power, coupled with man's availability, accomplishes great miracles of love. God and man, working together, can accomplish the seemingly impossible!"
25. When God is our Partner in all of our daily work, why will the quality of our work be greatly improved?
26. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If we work as if we were working for Christ, then we will receive our salary as if receiving it from Christ! Diligence in the working, and gratitude in the receiving of the pay!" (Note I Corinthians 10: 31)
27. As it relates to a Christian's relationship to his local Church, tell what is meant by the statement: "Use me, or lose me!"
28. Is the local Church meant to be like a "spectator sport", with the majority of people sitting on the bleachers "cheering on" the over-worked minority, or is the local Church meant to be a place where each believer may use his spiritual, God-given gifts to build up all the other believers within the local Church, through loving, self-forgetful service? Within your own local Church what specifically do you do to help build up (edify) the other believers, through the use of your spiritual gifts?
29. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The uninvolved, spectator Christian, sitting on the sidelines (in his pew) eventually becomes the unhappy, depressed, and critical Christian!"
30. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The time to give members some responsibility is when they join the Church. People need to know we're not operating the Church of the 'Sacred Rest'."
31. Is life really to be divided into the 'secular' and the 'sacred'? Is God more near and dear to you on Sunday in Church than He is to you on Monday in the office? Is God confined to a 'box', formed by the four walls of a Church Building on Sunday morning?
32. Is the 'Temple of the Lord' a building? (Note I Corinthians 6: 19-20)
33. Do you believe that 'Work' is a form of 'Worship'? Why or why not?

34. When Jesus referred to Christians as the “Salt of the earth” (Matthew 5: 13), what did He mean? Do you believe Christians are to be ‘isolationists’ from the world of men, or do you believe Christians are to penetrate with the Gospel of Jesus Christ every area of the world’s life and activity - the worlds of politics and government, of economics and industry, of education and science, of the arts and literature, and of leisure time and entertainment?
35. Tell how you respond or react to the following quotation:
- “It is not only prayer that gives God glory but work. Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, white-washing a wall, driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God some glory if being in His grace you do it as your duty. To go to communion worthily gives God great glory, but to take food in thankfulness and temperance gives Him glory too. To lift up the hands in prayer gives God glory, but a man with a dungfork in his hand, a woman with a sloppail, give Him glory too. He is so great that all things give Him glory if you mean they should.”
36. Have you set time apart for play, and for recreation, in your own personal life and for your spouse and children (family)? Why is this so important, and what Biblical support do you have for doing so?

CHAPTER 17

THE STEWARDSHIP OF TALENTS

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SUBJECT: THE STEWARDSHIP OF TALENTS

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 25: 14-30

TEXT: *“For the man who uses well what he is given shall be given more, and he shall have abundance. But from the man who is unfaithful, even what little responsibility he has shall be taken from him.”* (Matthew 25: 29, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION: The subject of stewardship is central to an understanding of life from a Biblical viewpoint. Stewardship in the Gospels is related to preparedness for Christ’s Second Coming.

I. GOD-GIVEN TALENT

II. CORPORATE DEPENDENCE

III. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

CONCLUSION: The talents we receive are not our own, but are entrusted to us by the Master, to be invested, developed, and increased. Love is the channel through which our talents are expressed within the corporate setting of the Church of Christ. Talents, unmotivated by love, are misused and wasted. Before the Master all men will individually stand to give a stewardship accounting. Either we will be identified with the self-protective, self-assertive, unenterprising group who will receive their just judgment of damnation, or we will stand with the redeemed who are the self-surrendered, self-accessible, daring, enterprising persons who will receive an award of eternal life for their productive endeavors. Which group will we be in? The choice is ours.

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INTRODUCTION:

The subject of stewardship is central to an understanding of life from a Biblical viewpoint. Stewardship in the Gospels is related to preparedness for Christ’s Second Coming. The importance of such preparedness is illustrated by a series of parables about Christ’s advent. Jesus told the saying about Noah’s Flood (Matthew 24: 36-41), parable of the Thief (Matthew 24: 42-44), parable of Faithful and Unfaithful Servants (Matthew 24: 45-61), parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25: 1-13).

The parable of the Talents is next in succession, followed by the parable of the sheep and goats. (Matthew 25: 31-46)

For an understanding of Stewardship, we must investigate the parable of the talents. To supplement our understanding, we must also look at Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12 which both speak about talents and gifts.

PROPOSITION:

Using these three passages as basis for our study, there are at least three specific observations that we may make about talents: (1) Talents are God-given, (2) Talents must be developed within and used for the corporate body of Christ, (3) Each person must give an individual stewardship accounting before God at the Last Day.

C. H. Dodd in ‘The Parables of the Kingdom’ says about the parable of the Talents: “It is surely evident that the central interest lies in the scene of the reckoning, and in particular in the position of the cautious servant, whose hopeful complacency receives so rude a rebuff.” (Pg. 118) Because this is the central focus of the parable, it is very important that we give special attention to the third point which discusses individual responsibility at the Last Day.

I. GOD-GIVEN TALENT.

The first important observation to make is that God is Sovereign of life who gives to every man as He alone sees best. Paul speaks of God's sovereign apportionment of gifts when he writes, "All these (achievements and abilities) are inspired and brought to pass by one and the same (Holy) Spirit, who apportions to each person individually (exactly) as He chooses." In the parable, the master delivered unto them his goods. He gave, and they received.

Paul declares in Romans 12: 3, that "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith," and that gifts differ "according to the grace that is given to us."

The importance of diverse gifts is illustrated by the analogy of the members of the human body. Paul asks, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body, and if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." (I Corinthians 12: 15)

To be jealous of another person's talent, intellect, faculty, capacity, or quality, is to express resentment towards the Almighty God who has apportioned talents according to His sovereign will. This does not mean that one cannot view another person as an example to follow, but this is different than holding bitter resentment against God. If God gives me only one talent, I must accept it with as much joy and responsibility as the five-talented man. I am just as important and responsible to God as he is.

Paul well understood the sovereignty of God when he asked, "O man, who art thou that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay...?" (Romans 9: 20-21)

Because God is sovereign and the Giver of all good gifts, man has no place for boasting. To deflate the proud and boastful in Corinth, Paul asked, "What have you that was not given to you? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received?" (I Corinthians 4: 7)

II. CORPORATE DEPENDENCE.

Paul taught that our individual gifts are to be developed within and used for the corporate body of Christ. He wrote to the Roman Christians, "For as in one physical body we have many parts (organs, members) and all of these parts do not have the same function or use, so we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ, the Messiah, and individually we are parts one of another - mutually dependent on one another." (Romans 12: 4-5, Amplified)

In speaking of individual difference in gifts, Paul also used the analogy of the human body in I Corinthians, to show the importance of each part. "God has so adjusted (mingled, harmonized and subtly proportioned the parts of the whole) body, giving the greater honor and richer endowment to the inferior parts which lack (apparent importance). So that there is no division or discord or lack of adaption (of the parts of the body to each other), but the members all alike have a mutual interest in and care for one another." (I Corinthians 12: 24-25, Amplified Bible)

Paul is saying that God has given talents as a means of glorifying God and expressing mutual love for one another. Love is the unifying and integrating bond that enables all to live harmoniously together as diverse parts to form the whole. Love forbids carnal striving and competition and encourages cooperation and concern.

The body can only function as all members and organs are working harmoniously together. If one organ is improperly functioning, other organs are affected. Each is important to insure the proper functioning of the whole body. Each vein and artery is important for the carrying of the blood to all parts of the body. The heart can't function without the arteries and veins. Each cell is dependent upon the arteries for nourishment. To lift the arm, the muscles must cooperate, some contracting and others relaxing.

Through the use of this analogy of the body, Paul shows the purpose of talents and the setting in which they are developed.

There are many different gifts and talents. (1) There are great intellectual gifts. The Bible never discourages scholarship as a goal to be pursued, but places a high premium on it. The Christian intellectual must be humble in his accomplishments, since he must realize the vast amount of knowledge that he has not tapped. (The intellectual who is touchy about always being called the right title of 'Doctor' is likely the victim of intellectual pride.)

The most influential intellect is a humble Christian, who realizes that all knowledge and intellectual capacity is given by God.

Sitting in the midst of the Greenville College faculty in Greenville, Illinois (where I attended college) during a morning chapel, I was thrilled as I realized the large scope of the intellectual abilities that were represented. How wonderful it is to know that most, if not all, the Greenville faculty, are humble servants of Christ who have surrendered their talents to God.

