

Sixth Annual
TRUTH IN LOVE
LECTURESHIP

Theme:
**Strength For
Daily
Christian Living**



May 15-19, 1996

PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR

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INTRODUCTION

Time passes so quickly – year after year. The fact we are now enjoying the **Sixth Annual TRUTH IN LOVE Lectureship** seems impossible. Over the course of these years the church has witnessed various changes, many of which are quite discouraging. Some “*open doors*” (especially overseas) has been a thrilling opportunity to preach the gospel to the lost, for which we are thankful. Satan is ever busy, seeking to capture and destroy your faith, and/or keep you from serving Jehovah God faithfully. He has done (and will continue to do) whatever is needed or necessary to get YOU.

Realizing Satan is diligently seeking to destroy us, many are serving him through their efforts to change or restructure the church, sin is ever rampant and a major temptation, the “*things*” of the world are controlling us, etc. — we thus present these twenty lessons on the theme of “***Strength For Daily Christian Living.***”

Christians can survive (I Cor. 15:57)! Christians have the power to resist Satan, refusing to succumb to his devilish temptations (James 5:8; I Cor. 10:13)! Christians understand the Lord will be with them always, even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20)! Christians can walk “*in the light*” (I John 1:7f), keeping themselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27), not being conformed to the world (Rom. 12:1-2)! Christians can set and maintain their affections on heavenly things (Col. 3:1ff; Matt. 6:19-21)! Christians can press toward the prize, go on toward perfection (Phil. 3:12-14; Heb. 6:1)! Christians can receive the crown, the prepared mansion (Rev. 2:10b; John 14:1-3)! All of these thoughts are factual and reflect on the precious promises of our Father. We can do all of these things IF we do what the

Lord requires of us (walking, serving, fighting, setting, continuing, pressing, keeping on, etc.).

The inspired writers admonished us to edify and encourage one another (Rom. 14:19; I Thess. 5:11). It is our sincere desire for all who hear these lessons presently at the lectureship, or those who read these powerful lessons from this book, will be encouraged and challenged to faithfully continue in their service to the Master. It is our fervent desire to receive heaven as our final home, along with you and countless others.

May the gracious Father in heaven continue to bless us as He knows best, and may we faithfully walk toward the prepared mansion, is our prayer.

Paul Sain
Lectureship Director

DEDICATION

The measure of the value of a man to Jehovah God is not determined by his wealth, health, power, popularity, or other similar ways. The value one is to the Creator is determined by his faith, loyalty, steadfastness, love for truth, faithful proclamation of the truth, sincere love for the soul's of all mankind, as well as the strength he offers and provides for his co-laborers in the Lord.

The 1996 **Truth In Love** Lectureship volume is lovingly dedicated to one who has provided strength and encouragement to countless members of the body of Christ, fellow gospel preachers, students in various institutions of learning, elderly, youth, children and grandchildren. From the rich heritage left by his family who have gone on before in death, to the co-workers of his present family, our dear friend **Winfred Clark** carries the banner of Christ faithfully.



One wears various hats in life. This dear brother has worn various titles, and served in many capacities in life. He has excelled in each work. He continues to excel at his present work as an elder of the Hobbs Street congregation in Athens, Alabama and that of directing the School of Bible Emphasis. From laughing at a joke, playing golf, or anguishing over the lost alien sinner or an erring brother, the pure heart of this dear friend is visible.

We express our love and high esteem and pray God's continued blessings upon he and his precious helpmeet Polly for many years to come.

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Section I
Source Of Strength



Jehovah God, The Great Source Of Strength

The Bible, God's Source Of Our Strength

Jesus, Our Example, Leader, Tempted One, Overcomer

Strength For Daily Christian Living



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Chapter 1

Jehovah God, Our Great Source Of Strength

Fred House

Fred has been preaching for thirty-five years. He has written an excellent booklet entitled, "*Why I Left The Baptist Church.*" He has worked with God's people locally in Tennessee and Alabama. He presently is working for the Shades Mountain Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama. He is highly respected for his love and stand for the truth. Fred and Joy have three children, five grandchildren.



I appreciate very much the invitation to participate in the program of this outstanding lectureship. Appreciation is therefore expressed to Paul Sain, the elders and all the East Hill congregation for this privilege and humbling duty. What a marvelous theme, and a beautiful subject assigned to me at this hour—"Jehovah God, Our Great Source Of Strength."

Jehovah God, The Creator

The first book of the Holy Bible begins with, "*In the beginning GOD created...*" (Gen. 1:1). Mankind is given many additional facts about the Almighty heavenly Father throughout the pages of holy writ. We will list a few of the encouraging truths concerning the characteristics of God. He is good (Psm. 33:5); merciful (Rom. 12:1); majestic (Rev. 4:1); great (Deut. 5:24); loving (John 3:16); glorious (Exod. 15:11); gracious (Psm. 84:11); holy (I Peter 1:16); just (Acts 10:34-35); longsuffering

(Rom. 15:5); compassionate (Psm. 78:38-39); faithful (I Cor. 1:9); kind (Psm. 42:8); etc.

The qualities of Jehovah God that are more frequently utilized are: **omnipotent**, all-powerful (Psm. 89:8; Gen. 18:14); **omniscient**, knows everything (Rom. 8:27; Heb. 4:13); **omnipresent**, exists everywhere (Psm. 139:7-10; Acts 17:27); **immutable**, changeless (James 1:7; Eccl. 3:14). John simply and emphatically declares,

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. **God is a Spirit**: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

Our heavenly Father is not flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), but is a Spirit. We remember also that one day we shall be changed and shall be like Him (I Cor. 15:51f).

Almighty God's Love For Man

From the creation (Gen. 1) and the beautiful garden of Eden to our day and time, God has been so good to us! We have been given the freedom of choice from our Creator (Gen. 2:15-17). God did not create mere robots, but human beings with the power to make decisions.

God has made the necessary provisions for our salvation from sin (Heb. 5:8-9). He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). He allowed His Son to die on the rugged cross, to provide redemption so desperately needed by all mankind. He has provided an eternal inheritance (II Cor. 5:1-2) for all who will do His will (Matt. 7:21) and remain faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). He has given (and will continue to give) us the needed strength to enable us to be victorious (Matt. 6:26-33) if we seek Him

first, loving Him with all our heart, mind, body, soul and strength (Matt. 22:37).

God Has Spoken

Over the ages of man's existence on earth, God has conveyed His will to him in various ways. The Hebrew writer stated:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb. 1:1-2).

God has spoken to various ones in various ways (i.e. Moses, Saul of Tarsus, etc.). He does not speak to man today in these miraculous means. How thankful we should be that we have the inspired, infallible, inerrant, all-sufficient, complete Word of God (II Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3).

When Paul and his co-workers preached the gospel of Christ, by the divine inspiration of God, the people received it correctly, as it was in truth, from Jehovah God. Note Paul's statements about this matter:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when **ye received the word of God** which ye heard of us, **ye received it not as the word of men**, but **as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (I Thess. 2:13).

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which **God hath prepared for them** that love him. But **God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit**: for

the Spirit searcheth all things...Now **we have received**, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know **the things that are freely given to us of God** (I Cor. 2:9-12).

Thus, appropriately our interest should be focused toward the inspired Word, that we may secure the needed ***strength for daily Christian life!***

The Holy Bible

I believe the Bible is God’s inspired word and final message to mankind, and, is without error. I believe it furnishes man with all the answers to life. Nevertheless, we often hear someone make the statement that the Bible gives the world today little to no help or strength. They speak of the Bible as a book of fables, and stories of man’s imagination. They have refused to recognize it as the perfect, and authoritative word of God; and as a result of such a view, they treat it as the word of man.

The strength of any idea or the influence of any teaching upon a man is measured by the respect or honor given to the source from which it comes. Paul spoke upon this subject by saying,

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (I Thess. 2:13).

However, if man continues to refuse the Bible as the word of God, then that person continues to separate himself from the strength of it, and the light of it, and will continue to grope in darkness. This is the most serious mistake that mankind can make.

As Paul met with the elders of the church at Ephesus he gave this admonition,

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

Yes, Paul's message to these men was the word of God is able to give strength. What it was able to do then it is able to do now! The Bible is our great source of strength for all people, young and aged.

Great Source Of Strength For Faith

Tell me, what strength does a person have when he has no faith? He is left weak, and his life will come to rest in the place of great disorder and confusion. Without this strength one is left without a firm foundation. To have this strength; this faith to make strong, we must go to the Bible and feast upon its divine message. We have this affirmed by Paul. He said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Throughout Holy Writ this message or source of strength is found. Paul declared to the people at Corinth that it is by this we live: "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7). We must have this strength to enable us to fight off all the wiles of the devil. Listen to Paul,

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (Eph. 6:16).

Attached to this great and wondrous source of strength is prayer, We have a lot of things in life we do not know how to handle. By our own strength in dealing with the

struggles which daily impedes our living for Christ, finds failure without prayer. The apostle Peter encouraged those to whom he writes, that they will need strength to face the daily persecutions, and the continually occurring hardships pressing upon them as they lived a life of righteousness. This courage or strength was found as they were pointed to the words of God. Peter said to them, “Cast all your care upon him; for He careth for you” (I Peter 5:7). These people to whom Peter is inspired to write, had not been void of the Good News, for it had been proclaimed to them that they might have the strength to continue a life of faith. The Gospel Message is not one just for those at ease in Zion; when all things are well and good in life. To build their faith in God’s word, Peter said, “the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you” (I Peter 1:25).