Some of God's effectual servants throughout the centuries have been intellectuals - Paul, Augustine, Luther, Wesley, and others.

(2) God also has given talents which involve the use of the hands. William Barclay tells the story of a shoemaker. "There was an old shoemaker who once had wished to become a minister, but the way had never opened up. He was the friend of a young divinity student; and when the lad one day was called to his first charge the old man asked him for one favor. He asked to be allowed always to make the lad's shoes, as long as life remained to him, so that he might feel that the preacher was wearing his shoes in the pulpit into which he could never come himself." (Pg. 96, Barclay's Luke)

Jesus knew what it was to work with his hands to make a living. With his dexterous hands, He probably created fine oxen yokes.

Brother Lawrence was a great mystic and saint who wrote a book entitled 'Practicing the Presence of God'. He spent many hours of his day in the monastery kitchen amidst the dirty dishes and he could say, "I felt Jesus Christ as close to me in the kitchen as ever I did at the blessed sacrament." (Barclay's Matthew, vol. 2; pg. 96)

The woman of the home, who sometimes feels that her labors are unimportant, needs to remember as Barclay has said, "It is on those who faithfully and ungrudgingly accept the simple duties that the world is built." (Matthew vol 1, pg. 33) Whether it is ironing the clothes, sweeping the floors, or washing the dishes, a Christian housewife should know that her service is noble.

"Lord of all pots and pans and things,
Since I've no time to be
A saint by doing lovely things,
Or watching late with Thee
Or dreaming in the dawnlight,
Or storming heaven's gate,
Make me a saint by getting meals
And washing up the plates."
(Barclay's Luke; pg. 144)

Some of God's servants occupy a well-known public position, while others quietly perform their service within the privacy of the home. Barclay says, "Many of His greatest servants are in the background, unseen but essential to His cause." (Luke, pg. 97) Mrs. Billy Graham had a little sign in her kitchen which read, 'Here divine service is performed three times each day.'

A great mother is a rich heritage. George Herbert once said, "A good mother is worth a hundred schoolmasters." (Barclay's Matthew vol. 1; pg. 33) Abraham Lincoln felt that his success was due to his having had a good mother. A good mother is one of the greatest gifts of God.

Sir James Y. Simpson was the great discoverer of chloroform, and he came from a poor home. When James was a child, one day his mother was darning his stockings, and contemplatively said to her son, "My, Jamie, mind when your mither's awa' that she was a grand darning." James' brother, Sandy, realized the brilliant potential of James, and willingly worked in the bakeshop in order that James would have money to attend college. Sir James Simpson's discovery of chloroform was possible because of the unselfish cooperation of his simple folk.

Whether we are a great scholar and use our minds, or a worker and use our hands, we must do all for the glory of God. Paul wrote, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." (Colossians 3: 23)

There have been many who have been incapacitated in one manner or another through physical affliction. Perhaps it is such Christians, who have one of their senses impaired, who are the most sensitive in nature to the voice of God, and thus the greatest prayer warriors in the Church. Fanny Crosby was blind, but she created hundreds of hymns and gospel songs.

Whether a person is one-talented or a ten-talented man, love is an essential gift that each must exercise as a child of God.

Essential to a complete discussion of talents and stewardship, is not only an understanding of the source of talents and the development of talents within a corporate setting, but also the responsible accounting for the use of talents.

III. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Jesus' parable of the talents teaches us that all had equal opportunities, although each had different numbers of talents. Each was expected to develop according to the individually given capacities. Both the two and five talented stewards received equal praise for their double development. It is not what we have or how much we have that is important, but rather what we do with what we have. Jesus said, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (Luke 12; 28) This implies that to whom little is given, little will be required. Therefore, the one talented man was not at a disadvantage.

1. Jesus' parable speaks about two types of men. The first type is illustrated by the one-talented steward. He is the over-cautious, unenterprising person, who is either fearful, or self-righteous. There are at least two categories of such unenterprising persons.

There is the self-assertive person. Such a person is competitive, contentious, carnal, critical, conceited, unloving, unadaptable, and insensitive to others.

To illustrate this person, let us again use the human body as an analogy. Suppose the artery leading away from the heart decided to declare itself independent of the veins and heart. Such self-assertion of this body part (if such were possible) would prove fatal to the entire body. Suppose the food-bearing arteries refused to dispose of their nourishment to the body cells. Soon the entire body would die for lack of food. The circulatory system can't function without each part harmoniously cooperating.

The one-talented man in Jesus' parable represents the member of the body which rejects its responsibility and, thus, does harm to the whole. He cowardly refuses to live harmoniously and cooperatively.

The one-talented steward not only represents the self-assertive, uncaring person, but he also represents the self-protective person. Such a man is selfishly introverted, socially indifferent, secretly manipulative, uninvolved, and preoccupied with selfish interest. He is the person who 'uses' other people for his own advantage, with an outward appearance of honesty.

The Pharisee, who came under Jesus' severe criticism, is a classic example of the self-righteous, self-protective person.

It is true that the Pharisees could form long prayers and pay large tithes. Fasting regularly, and meticulously observing the Law, they outwardly appeared clean, proper, and righteous.

Jesus knew the nature of the self-righteous Pharisee. Listen to His judgments. *"Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men"* (Matthew 25: 13), *"ye devour widows' houses"* (v. 14), *"ye fools and blind"* (v. 17), *"ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law - judgment, mercy, and faith"* (v. 23), *"ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel"* (v. 24), *"ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity"* (v. 28).

What is God's judgment on the unenterprising overly-cautious, self-protective, self-righteous person? Listen to the words of God's pronouncement. "So, take the talent away from him and give it to the one with the ten talents." Matthew adds this interpretation to the account: *"For to everyone who has, shall be given and he will have more than plenty: but from him who is wanting shall be taken what he has."* (Matthew 25: 28-30, Berkley)

The Pharisees drew their own religious robes about themselves and despised the inferior and immoral. They sought “personal security in a meticulous observance of the Law” (Parables - Dodd, 119). They boasted of their self-righteousness, and they cowardly protected their reputation from contact with sinners.

Because they were not willing to invest their lives and abilities in the interest of others, they could not escape the harsh judgment of God.

The self-protective, uncaring steward who returned his single talent to the master, “expected to be commended for his caution and strict honesty.” (Dodd-117). Because he didn’t invest and develop his God-given talent, he was pronounced as an unprofitable servant.

What an important lesson for every professing Christian to learn! To be overly-cautious, uncaring, and self-protective will spell tragic consequences in one’s eternal destiny. To perform religious duties in the cloak of self-righteousness, without any sacrifice of self to others, is to be “a barren rascal.” (Dodd, 118)

2. Jesus’ parable not only speaks of the overly-cautious, unenterprising person, but also of the daring, enterprising person.

Such a person is self-surrendered. He is the cooperative, constructive person who effectively functions as a part of the whole. He does not assert his own rights, but forms a small but significant link in the chain of love and service. He does not feel self-sufficient or indispensable, but he is willing to step down, if some other brother can more effectively fill his place. He finds a place of humble service.

As Paul exhorted, he does not estimate or think of himself more highly than he ought to think. He doesn’t have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance, but rather he rates his ability with sober judgment, according to the degree of faith apportioned by God to him. (Romans 12)

A Christian governs his life within the corporate body of Christ. He lives the exhortation of Paul which says, “Love one another with brotherly affection - as members of one family - giving precedence and showing honor to one another.” (Romans 12: 12, Amplified) He shares with others and lives harmoniously, adaptively, and humbly. (Romans 12: 13, 15, 16)

The daring, enterprising person is not only self-surrendered, but also he is self-accessible to others. He does not protect or guard his life, but he makes it

openly available for others. He seeks to influence others lovingly and inconspicuously. He never carnally strives to gain acknowledgment at the expense of another.

His life is based on Jesus' principles of discipleship. "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10: 39) He has denied self, has taken up his cross and has followed Christ.

What is God's pronouncement upon the daring, enterprising person who has invested and developed his talents in the service of others? To both the two talented and five talented stewards, the Master answered, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter into the joy of thy lord." Jesus taught that at the Last Day we shall be judged according to how we treated the least of those his brethren. If we have failed to serve our fellow men in practical ways, such as feeding and clothing the needy, and visiting the sick, we will be identified with Christ's enemies.