One cannot speak of this Godly strength and working faith without saying something about Noah,

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Heb. 11:7).

Without this strength Noah would have caved-in to all the evil of his day; with it he obeyed God “being warned of Him.” It is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. How awfully and repeatedly does the Bible speak of the fate of the disobedient. Surely it becomes us, whose hearts are open and obedient to listen to God’s warnings, and with the strength we have by His divine message move to build our life upon His everlasting love and promises! The child of God is blessed

by the Lord with the strength needed, and is to be a blessing of strength to others.

It is said of Sarah that “she counted Him faithful who had promised” (Heb. 11:11). She looked to the promises; she considered Him who had given it; she received the strength needed, and of which was given to her from God. The faithfulness of God was the strength of her heart and her faith! Now, let’s tie in the life of Sarah with that of the apostle Paul. Paul made this inspired announcement, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). What does both Sarah and Paul say to us? Trust God, He is faithful; He is the living and Almighty God; He gives life (John 10:10), and strength (Phil. 4:13)! God has spoken to us through His Holy Word, and by His word we have the great promises; and there we find the pledge of what He will make us. Friend, let us look to the promise, let us look to the spoken word, let us look to the faithful One who has promised, and with whom “it was impossible to lie” (Heb. 6:18), and we shall receive the strength to make life one of rejoicing!

Great Source Of Strength For Peace

In what other place, or in what other book can one find such wonderful words as those in Matthew 5:9?

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God (Matt. 5:9).

The strength that this verse gives is beyond measure! God is the God of peace; the Messiah is the Prince of peace, and upon His entrance into this greatly disturbed world, the Heavenly Host sang praises “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:13-14). With this peace given to those who are

His, He promised,

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you... (John 14:27).

Now listen of the strength it gives, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it afraid.” All who obey the Gospel of Christ are promised this peace and are able to keep their hearts or lives, and rules there. It is stated in the Bible, by Paul,

...the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

Friend, we are in the manufacturing business! What are we to manufacture? Peace! This will dispel anxiety and bring rest, contentment, and strength! We are told, “To be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). When the peaceable life is lived, the Gospel of peace is taught, and everyone put themselves to the studying of the Bible concerning this part of Christianity it makes for a stronger family, person, and congregation.

There is a daily plan and vision to restore this strength throughout the land! This plan and the vision must first start with self. Therefore, he is peace-loving. He is considerate. He is longsuffering. He is forgiving. His conversation is peaceable. He will sacrifice himself—all but truth and righteousness. Now, with all this noted from the Bible, how could anyone deny such does not call for and make strength? This peacemaker had better be strong in this work for he will have to take blows from all sides. The whole armour of God is furnished to every child of God for the purpose of making us strong in the Lord. One part of that armour is described in this

fashion. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15). Thank God for His word!

Great Source Of Strength For Love

You show me a person who has not the love of God within his life as taught by the Bible, and I will show you a weak and maladjusted person. He will find his life testering on the brink of disaster. His actions have no real center. Therefore, he will be driven by selfish and worldly motives alone. If one is prone to think that such a point as this does not fit within the subject matter of this chapter, then he will need to rethink the matter altogether. Did not Jesus our Lord command all those who are His to love everybody? Yes, He did! Then pray tell me how we will be able to carry out that commandment without the strength the Bible gives in doing do?

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works (Heb. 10:24).

Everything that can hinder love is to be put aside. Everything that can promote, prove, and provoke others to love is to be studied from the Bible and performed. The Christian life is a life of beauty; not a life that is ugly. Without love it becomes ugly. The Christian life is a life commanded by the Bible of who to love and how that is to be done. Consider with me now a passage from the sermon on the mount.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matt. 5:44).

With all the enemies of the way of righteousness, we

have our hands full to follow Christ to love them. Now do you think such will or can be done without The Bible, Our Great Source Of Strength For Love? It took an eternal or Heavenly strength and love to leave Heaven and come to such a place as this world, but Christ did just that! I place two passages before you now; please read these and subtract love from them and see what strength they carry.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

If love is subtracted we will be left alone without God, His only begotten Son, His giving, and everlasting life. Thank God for The Bible, Our Great Source Of Strength! Please consider this passage, and do the same thing.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

You remove love from that passage and you remove all of its strength! Again you would have no God; you would have no Christ coming and dying for us, and we would still be unforgiven and in sin. There is no doubt about it, when one speaks of Bible love he speaks of a Bible strength! But, there is more!

Great Source Of Strength In Temptations

There are temptations in the life of every person who is old enough to know of sin. It is no respecter of person, not even to our Lord. Knowing that the devil places the temptations before us, and it is in order for that person to rebel against God. We stand in need of

help that we might have the strength to overcome! Where could we go but to the Lord? It is stated of Him in the Bible,

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. 2:18).