CONCLUSION:

How important to us is the lesson of stewardship that Jesus taught! The talents we receive are not our own, but are entrusted to us by the Master, to be invested, developed, and increased. Love is the channel through which our talents are expressed within the corporate setting of the Church of Christ. Talents, unmotivated by love, are misused and wasted. Before the Master all men will individually stand to give a stewardship accounting. Either we will be identified with the self-protective, self-assertive, unenterprising group who will receive their just judgment of damnation, or we will stand with the redeemed who are the self-surrendered, self-accessible, daring, enterprising persons who will receive an award of eternal life for their productive endeavors. Which group will we be in? The choice is ours.

CHAPTER 17

QUESTIONS

1. From whom does a Christian receive his gifts and talents? (Note Romans 12: 3; I Corinthians 12: 15)
2. What is the result when fellow believers begin to compare their gifts and talents with each other?
3. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement: “To be jealous of another person’s talents, intellect, faculty, capacity, or quality, is to express resentment towards the Almighty God who has apportioned talents according to His sovereign will.”
4. Does God favor the two-talented and five-talented person over the one-talented person? Why or why not?
5. Why is it wrong for a Christian to question God as to the number and the kind of talents or calling he has received from God? (Note Romans 9: 20-21; John 21: 20-22)
6. Should a Christian ever boast because of the gifts and talents that he possesses and enjoys and uses? Why or why not? (I Corinthians 4: 7)
7. For what specific reasons has God given to you your individual talents and gifts, according to Romans 12: 4-5?
8. Why, according to I Corinthians 12: 24-25, is it so important for believers (within the corporate setting of a local Church) to have both the qualities of humility and confidence, in the exercise of their spiritual gifts and talents?
9. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statements: “Love is the unifying and integrating bond that enables all to live harmoniously together as diverse parts to form the whole. Love forbids carnal striving and competition and encourages cooperation and concern.” (Note I Corinthians 13; Galatians 5: 22-23)
10. Does God favor those persons who are endowed with great intellectual gifts over those persons whose gifts are manifested in skills of the hands? Why or why not? Should Christians ever be intimidating to or intimidated by other fellow Christians, as regards to the kind or to the number of their spiritual gifts? Why or why not? How can fellow believers manifest a spirit of true humility in their relationship with each other, within the corporate setting of the local Church, as all believers seek to use their spiritual gifts? Are believers, whose gifts are used in high-profile, public settings

(like preaching and teaching and singing), more tempted to succumb to “pride” (because of the applause and praise and recognition which usually accompanies the use of such gifts in larger groups within the local Church)? How can fellow Christians give sincere compliments and recognition to each other, in the use of their gifts, without provoking pride in the hearts of their fellow believers?

11. In the use of one’s spiritual gifts, what should be the greatest concern that one should have? (Note Colossians 3: 23)
12. Does a physical or a mental handicap necessarily destroy one’s effectiveness as a servant of God? Why or why not? Is it possible that a believer, who becomes physically handicapped, may become (as a result of the handicap) an ever more effective servant of the Lord? Can you think of any examples where God’s power was greatly manifested in weak (or handicapped) people? (Note II Corinthians 12: 7-10)
13. Is it possible to manifest (to exercise and to use) spiritual gifts in an unspiritual (carnal) manner? (Note I Corinthians 3: 1-4)
14. Give your interpretation and tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “It is not what we have or how much we have that is important, but rather what we do with what we have.” (Note Luke 12: 28)
15. What words would you use to describe the one-talented man in Jesus’ Parable of the Talents?
16. What words would you use to describe the two-talented and the five-talented man in Jesus’ Parable of the Talents?
17. What is God’s pronouncement upon the daring, enterprising person who has invested and developed his talents in the service of others?
18. What, to you, brings the greatest impact in Jesus’ Teaching regarding the Last Judgment, as recorded in Matthew 25: 31-46?

CHAPTER 18

THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

CHAPTER 18

SUBJECT: THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

SCRIPTURE: John 8: 31-36

TEXT: *“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”* (John 8: 32, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION: Does human life have any value? Is man more than dust, more than 160 pounds of muscle and fat and bone and fluid? Is man more than a combination of material and chemical substances which can be purchased for a few dollars at a drug store? Is man more than a small speck, living on an insignificant planet in the vast universe, lost in space?

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

I. EXPOSITION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF SANCTITY OF LIFE

- A. Creation
- B. Incarnation
- C. Jesus’ Atoning Death

II. APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF SANCTITY OF LIFE

- A. Man Derives His Value From God
- B. Because God has acted in human history to give dignity to human life, what should be my appropriate reaction and response to God’s loving action?

CONCLUSION: The foundation of freedom is based on the Biblical teaching of the sanctity of human life. Remove the Biblical foundation and the foundation of freedom crumbles! All of life must be built upon the Scriptural teachings regarding the sanctity of human life!

CHAPTER 18

SUBJECT: THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

SCRIPTURE: John 8: 31-36

TEXT: *“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”* (John 8: 32, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION:

Men fight hard for freedom. Men feel that they are born to be free! But why fight so hard for freedom if man is no more than a complex, disposable machine, a product of chance, a creature with no ultimate purpose or meaning? Why defend human rights if there is no universal standard by which to measure man's value and to determine man's rights? Does man have any 'inalienable rights' - rights that belong to every human being simply because he is human? The constitution of the United States believes so! It is an important question. Are there rights which are man's inherently, rights guaranteed to man by his Creator, rights which no man or nation or institution has a right to deny or destroy? If man is not special, if he is only a complex animal, if he has no unique creation, if there is no divinely-given rights to man, then man has no ultimate value and man has no foundation for freedom. If man is the property of the State, then man must be subject to the State, then man must be subject to the State, then man has no authority higher than the State to resort to as a basis for right, justice, and freedom!

If man has no authority higher than society or the State, then man has no basis for his contention of 'inalienable rights'!

To claim inalienable rights is to claim rights that are the gifts of a power higher than the power of the State or the power of social consensus. These inalienable rights derive from God's creation of Man and God's special redemption of man. These rights assume that man is the recipient of a spacial gift from the divine Creator, rights that are inherent in man's special creation. Man's belief in human freedom is based upon man's belief in the sanctity of human life.

If one no longer believes in the sanctity of human life - that is, human life which has uniqueness and purpose - then logically one has no right to believe in human 'inalienable rights'. A human being has no right if he is merely a creature of chance, a creature of instinct, a product of social environment, or a complex animal controlled by chemical components. Man must be the product of divine creation if he has any basis to claim divinely-given rights!

PROPOSITION:

The Foundation of Freedom is belief in the sanctity of human life, and the foundation for belief in the sanctity of life is the Judeo-Christian view of life as revealed in the Bible.

Notes Malcolm Muggeridge, "In the much talk today about human rights, we forget that our human rights are derived from the Christian faith...these basic human rights depend ultimately on the Christian concept of man and of his relationship to his Creator." (The End of Christendom; pg. 19) Think of what life is without belief in man's special creation. Life is greatly cheapened! It is Christianity which has taught the sacredness of life. It is Christianity which has championed the rights of women, the rights of children, the rights of the poor, the rights of the crippled and deformed. It is Christianity which organized the first hospitals and orphanages. It is Christianity which cares for the infirm, the blind, the crippled, the deformed, the suffering victims of war! It is Christianity which feeds the poor, clothes the naked, shelters the destitute! It is Christianity that cares for the refugees, that provides hospitals for the insane!

To the extent that Christians are genuine, though imperfect, representatives of their Master, to that same extent they are the healers of the world's wounds, the comforters of the world's sorrowing, the defenders of the world's oppressed, the saviors of the world's dying!

Why should Christians be so concerned to care for the depressed, down-graded, dying persons of humanity? Especially in a world where human life seems to be so cheap? In a world where Hitler could kill 6 million Jews? In a world where 40 million persons lost their lives in World War II? In a world where Lenin's disregard for God and religion perpetuated brutality and unrestrained evil in the Communist system which was responsible for the killing of millions, including 30 million Russians and millions more of Chinese! It is said that if Joseph Stalin, a leader of the Communist Revolution, had done nothing else all his life but to write the names of his innocent victims, his life would not have been long enough to finish the job!

We live in a world where 460 million people are victims of acute hunger! Where ten thousand will die by tomorrow! "A million hogs in Indiana have superior housing to a billion humans on this planet!" In Calcutta alone 600,000 are perpetually homeless." (Freedom of Simplicity; pg. 170, Foster)

Does human life have any value? Is man more than dust, more than 160 pounds of muscle and fat and bone and fluid? Is man more than a combination of material and chemical substances which can be purchased for a few dollars at a drug store? Is man more than a small speck living on an insignificant planet in the vast universe, lost in space?

Slander against humanity is committed often by atheistic philosophers, such as the one who stated that man is "a boisterous bit of the organic scum of one small planet." The one who

has lost faith in a loving Creator is the one who has also lost faith in the dignity of man and the sanctity of life! To such a person, human life has little value.

Atheistic philosophy cannot sustain faith, courage, and justice - the ingredients necessary to maintain human freedom in a world constantly threatened by war, terrorism, and tyranny.

Notes Muggeridge: "During the late '39-45 war, in the darkest days of Russia when the German army was within a few miles of both Leningrad and Moscow, Stalin did a most extraordinary thing. You might have expected that as a convinced Marxist he would have had readings from 'Das Kapital' on the Soviet radio in order to stiffen up the sinews and summon up the blood of his fellow countrymen. But he didn't do that, for the name of Marx was unmentioned in those dark days. What he did do was a characteristic Stalinist thing, he fetched the patriarch and one or two other prelates from the labor camp where they were languishing and brought them to the Kremlin and set them up in business again. In other words, he reestablished for the time being the Russian Orthodox Church. It's one of those very significant incidents that tends to get forgotten. I wonder what it must have been like in the camp when the poor old patriarch was told that Stalin wanted to set him up again. The order to get all his vestments and things would have come as quite a shock to him. But that is exactly what happened because Stalin knew that to get the Russian people to fight to the end with their backs to the wall, he needed something more than Marxist materialism." (The End of Christendom; pg. 15)

In other words, freedom's fight against the brutal attacks of Hitler's Nazism needed no less of a motivation than that provided by the Christian Church, as represented by the patriarch! In the midst of the bitter fight of freedom against tyranny, only the Christian Church, which believes in freedom has its source in the Biblical concept of Man, could provide enough stimulus to the Russian people to fight against the brutal Nazi regime! Marx couldn't produce in the hour of crisis, for Marx has no Biblical understanding of man in his writings! Freedom's fight against tyranny makes no sense if man is not invested with the God-given right to freedom! And only those who believe in the Bible believe that man is invested with God-given 'inalienable rights'!

I. EXPOSITION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF SANCTITY OF LIFE

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

There are several principles in the Bible that reveal God's respect for human life.

A. Creation

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

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

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

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

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

B. Incarnation

Why does Christianity teach that human life is sacred and that man’s claim to certain ‘inalienable rights’ is justifiable? Because of man’s unique creation, as we have noted! Also because of God’s special regard for human life as shown in the fact that God embodied himself in a human form! *“And the*

Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” (John 1: 14) God reflected his glory in His Son - not only in heaven but on earth - in a bodily, physical, earthly form! God did not look upon the human race as untouchable. Far from it, for ‘He dwelt among us’, laughing, loving, longing, languishing with us humans! God has forever sanctified human life and invested dignity in the human race when He became a man in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ! Jesus is ‘God with us’ - Immanuel - imparting value to an otherwise valueless human existence. The great fact of human history is the fact that this planet is a visited planet - visited not merely by angels in spirit form, but visited by the Creator Himself in bodily form! God became a man, embodying himself in human flesh! This fact alone forever establishes the truth of the sanctity of human life! The human form, the result of God’s special creation according to Genesis, is the very same form that God chose to live in for 33 years! Therefore, if the human form is a specially created form, and if it is the very form that God chose to embody Himself in while living on earth, what institution, or law, or nation, or individual has a right to destroy that human form? Life is sacred because of the fact of the Incarnation!

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

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

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

On one hand, the New Testament refutes the cynical modern-day contention of some chemists, and philosophical humanists who contend that man is

merely a chemically and psychologically-determined animal. On the other hand, the New Testament nowhere exhorts man to worship the body or to consider it as the most important feature of human life. Christ calls us to a wholistic view of life, teaching us to value all of life - body, soul, and spirit - with all of the God-sanctioned expressions of these divinely-created capacities.

C. Jesus' Atoning Death

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

Regardless of his physical, mental, moral, or spiritual condition, every man has value and dignity! Why? No man can be called valueless for whom Christ died! Because Christ died for all, none is beyond hope! None is unloveable! None is unredeemable! Because the most valuable person in the universe died for sinners, no sinner is without hope! All can be saved! Man's dignity is not based upon his moral performance, or upon his utilitarian value. Man's dignity and worth is based upon the fact that he is a creature who has been redeemed by the blood of the Savior!

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

II. **APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF SANCTITY OF LIFE**

A. Man Derives His Value From God.

God has shown in His mighty acts that He highly regards man.

God showed His high regard for man when He uniquely created man. Man is not only a highly complex animal in the animal world, but man is a spiritual being in the spiritual realm. Man is not only different in degree from the animals, but man is different in kind. Man is not only a highly intelligent animal, but man is a spiritually-endowed being whose capacity to know God is the highest mark of his unique creation!

God showed His high regard for man when He came to earth in the form of a human being. No greater compliment was paid to the human race than when God became a man. Greek philosophy in the ancient world may declare that the human body is an evil, a prison-house which shackles the soul, a tomb that confines the spirit! But God says that the human body is the vehicle of God's loving, visible revelation of divine truth. God was not ashamed to be embodied in human form for 33 years! The human form has deity stamped upon it! The Incarnation gives dignity to the human body, to the human situation. Because of the Incarnation, life is pregnant with meaning, purpose, value, dignity!

God showed His high regard for man when He died on the Cross for humanity. Not for humanity only as a mass, but for humanity composed of each man, woman, and child. Christ died as if there was only one to die for. Therefore, every person has individual importance to God. Call no man worthless for whom Christ has died! The precious blood of Christ makes the lifeblood of every person precious!

B. Because God has acted in human history to give dignity to human life, what should be my appropriate reaction and response to God's loving action?

Because God says life is sacred, I must concur - practically and realistically - that human life is sacred! I must first learn to respect the life that God has given to me, and in turn teach others to respect human life. To take a high view of life - the view of life which the Scriptures teach - is to cultivate a certain lifestyle. But a certain lifestyle is always a result of a definite mind set. As a man thinks, so is he!

A high view of life means that I will see all of life as sacred. The common ventures of life - routine work, a vacation, a marriage, a family - will all be seen as sacred! All human relationships will be entered into with a sense of reverence and respect! Each person will be seen as the object of God's special love, never as an object for selfish exploitation.

The body will be seen, not as inherently evil, but as the vehicle of expression for the soul and spirit. Sexual sins will be seen for what they are - sinful abuses of the body! Wrote Paul, "Sexual sin is never right; our bodies were not made for that, but for the Lord, and the Lord wants to fill our bodies with himself...Use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because He owns it." Thus, to abuse the body with sexual sins, or (for that matter) with alcohol, or with drugs, or with tobacco, or with improper diet is to sin, not only against the body, but against the Creator and owner of the body!

A high view of life leads one to love his fellow men. The supreme law of love states: *“Love God supremely, and love your neighbor as yourself!”* A profound respect for human life - based upon God’s unique Creation, based upon God’s amazing Incarnation, based upon God’s redemptive death - must practically issue forth in a life of loving relationships. *“If you love, you will be obeying all of God’s laws, fulfilling all of His requirements.”* (Romans 13) Love is not a mere sentiment, but love is right actions toward fellow human beings! Love means treating others as one would like to be treated! Jesus said, *“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do, do ye even so to them.”* (Matthew 7: 12) This is called the Golden Rule of life. The Golden Rule of Jesus has much to say about the proper and respectful treatment of other people.

A high view of life will lead one to contend for the ‘inalienable rights’ of freedom with which every man is born. Again, coming back to our original theme on the foundation of freedom, the one whose attitudes are fed by the Holy Scriptures will contend that all men are created by God and for God and that no man or institution or philosophy has any right to take the God-given freedom of life and liberty from any person.

CONCLUSION:

The foundation of freedom is based on the Biblical teaching of the sanctity of human life. Remove the Biblical foundation and the foundation of freedom crumbles! All of life must be built upon the Scriptural teachings regarding the sanctity of human life! To embrace a Biblical understanding of Stewardship means that one regards the human body and all human relationships as God-given and as very sacred!