What comfort and strength comes at such a time to the person, when he sees that Jesus is able to sympathize because He has himself been thus tempted! Where did Christ go for His strength, and where can we go today to receive the strength to overcome temptation? The answer is given in the Bible, Our Great Source of Strength! The devil tempted Christ by saying, and trying with all his might, to get Him to give in to his evil propositions, and turn the stones into bread.

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

Jesus reaches back to the word of God found in Deuteronomy 8:3, and that word was strong enough to defeat the devil in this temptation. However, the devil will try again and in another way. This time the devil will also use Scripture. He wanted Jesus to prove Himself to be who He claimed to be and cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and then used Psalms 91:11-12. We watch to see where Jesus will go and do to get the strength to overcome this temptation. Jesus said, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:7). Again Jesus goes to The Bible, Our Great Source Of Strength and He quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. The devil finds defeat again. Another temptation is forthcoming. He tries to get Jesus to "fall down and

worship” him. With great strength, wonderful endurance and with His mind on things from above set an example for all mankind. Jesus stands in victory as He goes to The Bible (Duet. 6:13). Friends, what strength it offers, if we will only rely upon its divine truths!

What a privilege to know that there is no temptation so great and depressing, or so harassing, but it can be a school of faith, as we turn to God and His word. The devil is able to take the temptations he places before us and disfigures sin to make it look pleasant. Unless we continue our earthly journey by the instructions and daily help God gives through His book we shall be overcome with sin. We are encouraged, and for this very reason, to “set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2). Let this be our aim! Then the people of God shall arise with lifted voices in praise to declare,

Yield not to temptation, For yielding is sin;
Each vict'ry will help you Some other to win;
Fight man-fully on-ward, Dark passions sub-
due, Look ever to Jesus: He'll carry you thro'.
Ask Saviour to help you, Comfort, strengthen,
and keep you; He is willing to aid you, He will
carry you thro'.

Great Source Of Strength In Suffering

Our society is filled with many complex problems. We shake our heads and wonder why they have adopted some of the ideas we now notice in our daily struggles. It would seem many have forgotten the meaning of such simple and important words as Honesty, Principal, Justice, and Right. However, there is one thing they have not forgotten—Suffering!

There is no question that the matter of suffering will at some time in a life, and in some fashion, come to a person. Not all of our roads are smooth, not all our streams we must cross have calm waters. There are some rugged hills we must climb, and there are some fierce battles we must be engaged in along life's way. Paul gives a warning to Timothy, and to us today by saying, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall SUFFER persecution" (I Tim. 3:12). Now the simple question is this: What will we do with the sufferings I am called upon to bear? Is there an answer? Yes! We must turn to the Bible, Our Great Source Of Strength In Suffering! What will we find by going to the Bible? We will find a great a divine example for us to be strengthened by as we face these hardships.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (I Peter 2:21).

Consider some of the roads of sufferings.

Rejection brings into the heart a real form of suffering. When I consider this form of suffering, there are at least two people that come to mind—Moses and Christ Jesus. Moses will go back into Egypt to help get his people out of bondage and into God's promise land. It is not long, however, when they were faced with danger, disappointments, and hardships that they then had thoughts of stoning him. Moses will do the only thing he can do; see just what God's will is in instructing him to do under these circumstances. Christ Jesus our Saviour would ask after "his disciples went back, and walked no more with Him; will ye also go away?" (John 6:66-67). All the good He did; of all the hope He gives;

of all the walls of hats He removed; the world rejected Him. While on the cross He cried out with a loud voice unto God “Why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). Nevertheless, He will with a loving and obedient heart be heard to say “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

Family Problems bring suffering as nothing else of this world. A son or a daughter goes bad to walk no more the way of righteousness. A mate for many years leaves for another. Oh, the many problems within the walls of many a house. I look back upon the grieving heart of David and the suffering over a son. When David learned of Absalom’s death, he:

...went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son (II Sam. 18:33).

In all such suffering of the heart, David would always look to God, and so must we! Therefore, go to the Bible, Our Great Source Of Strength.

A Body Racked With Disease is surely a suffering that is not to be denied. Where did the woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years turn? Was it not unto the Lord (Matt. 9:20-22)? But, the Lord will not perform any miracles upon our body today that the disease will suddenly leave. True! But, again I point to the Bible, Our Great Source Of Strength under this kind of suffering! Just one place I now draw your attention—Job. The Bible says that Job was so diseased that he had “boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown” (Job 2:7). In all his sufferings Job sinned not with his lips (Job 2:10), in fact we hear him saying, “With God is

wisdom and strength, He hath counsel and understanding” (Job 12:13)! Our strength is found only when we read the Scriptures and look beyond this life on earth for

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

Thank God for such a Great Source of Strength!