CHAPTER 18

QUESTIONS

1. Is it rational for one to fight so hard for freedom if man is no more than a complex, disposable machine, a product of chance, a creature with no ultimate purpose or meaning? Why defend human rights if there is no universal, objective standard by which to measure man's value and to determine man's rights?
2. Does man have any 'inalienable rights' - rights that belong to every human being simply because he is human? If so, from whence come these 'rights'?
3. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement, and give your fuller explanation and application of it: "If man is the property of the State, then man must be subject to the State, then man has no authority higher than the State to resort to as a basis for right, justice, and freedom!"
4. What is the "foundation for the belief in human freedom?"
5. Do you believe that man is the product of divine creation, or do you believe that man is merely a creature of chance and instinct, and a product of social environment, and a complex animal who is controlled by chemical components? Depending upon which one of these two viewpoints you accept, what difference will it make in your attitudes and responses to God, to yourself, and to other people?
6. From what source are basic "human rights" derived?
7. When the teachings of Christianity are seriously accepted and practiced, what are some of the specific social results? (Note Matthew 25: 31-46; James 2: 14-17; I John 3: 17-18)
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To the extent that Christians are genuine, though imperfect, representatives of their Master, to that same extent they are the healers of the world's wounds, the comforters for the world's sorrowing, the defenders of the world's oppressed, the saviors of the world's dying!" Is it possible to be a Christian in deliberately chosen "social isolation?" Why or why not? Is it true that a "Saving Faith" is always a "Working Faith", that , even though one is not saved by good works, he is saved for good works? (Note James 2: 17-20)
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The one who has lost faith in a loving Creator is the one who has lost faith in the dignity of man and the sanctity of life!"

10. Give examples to demonstrate and illustrate the truth of the following statement: "Atheistic philosophy cannot sustain faith, courage, and justice - the ingredients necessary to maintain human freedom in a world constantly threatened by war, terrorism, and tyranny!"
11. From a Biblical viewpoint, why is it so wrong to treat persons as "things to be used", as "cogs in a machine," as "objects to be exploited", as "functionary units of the State," as "impersonal parts of the mass of humanity?" (Note Genesis 1: 26-27; Acts 17: 28; Psalms 139: 13-18)
12. How does the fact of the Incarnation provide a basis for the dignity of man?
13. If the human form is a specially created form, and if it is the very form that God chose to embody Himself in while living on earth, what institutions, or laws, or nations, or individuals have a right to destroy that human form?
14. What heresy did the Early Church confront, which taught that all human flesh was inherently evil, and how did the early Christian leaders refute and combat this dangerous heresy?
15. If man's dignity is not based upon his moral performance or upon his utilitarian value, then upon what basis is man's dignity and value established?
16. Give your interpretation and application of the following popular statements: "Call no man worthless for whom Christ has died! The precious blood of Christ makes the lifeblood of every person precious!"
17. Give an example that illustrates and demonstrates the truth of the following statement: "No matter how ordinary, ill-educated, disfigured, ill-born, one-talented or obscure a man or woman may be, Christ has a use for them, and He gives them dignity by that use."
18. Give your response and interpretation of the following statement: No greater compliment was paid to the human race than when God became a man."
19. Because God has acted in human history to give dignity to human life, what should be my appropriate reaction and response to God's loving actions?
20. Using the following questions, examine your own personal life, to help determine the level (or degree) of your "sense of the sacred" and your basic "respect for life." Put a check by those statements which you believe you can answer in the affirmative.
 - _____ a. Do I respect the life that God has given me?
 - _____ b. Do I see all of life around me as sacred and God-given?

- _____ c. Do the common ventures of my personal life - my routine work, my vacations, my marriage, my family - all seem sacred to me?
- _____ d. Do I enter into all human relationships with a sense of reverence and respect?
- _____ e. Do I see each person I meet as an object of God's special love, never as an object for my own selfish exploitation?
- _____ f. Do I see my body, not as inherently evil, but as the temple of the Holy Spirit and as the vehicle of expression for my soul and spirit?
- _____ g. Do I see sexual abuse and misuse of my body as serious sins against God who has claimed my body as His temple (dwelling place)?
- _____ h. Do I seek to use every part of my body to give glory to God, because He owns my body?
- _____ I. Do I abstain from all alcohol and tobacco and drugs, out of reverence for God and out of respect for my body?
- _____ j. Based upon God's viewpoint of human life (i.e., the human body and the never-dying soul) which He has made known through the Creation of Mankind and the Incarnation of Christ and the Death of Christ, do I seek to love God supremely and to love my neighbors as myself?
- _____ k. Do I believe that every person in the world is born with certain "inalienable rights", and do I seek to respect each person in a way that reflects this deep conviction, regardless of race, nationality, education, sex, creed, or color?
- _____ l. Do I believe that all persons are created equally by Almighty God, and that no institution or philosophy or individual has any right to take the God-given freedom of life and liberty from any person?
- _____ m. Do I believe that the aborting of an unborn baby is a serious violation of human rights, and therefore a grievous sin against the Creator?
- _____ n. Do I believe that God has a special purpose and mission for every person, even for those persons who are called physically or mentally disadvantaged (handicapped)?
- _____ o. Do I believe it is wrong to allow the sick and the infirm and the elderly prematurely to die, through passive neglect or through active intervention to cause death?
- _____ p. Do I believe that it is always wrong for one to take his own life (suicide)?
- _____ q. Do I seek actively to preserve and to enhance my own physical health, by obeying basic health rules, such as eating properly (i.e., mostly fresh fruits and raw vegetables) and exercising vigorously (i.e., fast walking or jogging or swimming, etc)?
- _____ r. Do I practice positive mental thinking and positive verbalization and seek to turn my "worry energy" into "prayer energy", and practice trusting God instead of destroying my body and mind through anxiety and needless stress?

- _____ s. Do I seek regularly to purge my mind and my soul of any residues of bitterness and ill-feeling and resentments by the act of forgiveness towards those who have sinned against me?
- _____ t. Do I look for the positive virtues in the lives of others, instead of focusing upon their faults, failures, shortcomings, and oddities?
- _____ u. Do I endeavor to look on the 'bright side of life', instead of on the 'dark side of life' and do I seek in all things to be grateful and to praise God "from whom all blessings flow?"
- _____ v. Do I have a 'holy reverence' for Almighty God, and do I trust Him during my adversities in life and amidst life's injustices, inequities, perplexities, and mysteries, with a strong conviction that all things which happen to Christian people do work into a pattern for ultimate good?
- _____ w. Do I attempt to protect and to defend the helpless and the oppressed persons around me, such as lonely widows and fatherless children and battered women and starving poor and homeless families?
- _____ x. Do I respect the little creatures and the big creatures in God's vast creation (the animal world), and do I respect the delicate 'balance of nature' and avoid carelessly to poison the earth's atmosphere with pollutants?
- _____ y. Do I seek to cultivate a spirit of deep reverence for God and for all of God's creation , in the hearts and the minds of my own children and all other children and youth whom God allows me to influence in my relationships?
- _____ z. Do I cherish "the old rugged cross" of Christ more than any other event in history, and do I daily live with a deep sense of "holy awe" as I anticipate the coming of Christ to this earth as the "King of Kings", before whom all knees shall someday bow to worship Him as "Lord of all?"

CHAPTER 19

THE HELPLESSNESS OF GOD!

CHAPTER 19

SUBJECT: THE HELPLESSNESS OF GOD!

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2: 43-47; Matthew 13: 53-58

TEXT: *“And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”*
(Matthew 13: 58, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION: It is true that God is all-powerful, but by that statement we must not think that God can do anything, independent of man’s cooperation. God has voluntarily limited himself to work through human instruments. God is helpless unless He gets men and women through whom He may work. Without man’s cooperation, God is helpless to accomplish His full divine purposes on earth.

- I. **GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER’S RESPONSE OF PRAYER (Acts 2: 42)**
- II. **GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER’S FAITHFUL CHURCH ATTENDANCE (v. 44a, 46)**
- III. **GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER’S INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHING (v. 42)**
- IV. **GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER’S INVOLVEMENT IN JOYFUL GIVING (v. 45)**
- V. **COMPASSIONATE ACTION ALLOWS GOD TO BE ACTIVE. WITHOUT IT, GOD IS HELPLESS (v. 44-45)**
- VI. **GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER’S INVOLVEMENT IN WITNESSING (v. 47)**

CONCLUSION: God has called His people to certain tasks, all of which are important if God’s work is to be accomplished on earth. Miracles happen when God’s power is linked with man’s obedience and actions. Man indeed is helpless without God, but it is also true that God is helpless without man!

CHAPTER 19

SUBJECT: THE HELPLESSNESS OF GOD!

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2: 43-47; Matthew 13: 53-58

TEXT: *“And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”* (Matthew 13: 58, Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION:

We often hear and speak of the Sovereignty of Almighty God, and rightfully so, but how often have we thought of the Helplessness of God?

It is true that God is all-powerful, but by that statement we must not think that God can do anything, independent of man's cooperation. It is true that God will ultimately take even the bad choices of men - yes, even the rebellion of men - and make everything serve His eternal purposes. Strangely, yet truly, God makes even the wrath of men to praise Him!

However, after asserting this important truth, it is still true that God is sometimes helpless, because man is sometimes uncooperative or disobedient or unbelieving. Think of the people in Nazareth who tied Jesus' Hands! Yes, in some degree, Jesus was rendered helpless to perform great miracles because of the unbelieving reaction of the hostile townspeople of Nazareth. Jesus wanted to perform great miracles there, but He could not because of rejection and unbelief.

Later in Jesus' life, just preceding His crucifixion, Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!”* (Matthew 23: 37) Jesus was rendered helpless to comfort and to save Jerusalem because of rejection and disbelief. It is God's Perfect Will to save all men. However, God permits men to reject love's call, and thus even God is helpless to save such a person. Such rejection of Jesus and denial of God's righteousness is what the Bible calls 'sin against the Holy Spirit'. Such rejection renders God helpless to save!

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

God has limited Himself to give man the joy of involvement in creative purposes - an involvement that can be entered into freely. In God's Creation He gave only raw materials to man. God pronounced such a Creation as 'Good', 'Good' but not 'Perfect', for man is created to create - to take the raw materials and to creatively produce. God never intended the raw materials to be left unperfected. He gives man that job as a little creator.

Man is given raw material to creatively use. He is given talents and spiritual gifts to use to benefit himself and to edify and to help and to serve others.

God looks at man in some ways like a doctor looks at his medical instruments. Imagine the frustration of a doctor at the scene of an accident or in an operating room, without medical instruments. It is not the instruments which do the surgery, yet the doctor is helpless without the instruments. It is not man that does the divine miracles, yet God in some way is helpless without human instruments. God has voluntarily limited Himself to work through human instruments.

There is a poem by George Elliot in which she depicts the famous maker of violins, Antonio Stradivari, speaking:

When any master holds
 'Twixt chin and hand a violin of mine,
 He will be glad that Stradivari lived,
 Made violins, and made them of the best.
 while God gives them skill
 I give them instruments to play upon,
 ...if my hand slacked
I should rob God - since He is fullest good -
 Leaving a blank instead of violins.
 ... 'Tis God gives skill,
But not without men's hands: He could not make
 Antonio Stradivari's violins
 Without Antonio.

Notes William Barclay, "If my hand slacked I should rob God.' We hear a great many sermons about the might and the majesty and the power of God; we would be well sometimes to think of the helplessness of God, that without us and without what we can do God is quite and totally helpless. He has got to get a man! We are the Body of Christ, literally hands to do his work, feet to run upon his errands, a voice to speak for him. This is the Church's task; to be the body, the hands, the feet, through whom Christ acts." (Life of Christ for Everyone; 94, 95)

PROPOSITION:

Without man's Cooperation, God is Helpless to Accomplish His full Divine Purposes on Earth. We have already noted briefly that God is rendered helpless to save mankind if there is rejection and

unbelief. God is dependent upon the sinner's repentant response if God is going to do his saving work. God cannot save a man, in spite of that man's rejection and unbelief.

I suggest that the Scriptures are full of illustrations that show that God's work in His world - the work of redemption and salvation - is dependent upon the loving cooperation of the believer.

The Scripture in Acts 2 describes the daily life of the Early Christian Church. The Book of Acts might be called the Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit. However, while giving proper attention to the sovereignty and power and work of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, let us quickly realize that none of the work would have been accomplished without the obedient response and involvement of men and women.

It is likewise true today. God is helpless unless He gets men and women through whom He may work.

I. GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSE OF PRAYER (Acts 2: 42)

Have we devoted ourselves to prayer, like these early disciples of Christ? Prayer was vitally important to Christ and to the early Church. It is prayer that moves the hand of God. It is not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit and by prayer that great things are accomplished in God's Kingdom. *'Ye have not because ye ask not'*, says the Scriptures. God is helpless to give us what we need and want, because we do not pray. *'O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.'* The early Church was spiritually powerful because it was fervently prayerful! Do you belong to a prayer group? Do you have a prayer partner? Do you practice daily prayer? Do you attend prayer meeting on Wednesday night at your Church? If you do not pray, you render God helpless, for God works in answer to prayer. *'More is wrought through prayer than this world dreams of!'*

II. GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER'S FAITHFUL CHURCH ATTENDANCE (v. 44a, 46)

It is God's will that His House be full of worshiping believers and seekers for God. Said Jesus, "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled." (Luke 14: 23)

Are you helping to fill God's House at every occasion the Church's doors are open! If not, then to the degree of your neglect, to that same degree are you hindering God's purposes and even rendering God partially helpless in fulfilling His will.

It is God's will for His House to be full, but only you can make that a reality - by diligently seeing that you are consistently present at Church services. You cannot live another person's life or allow another to influence you negatively. It is your responsibility to see that you are

at God's House, regardless of those who are not there. It is not a matter of bondage; it is a matter of delight! Wrote David in Psalms 23: 6, "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*" "*My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.*" (Psalms 84: 2) "*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" (Psalms 84: 10) "*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!*" (Psalms 100: 4)

Says David Foster, "I gave a talent survey sheet to a congregation several years ago, that really resulted in an exciting stack of returns. I leafed through them and my excitement grew. I could see Church growth and evangelism and a discipling ministry in the body of Christ. I could even imagine the devil was beginning to shake a bit.

But after a number of frustrating hours of trying to fill several current needs in the Body of Christ, I came to the conclusion that members of the Church we are, but servants of Christ we are not." (Sermon on Servanthood; Aug. 24, 1979)

An older man was in a congregation, a man not greatly gifted (as we would think of gifts), unlettered, and yet a very devoted servant. But he had been, and even in those retiring years, he was a faithful Sunday School teacher, not to a large Bible class, but to a group of boys. Now up in years, a terminal illness, hospital confinement, and finally a comma. His family had been with him, hour on end, and finally, the pastor said, 'Let me stay up with him tonight.' And so the family went home for much needed rest. The pastor went to the bedside of this dying servant. He had said nothing for hours. The pastor stayed there throughout the early night and then into the early morning, and as the rays of the sun was beginning to dawn, this man in a comma began to stir, and the pastor got out of his chair and went right to his side, and said, "Is there something I can get for you, a drink of water?" He cleared his throat and said, "Get someone to teach my Sunday School class." And went back into his comma, and in a few hours, he stood in the presence of His Lord to hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Enter the Church eagerly, attentively, prayerfully, joyfully. Long to be in God's House regularly! Remember, enthusiasm in worship is contagious, and dullness is also contagious.

When you stand in His presence, what will He say to you?

III. GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER'S INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHING (v. 42)

One of the most important jobs in life is communication of God's Truth to others. A parent can do nothing greater than communication of God's truth to his children, both by precept and by example. So it is also true in the Church. The Church's greatest mission is to teach truth to the young and to the old.

We must make teaching a priority in our lives.

"The days go by, the weeks how fast,
And all at once the year is past!
And oh, how much we meant to do
Before another year was through -
That Bible class we meant to teach,
The boys and girls we planned to reach!

But some of them have slipped away
And we never found the time to say
A word for Christ; ah! Had we known,
How eager then our hearts had grown!
And some whose hearts were warm to hear
The name of Him we love so dear,
Have since grown cold and hard in sin,
And now they will not ask Him in,
For Satan found them prey indeed
Because we failed to sow the seed.