Great Source Of Strength Through Promises

There is not any part of one’s life that is not attached to promises of some kind. From these promises we gather strength; but think of the mighty promises of God. Peter called these promises “exceeding great and precious promises” (II Peter 1:4). Will God keep His promises? If He doesn’t, then they give us no strength at all. But, God is faithful and does not and will not fail in His promises! Upon His great promises we live our lives and build our hopes.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) (Heb. 10:23).

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Rom. 4:21).

I think of no better way of bringing this point to an end than noting what David said.

And now, LORD, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for

ever: for thou blessest, O LORD, and it shall be blessed for ever (I Chron. 17:26-27).

Conclusion

Give me the Bible! Why? Because it is Our Source Of Strength, and that is so because “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Tim. 3:16). This book of Books holds a special interest, value, and importance to the child of God. Each book of the Bible has its own distinct place and object, and each has its own assigned purpose give to it by its divine Author! Therefore, all is divine, and without error. This we heartily believe, and without doubt go forth holding it up for all to take notice. This perfect Book (James 1:25) has in every verse the perfect God of love and strength.

We must stress the importance of this Book at all times, but more especially at a moment like the present, to have the heart and mind established in the grand truth of the divine authority of Holy Scriptures—its plenary inspiration—its all sufficiency for all purposes, for all people, at all time. There are more than a few who have hostile words about this grand old Book. There is the hostile view of infidelity who deny that God has spoken to us in His Word, and another group who would admit that God has spoken, but deny that we can understand what He says. They say that God talks god talk, and man talks man talk. But, did not the Lord instruct in Matthew 15:10 when He called the multitude, and said unto them, “hear and understand,” that we can know with clear knowledge? Wherein, let me ask, lies the difference between denying that God has spoken and that of denying that we can understand what He says? In either case, are we not deprived of the pure

word of God? Unquestionably. If God cannot give us a Book where we can understand what He says—if He cannot give us assurance that it is He Himself who speaks, I am in no wise better off than if He had not spoken at all. If God’s word is not “God Breathed” and is not understandable, then it CANNOT be God’s word at all. That which is insufficient is not God’s word! We must admit either one of two things, namely, that God has spoken at all, or if He has spoken, His word is perfect.

Give me the Bible, all my steps enlighten,
Teach me the danger of these realms below;
That lamp of safety o’er the gloom shall
brighten, That light alone the path of peace
can show.

Chapter 3

God's Source Of Strength: The Holy Bible

Perry B. Cotham

Perry has powerfully preached the gospel for over sixty-two years, on every inhabited continent, in over sixty nations. He has been involved in full-time evangelistic work since 1972. He continues his work in gospel meetings and lectureships. He has excellent books and material he has written. Perry and Teresa are loved and highly respected by those who know them. They live in Grand Prairie, Texas.



The elders and brother Paul Sain are to be commended for selecting the theme of **Strength For Daily Christian Living** for this year's lectureship. Truly, Christians need to be strong spiritually in the age in which we are now living, especially is this true today in America.

The apostle Peter closed his second epistle to the children of God with the important words of warning:

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, **beware** lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, **fall** from your own steadfastness. But **grow** in **grace**, and in the **knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. (II Peter 3:17-18; cf. II Peter 1:2-4).

Paul, likewise, encouraged the disciples at Ephesus to "be **strong** in the Lord, and in the power of his might" by putting "on the whole armour of God...that ye may

be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand**" (Eph. 6:10, 13). A congregation may be large in membership and financially well secure and yet be very weak in spiritual matters. When we read the letters of our Lord, through John, directed by the Holy Spirit, to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2 and 3), we note that this is true. The church at Ephesus by this time (around A. D. 96) had left its "first love" and was told to remember from whence they had "fallen, and repent" (Rev. 2:4-5). The congregation at Pergamos had those who held to the "doctrine of Balaam" and also to "the doctrine of the Nicolaitans" (Rev. 2:14-15). This the Lord hated. They, too, were told to "repent." Evidently there was some form of immorality in the church among some of the members and it was being overlooked.

In the church at Thyatira the woman Jezebel was allowed to "teach and seduce" the Lord's servants "to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Rev. 2:20), a very common practice among the ancient pagans. They were told to "repent of their deeds" (v. 22). The church at Sardis was a living **dead** church, i.e., dead spiritually, although alive physically (cf. Matt. 8:22; I Tim. 5:6). Sin brings about a spiritual separation between God and man (Gen. 2:17; Isa. 59:1-2). Even though there were "a few names" in the congregation which had "not defiled their garments" the church as a whole needed to "repent" (Rev. 3:1-6). The church was in need of a great spiritual revival (cf. Psm. 85:6; Hab. 3:2).

The church at Laodicea was "lukewarm"—"neither cold nor hot" (Rev. 3:15-20). Although the members were "rich and increased with goods" from a material standpoint, and thought they had need of "nothing" yet

from a spiritual standpoint they were “wretched,” “miserable,” “poor,” “blind,” and “naked.” They were in dire need of that true wealth that makes a group of Christians “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” They were likewise told to “repent,” for their “lukewarm,” half-hearted condition made the Lord sick at His stomach and He was ready to spew them out of His mouth. What a vivid illustration of disgust the Savior had for this wealthy, self-satisfied church!

No word of adverse criticism is offered against the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia; they were good, strong, and faithful Christians although they were not perfect from a human standpoint (I John 1:8-10).

These seven churches are illustrative of congregations in the world today. Some are weak, some are strong, and some are in between. Thus, if the churches will carefully study the epistles, in connection with their daily living, and then study the letters to the seven churches of Asia, wherein the Lord points out the good and the bad in each group, they, too, can easily see how they stand in the Lord’s sight. Our desire should be that all congregations grow spiritually and remain faithful to God, for if the members are strong, the congregation will be strong (cf. Acts 16:5).

The Source Of The Christian’s Strength

But, what is God’s source of strength for the Christian? How are children of God made strong in the Lord? The apostle John desired that his beloved friend, Gaius, “prosper and be in health” even as his soul prospered (III John 2). Gaius, then, was not in good health bodily, yet spiritually he was in excellent health. We might need to reverse this statement if we were

writing some of our friends today. They are in excellent health physically and are prospering materially, yet their souls are very weak and sickly. However, Gaius was walking in the truth (III John 3). He had learned to put **first things first**.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

From a short letter to him we know that he was a man of liberality, hospitality, and good works. We cannot separate theory and practice in genuine Christianity. Therefore, there is such a thing as **soul-prosperity**. Just as a growing child must have plenty of good, wholesome food to nourish his body for growth, so must the Christian have good food for his spiritual growth. What is that food? It is the word of God. Peter told newborn babes in Christ to “desire the sincere milk of the **word**, that ye may **grow** thereby” (I Peter 2:2). God’s word is spiritual nourishment. There is no growth without it. Jesus, in answering the temptation of Satan to command that these stones be turned into bread, said:

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matt. 4:4).

The Bible is our source of spiritual food, and the Lord wants us to grow by feeding upon His word. The Old Testament prophet Hosea said in the long ago to the people of Israel:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee... (Hosea 4:6; cf. Isa. 30:10; Jer. 5:31).

The people had the word of God, but they were ignorant of it. As a result of this, and not obeying the Lord, the northern kingdom (Israel) went into Assyrian Captivity. Ignorance of God’s word always leads to apostasy.

The teaching must be “sincere,” that is, pure, unadulterated, wholesome, not mixed with the opinions and doctrines of men which corrupt the word (II Cor. 2:17). Thus, all Christians, young and old alike, should read, study, love and obey the Bible that they may grow (cf. Heb. 5:12-14; I Cor. 3:1-3). The Holy Scriptures have the answers to our spiritual problems, if we would learn and apply them to our lives. I love to preach. There is nothing comparable to it. But, never in my years of preaching has the Lord’s church been faced with more serious problems than now, nor has there been a greater need for sound gospel preaching (cf. I Kings 18:1-40; 22:14). A compromising spirit with religious errors is steadily increasing in the church among those not rooted and grounded in the faith (Col. 2:7; Eph. 3:17). Untaught members of the church are as “children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:4). Some who once stood firm for the truth of the gospel stand there no more. Some of our popular brethren are meeting with the exponents of error in “one of the villages in the plain of Ono” (Neh. 6:12), and are compromising God’s word.¹ How sad!

Paul, in his farewell words to the elders of the church at Ephesus, while in Miletus, declared:

I commend you to God, and to the **word** of his grace, which is **able to build you up**, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. (Acts 20:32; cf. v. 28-31).

There is no greater source of strength for the Christian

than the word of God. There is no greater way to protect our home from the assaults of the devil than by teaching our family the Holy Scriptures (cf. Matt. 5:6). This is the Lord's source of strength for the Christian. It is the food for the soul, but we are losing many of our young people today from the church. Timothy was taught the scriptures from a child (II Tim. 3:15). Likewise, our children are being taught in the public schools evolution as a fact. They are daily exposed to immorality and the drug culture on TV programs, video, and various books (magazines). They are our precious children; they have (are) immortal souls.

I saw tomorrow look at me,
From little children's eyes,
And though how careful we would be,
If we were really wise.

However, with every temptation God provides for us a way of escape (I Cor. 10:13). But we need strong, biblically-oriented lessons in our Bible classes and in our preaching. One person dies every 30 minutes because of drunken drivers. About ten million drunken driving accidents occur each year, involving many young people (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-32).