God's time is now, this day, this hour,
To rescue souls from Satan's power.
Our most sincere repentant sigh
Will not recall the years gone by,
Oh, there are boys and girls today
Who wait for you to point the way.
So forget the things that lie behind
And press ahead, with yielded mind
And heart and hands and feet and eyes,
To reach God's goal, to gain His prize.
(Barbara Cornet Tyberg)

God leaves the sowing of the seeds of truth to human beings. "When any man sows the seed of the word, he does not know what he is doing, and what effect the seed is having. H. L. Gee in one of his books tells a story. In the Church where he worshiped there was a lonely man, old Thomas. Thomas had outlived all his friends and hardly anyone knew him. Thomas died. H. L. Gee had the feeling that there would be no one to go to the funeral so he decided to go, so that someone might follow old Thomas to his last resting place. There was no one;

and it was a wild wet day. The funeral reached the cemetery; it was during the war ; and at the gate there was a soldier waiting. He was an officer, but on his raincoat there were no rank badges. The soldier came to the graveside for the ceremony; when it was over he stepped forward and standing before the open grave he swept his hand to a salute that might have been given to a king. H. L. Gee walked away with this soldier, and as they walked the wind blew the soldier's raincoat open; and now H. L. Gee saw the shoulder badges of rank; the soldier was nothing less than a brigadier. The soldier said to H. L. Gee: 'You will perhaps be wondering what I am doing here. Years ago Thomas was my Sunday School teacher; I was a wild lad and a sore trial to him; he never knew what he did for me; but I owe everything I am or will be to old Thomas; and today I had to come to salute him at the end.' Thomas did not know what he was doing. No preacher or teacher ever does. It is our task to sow the seed, and, without discouragement, to leave the rest to God." (Barclay's Matthew; vol. 2; pg. 70)

It is our job to sow the seed and God's job to let it germinate. But even God is rendered helpless unless we sow the seeds of truth. There is a high road and a low road and every child will choose one or the other. Will you stand at the junction and direct that child to the high road?

IV GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER'S INVOLVEMENT IN JOYFUL GIVING (v. 45)

Do we give to everyone who has needs as the early disciples did? Perhaps you have heard of the story of poor and rich farmer with the latter praying for the former's needs, only to be stopped by a small daughter who was listening to the prayer, "Daddy, don't bother God with the neighbor's needs, when you have the money to help him."

"If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth." (I John 3: 17, 18)

"What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." (James 2: 14-17)

God wants more missionaries to go to the far reaches of the world to spread the Good News, but God is helpless to send those missionaries unless you and I provide the money for their salaries. God wants strong, growing Home Churches, with good programs and trained personnel, but God is helpless to accomplish this goal unless we dedicate our money to God and to the Church.

Many times those who talk most about financial problems, are the very ones who give least to God and to the Church. It is important to remember the promise of Malachi 3: 10: *“Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.”*

Those who do not tithe hinder God from providing ‘meat in my house’. Note: There is a condition to receiving God’s blessings - obedience and generous giving of the tithe. Those who refuse to tithe or neglect to tithe are actually closing the windows of heaven! God cannot pour out heaven’s blessings into a small, stingy heart. It takes a big and generous heart to have room for God’s overflowing blessings. It takes a big heart to receive big blessings. God is Helpless unless you are Generous!

V. COMPASSIONATE ACTION ALLOWS GOD TO BE ACTIVE . WITHOUT IT, GOD IS HELPLESS.

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.”(Acts 2: 44-45, NIV)

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you. When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’” The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’.” (Matthew 25: 31-40)

“Breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts” (v. 46) Christian hospitality is allowing God to do His work.

“Do not forget or neglect or refuse to extend hospitality to strangers (in the brotherhood) - being friendly, cordial and gracious, sharing the comforts of your home and doing your part generously - for through it some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Genesis 18: 1-8; 19: 1-3).” - Hebrews 13: 2, Amplified.

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” (James 1: 27)

Think of what would happen in an average-sized local Church if every believer would take time to visit one other person each week in their home. Suppose 20 adults would seriously commit themselves to one visit per week during this coming year. Simple arithmetic (20 times 52) show that 1040 visits would be made this year in the name of Christ. Will you allow God to be helpful or will you render God helpless, because you neglect visitation and Christian hospitality?

But what to do on such a visit? Talk about Jesus - what He means to you. Talk to the person about his interests. Possibly read some Scripture and pray. It is simple. Every Christian can do this. Need help? Ask the pastor or leaders of your Church. Join the visitation team of your Church.

VI. GOD IS HELPLESS WITHOUT THE BELIEVER'S INVOLVEMENT IN WITNESSING (v. 47)

If every Christian in your Church would witness regularly, could it be possible that souls would be added daily to your Church, as in the days of the early Church?

UNCHAIN THE CHRIST

A minister approached his Church to find it thronged by a struggling, shoving mass of people who seemed bent on getting into the sanctuary. The steps of both main entrances were tightly packed. To enter himself, the minister had to go to the back of the building and use the door to the furnace room.

As he crossed the basement toward the stairs leading to the vestibule, he heard a commotion overhead similar to what he had witnessed outside. Feet shuffled incessantly and a babble of voices tumbled down the stairwell to meet him. When he had finally wrestled his way through the vestibule and into the sanctuary, he found things much the same - aisles were jammed and pews lined with standing, straining people. What was at the front of the sanctuary that could cause such restless commotion?

After finally struggling and coaxing his way to the platform, the perplexed minister discovered the reason for the crowds and the great surge into his sanctuary. Christ was in his pulpit. On closer examination, he found that Christ was chained to his pulpit.

An improbable situation? It was really a minister's dream but one with such an impact that it brought him struggling to the surface of consciousness much as a nightmare does. And when its moral broke upon him in full force, there was no returning to sleep that night.

Christ is chained to the pulpit in many fine churches these days. Of course crowds are not clamoring to get into the churches like the people in the dream, but they are clamoring. In many unconscious ways they look for a clear answer to their restless striving. All the more pity, then, that the only adequate answer to the striving of the masses is chained to the pulpit of a building where the masses seldom go.

Is Christ chained to the pulpit in your Church? Before you push the question aside as absurd, ponder it. Christians often hold unexamined attitudes toward the work of the Church which in effect chain Christ to the pulpit of their fine, well landscaped houses of worship. This may have happened in your case.

For example, if you assume that evangelism is what your pastor does when he preaches either Sunday morning or evening, then Christ is chained to the pulpit. You may never have put this into words nor even formed it into a conscious thought in your mind. But it is an assumption, and unexamined assumptions are often the most influential in shaping our attitudes and regulating our actions. The pulpit certainly is a place for evangelism, but if it is the only place, then Christ is chained to the pulpit.

Or, if you consider evangelism as something that goes on twice a year when a special evangelist is hired by the Church, then, in your Church Christ is chained to the pulpit. Lamentably, churches that operate on this unexamined assumption see little that resembles evangelism even during these special sessions. They repeat them twice yearly but seldom does anything noteworthy happen. The sad fact is that such seasonal meetings can only be successful in an evangelistic way when Christ is taken into the streets and the homes in the months before and after. Ironically, He does not do His transforming work in the Church when He is chained in the pulpit.

Or, to put this still more broadly, if you assume that evangelism is something you are paying your pastor to do, then in all probability, Christ is chained to the pulpit. Certainly you pay your pastor to do evangelistic work and he will do his share of it both in the pulpit and out. But to expect him to fulfill singlehandedly the task which was really given by Christ to the whole Church is to ask the impossible of him. Community evangelism – the kind that involves door-to-door calling and cottage prayer meetings and the informal word across the fence or through the telephone – is the task of the whole Church, and to see it any other way is to chain Christ to the pulpit.

If Christ is chained to the pulpit in your Church, it is you and fellow laymen who have shackled Him there. You may be startled at the thought in view of your tithing habits and your blameless life. You may well be one of the most faithful members of your Church. Nevertheless, if your unexamined assumptions about the work of the Church fall into the above categories, you have chained Christ to the pulpit. It is for you then to remove the chain and see to it that Christ gets where the hungry masses are. Then

He will evangelize through you. (By Donald Bastian; Quoted in 'Go', by George Delamarter; pg. 28, 29)

Someone noted the following: Multiplication verses Addition in Evangelism. Note that it would take one person, reaching 1000 persons to Christ daily, 8000 years to win the world, in contrast to less than 50 years to win all in world if each believer won one other person to Christ each year, and each new convert won one other to Christ each year.

Every Christian is a Minister: "All Christians must be in the ministry, whatever their occupations, because the nonwitnessing follower of Christ is a contradiction in terms. If we take seriously Christ's first group order, the command to let our light shine, we dare not let the witness be limited to a small group of the professionally religious. Therefore the ministry of Christ must be universal. It must be universal in three specific ways. It must involve all places; it must involve all times; it must involve all Christian persons, male and female, lay and clerical, old and young." (Trueblood)

"Toscanini, the famous conductor, was once conducting an orchestra, and it was obvious that the orchestra was bored and was not trying. After struggling along for a while Toscanini laid down his baton and leant over the rostrum. 'Gentlemen', he said, 'God has told me how he wants this symphony played and you - you hinder God'." (Barclay, The Life of Jesus for Everyone; pg. 94) Do we help God or hinder God?

"Nicolo and Maffeo Polo were at the court of Kublai Khan, whose empire stretched from Urals to the Himalayas, and from the Danube to the China Sea, and Kublai Khan said, 'I want you to go back to the Pope and I want you to ask him to send a hundred missionaries, and I'll become a Christian and all my great men will become Christians, and all my country will become Christians, and you will have more Christians in the east here than ever in the west'. So they went back and they asked the Pope, but the Pope was too busy playing politics. For eighteen years nothing was done and then a few missionaries were sent, just a handful; too late and too few. Now think what might have happened if that chance had been taken. China would have been Christian; Japan would have been Christian; the Middle East would have been Christian; Turkey would have been Christian, even India would have been Christian - the face of the world would have been changed. But the Church refused the chance." (Ibid; pg. 95)

Said Jesus, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." It is our part to follow Christ, and if we don't do that, then God is helpless to make us fishers of men!

"When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'" (Matthew 9: 36-38)

The crowds will continue to be harassed and helpless unless you go to help them. The people need shepherds. Will you be one of those shepherds? The vast harvest fields will go unharvested unless you go and help harvest it! Have you ever heard of fruit that has rotted on the tree, because no one would harvest it? The Lord of the harvest needs harvesters. He is helpless without them! He is not willing that any perish, but that all come to repentance, but without a vision the people perish in spite of God's desire for their salvation!

You are the best Christian that someone knows! Every Christian is called to witness - that is, to share what is real in his life. We are not called to be God's lawyer - to defend Christ or Christianity. The Gospel is like a lion; turn it loose and it can defend itself. Will you turn the Gospel loose this coming year through a clear witness for Christ?

Think of the futility of a farmer not sowing seeds. How foolish and how presumptuous of him to expect a crop, if he has not even sown his seeds.

Or think of how futile it is for a fisherman to have the fine fishing gear, but never actually fishing with it! It is not enough for us to have fine programs or fine buildings. We must fish for men.

The local Church is too much like a football game. There are 22 players on the field in desperate need of rest. There are 22,000 spectators in the bleachers, desperately in need of exercise. Christianity is too often a spectator sport. Every believer has been given spiritual gifts to use for God's glory and for the edification of the Church.

Are you active in the Church? Are you exercising your spiritual muscles? Every believer is a minister. Every believer is to work for the Master - Jesus Christ!

Suppose every believer simply tithed (1/10) his time to the local Church! Think of the spiritual harvest that would result! Jesus said the laborers are few even though the fields are ready to be harvested!

We all have time to do the most important tasks of life. Don't let the cares of life destroy your faith, or pervert your spiritual priorities. Determine - resolve in your will - to put God and His Church first in your loyalties! Take time to work for the Master! There are only two things which are eternal (that will outlast time): (1) The Word of God (Bible); (2) The Soul of man. Are you sowing the Word of God in order to save the Soul of Man?

Someone once said, "Churches are full of willing people — some willing to work and the rest willing to let them." Which kind of person are you?

CONCLUSION:

God has called His people to certain tasks, all of which are important if God's work is to be accomplished on earth. Miracles happen when God's power is linked with man's obedience and actions. Man indeed is helpless without God, but it is also true that God is helpless without man!

Let us then commit ourselves to those God-ordained actions which are demonstrated for us in the Early Church - (1) Prayer, (2) Faithful Church Attendance, (3) Teaching, (4) Joyful Giving, (5) Compassionate Action (6) Witnessing.

RISE UP, O MEN AND WOMEN OF GOD AND BE ABOUT YOUR FATHER'S BUSINESS!!!

CHAPTER 19

QUESTIONS

1. How do you personally react or respond when someone talks about the “Helplessness of God”? In light of God’s sovereign power, is it Biblically supportable and realistic to say that, just as man needs God, so God needs human beings to accomplish His divine will on earth? Even though it is true that God is all-powerful (omniscient), can God do anything He wishes to do, independent of man’s cooperation? Why or why not? (See Matthew 13: 53-58)
2. As a unique creature, created in God’s own image, what is the most frightening ability which God has given to human beings?
3. What is the difference between God’s perfect will and God’s permissive will? Even though it is not God’s (perfect) will that any human being should perish (be lost spiritually), does the fact of God’s loving purpose to save all persons mean in the end that every person will ultimately be saved in heaven? Why or why not? (See II Peter 3: 9 and John 3: 16 and Revelations 22: 12-21)
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: “It is not man that does the divine miracles, yet God in some way is helpless without human instruments. God has voluntarily limited himself to work through human instruments. God has got to get a man! We are the Body of Christ, literally hands to do his work, feet to run upon his errands, a voice to speak for Him. This is the Church’s task; to be the body, the hands, the feet, through whom Christ acts.”
5. Is it possible for the work of God to be accomplished in this world without the obedient response and involvement of men and women? Why or why not?
6. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “If you do not pray, you render God helpless, for God works in answer to prayers.”
7. Do you belong to a prayer group? Do you have a prayer partner? Do you practice daily prayer? Are you a member of your Church’s ‘Prayer Chain’?
8. With what attitude should a believer enter the House of God (local Church)? (Note Psalms 23: 6; Psalms 84: 2; Psalms 84: 10; Psalms 100: 4)
9. How important is regular attendance at the House of God? (Note Hebrews 10: 25 and Luke 14: 23)

10. In terms of the Church's Mission, how important is teaching? (Note Matthew 28: 19-20) Do you ever find yourself discouraged when you fail to see quick or lasting results from your labors of love in your local Church (like teaching a Sunday School Class)? What help have you found when you find yourself discouraged? (Note I Corinthians 15: 58; Galatians 6: 9)
11. As you consider your "labor of love" for your Lord, tell to what extent you believe the following statement: "It is our task to sow the seed, and without discouragement, to leave the rest to God."
12. What responsibility do you have, as a believer, to help meet the material needs of fellow believers? (Note I John 3: 17-18; James 2: 14-17) Is prayer, for the poor persons around you, sufficient without accompanying actions of loving compassion? Why or why not?
13. According to Malachi 3: 10, what conditions must a believer meet in order to be assured of God's blessings in his life?
14. Give your interpretation and application of the following statements: "It takes a big heart to receive big blessings. God is helpless unless you are generous."
15. According to Hebrews 13: 2, in what practical activity are Christians to be involved?
16. According to James 1: 27, how is "Pure Religion" defined and described?
17. Why is the simple activity of home visitation so very beneficial to others and so pleasing to God?
18. Give your explanation of the following statement, and tell why you agree or disagree with it: "All Christians must be in the ministry, whatever their occupation, because the nonwitnessing follower of Christ is a contradiction in terms."
19. Why, according to Matthew 9: 36-38, should a Christian pray with such urgency to the Lord that He would raise up "harvesters"?
20. Give your interpretation of the Biblical statement: "Without a vision, the people perish."
21. What is the difference between a believer attempting to be "God's Lawyer" and "God's Witness"?
22. If it is presumptuous for a farmer to expect a crop if he does not sow any seeds, and if it is presumptuous for a fisherman to expect a catch of fish even though he does not use his expensive fishing gear to actually "go fishing", is it not just as presumptuous (and futile) for a Christian to expect "souls for the Kingdom" even though he never witnesses to sinners?

23. Why is the local Church sometimes compared to a modern-day, professional football game?
24. Someone rather pointedly said, "Churches are full of willing people - some willing to work and the rest willing to let them." Which kind of person are you?

APPENDIX

BOOKS WRITTEN BY RON CHRISTIAN

When ordering any of the following books, please indicate the number of books and make checks out to:

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