Young People Have Questions

Our youth today are desperate for teaching that answers some of the basic questions, such as: "Who am I? Why am I here? Who put me here? Is there really a God to whom I am accountable and to whom I owe allegiance? Are there moral absolutes? Is there life after death, or does death end it all? What will bring me real happiness and satisfaction in life?"

The Holy Scriptures give the answers to these

questions. The Psalmist said,

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. (Psm. 119:9).

The question really means, “How may I live a pure and noble life?” It is really the question for everybody, but it is more especially for young people. They often live without any plan of life at all.

The answer is, “By taking heed to the word of God.” That seems a very simple, common-sense answer. We often say, “It is always right to do right, and it is always wrong to do wrong.” But what determines what is right and what is wrong? We cannot trust our own selves for the guidance of our lives, or for our duty (cf. Eccl. 12:13-14).

O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (Jer. 10:23; cf. Prov. 14:12; 12:15; 21:2).

So it is the word of God that gives an all-sufficient guide for life (II Peter 1:3). The songwriter expressed this thought in a beautiful way:

How shall the young secure their hearts,
And guide their lives from sin?
Thy word the choicest rules imparts
To keep the conscience clean.

–Isaac Waats

Satan is shrewd; he knows how to lead us astray, especially the young people. But we should not be ignorant of “his devises” (II Cor. 2:11). We should beware of evil thoughts that can be planted in our minds. We must continue to renew our minds on God’s word (Rom. 12:2). For, as a person “thinketh in his heart, so is he”

(Prov. 23:7). The Bible warns, therefore, that we guard our hearts.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. (Prov. 4:23).

...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (Matt. 12:34)

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psm. 119:11).

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (Psm. 1:1-2).

Strengthened By The Spirit

Paul's desire for the Christians at Ephesus was that they might be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:16-17). But **how** does the Holy Spirit strengthen Christians? It is through the inspired word, "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17). Hence, Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Let the **word of Christ** dwell in you richly in all wisdom..." (3:16). John closed every one of his letters to the seven churches of Asia by saying:

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches... (Rev. 2:7).

A very important question is, "How was the Spirit saying those things to the churches?" It was by the written word. John was told to "write" (Rev. 1:11, 19) and the churches were to hear what the Spirit was saying in the written word. This is how the Spirit speaks unto us

today; it is by means of the word. This is how Christ dwells in our hearts (Col. 1:27; Rom. 10:17). This is how the Spirit leads and guides the child of God today (Rom. 8:14). David declared:

Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. (Psm. 73:24).

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psm. 119:105).

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. (Psm. 119:130).

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. (Psm. 119:97).

Thus the Spirit’s strengthening is through the word of God.

A Famine In The Land

Amos, the prophet, spoke of a great famine in Israel, a spiritual famine, a famine of hearing the words of the Lord:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: (Amos 8:11).

Today all across our great land there is a famine, a scarcity of good Bible teaching and preaching. Many members of the church of our Lord are literally starving to hear basic, fundamental gospel preaching. Just as Amos spoke of a famine not of bread and water (which are necessary for growth and health of the body), but of a much greater famine—a famine of hearing the words of the Lord, the sorest of all famines—so it is with us.

Members are getting tired of being fed only pablum Sunday after Sunday. They desire something more solid from the Bible, the meat of God's word.

If a mother stops feeding her child it will soon become weak and finally it will die. The same is true with us as God's children. If we cease to feed upon God's word, the food for the soul, we will become weak spiritually and finally spiritual life will die. With many families, **Family Hour** died when TV arrived.

Some churches, because of liberalism, have decided not to have a strong pulpit proclaiming God's truths, or conduct gospel meetings any longer. They have suffered not only loss in membership but also in spiritual strength as a result. The power is in the gospel (Rom. 1:16); God's word is powerful (Heb. 4:12); "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21; cf. Jonah 3:2; Ezek. 3:16-21).

A pioneer gospel preacher was once heard to say, "I would rather have thousands to say to me at the judgment, 'We heard you preach and you hurt our feelings,' than to have just one lost soul say, 'I heard you preach, but you did not tell me the truth.'" Paul asked the Galatians, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). But he also spoke of "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). A faithful gospel preacher will both save himself and them that hear him (I Tim. 4:16; cf. Acts 20:26-27; Gal. 1:8-9). Paul's charge to Timothy was, "**Preach the word**" (II Tim. 4:1-2). How can a man who claims to be a gospel preacher stand before an audience Sunday after Sunday, with lost souls before him, and never one time tell them what one must do to be saved? Or, how to be restored? We need to cry out as did Jeremiah of old: "O earth,

earth, earth, **hear the word of the Lord**” (Jer. 22:29).

One Christian lady was once heard to say to a gospel preacher, after he had preached a great sermon, quoting many verses of Scripture from memory, “I would give half of my life to know the Bible as you do.” The preacher replied, “That is just about what it cost me.”

Peter told Christians to add to their faith, “knowledge” (II Peter 1:5). Perhaps one of the damning sins of this age for members of the church is Biblical ignorance. Paul instructed Timothy to study:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (II Tim. 2:15; cf. I Tim. 4:13).

A preacher cannot preach what he does not know (cf. Ezra 7:10; Neh. 8:8).

Not Knowing The Scriptures

Once when Jesus was approached by the Sadducees concerning the continuation of the departed spirit (souls) of man after physical death (they thought a person ceased to exist at death), replied, “Ye do err, **not knowing the scriptures**, nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29).

Many errors will be accepted by members of the church when they seemingly do not know the Scriptures. We cannot test false teachers if we do not know the divine standard, the word of God. The apostle John wrote:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world...We (that is, apostles, inspired men –PBC) are of

God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (I John 4:1, 6; cf. Rev. 2:2).

God's word is truth. Jesus said, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Hence, that which differs from the Holy Scriptures cannot be truth.

There are many areas in which members of the church should know the Scriptures and be strong enough to stand up for the truth. We shall note only three:

(1) **Morality.** We are living at a time of increasing immorality. Children are being disobedient to their parents as well as the laws of the land. Teenage pregnancies are increasing each year. Some 45 million abortions are performed worldwide every year. About 1,340 infants are born every day nationwide to teen and pre-teen mothers—nearly 500,000 babies a year. The United States spends more than \$21 billion each year to support families started by teen mothers. According to recent news, worldwide, twenty million are affected with the HIV virus (AIDS), and four million have already died with it. Many more will die in the future due to this disease. Since 1981, more than 200,000 have died of AIDS nationally.

God's law on marriage and divorce is being ignored (Matt. 19:9). (Elizabeth Taylor, age 64, has just broken up with husband number eight). Couples are living together outside of marriage, and some homosexual couples want their union to be considered as a marriage. In the beginning God created Adam and Eve, male and female, and not Adam and Steve, or Eve and Evelyn. It was one man for one woman till death (Mal. 2:15). But today we read of "Alternate lifestyles." There is no sense

of shame in the minds of some when fornication is committed and a child is born out of wedlock.

Homosexuals tell Christians that Jesus never condemned their “lifestyles.” But they are ignorant of the Scriptures. Christ sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles to guide them into all truth (John 16:13), and they spoke and wrote as the Spirit gave them words (Acts 2:4; I Cor. 2:13; 14:37). Paul wrote that God gave up idol worshipers to,

...uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves...For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet (Rom. 1:24-27).

Paul also mentioned those who shall not “inherit the kingdom of God,” including the “effeminate (i.e., effeminate by perversion, ft., NASB)” and “abusers of themselves with mankind (homosexuals, NASB)” (I Cor. 6:9-10).²

However, Jesus is able and willing to save all, but He will not forgive those who do not repent (Luke 13:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 17:30; II Peter 3:9). Moreover, even some at Corinth who had practiced such sins were forgiven, for Paul continued in the next verse by saying, “and such **were** some of you: but ye are washed...” (I Cor. 6:11; Acts 18:8; 22:16).

Again, Paul writes that “adultery” and “fornication” will exclude one from heaven (Gal. 5:19-21)—that is,

unless there is true repentance.³ The government says it wants to curb teen pregnancies. But educating youth concerning “safe sex” is not the answer to the problem. The Bible teaches that all sexual relationships outside of scriptural marriages are sinful.⁴ Paul admonished the Corinthians: “Flee fornication” (I Cor. 6:18).

(2) **The plan of salvation.** Jesus Christ is man’s only Savior; He is the only way by which we may reach heaven (John 14:6). Salvation is not to be found in any other name under heaven (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ has “all authority” today in religion (Matt. 28:18), and the New Testament is the Lord’s final and complete revelation to man (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). All others who have come on the religious scene since the complete word of God was given by the inspired apostles, claiming to have a divine revelation, were false prophets (Matt. 7:15, 21-27; II John 9).

Jesus teaches that one must hear His word and believe in Him as the only begotten Son of God, sincerely repent of all sins, confess His name before men, and be buried with Him in baptism in order to obtain the forgiveness of all past sins by the grace of God (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; I Peter 3:21). There is no other plan of salvation, and no one has the assurance of forgiveness of his sins except on the basis of his obedience to the Lord’s will (Eph. 2:8). There is no direct guidance of the Spirit telling one what to do to be saved, or giving to him the assurance of salvation.⁵ Preachers must preach what the Bible says on the plan of salvation and members of the church must be mature enough to say that this is right. The denominational plan of “faith only” or “pray this prayer and ask Jesus to come into your heart” is not biblical teaching (Rom.

6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27). Neither is “accept Christ as your personal Savior” (Luke 6:46).

(3) **The Church.** The church that Christ established is composed of all the saved, and none but the saved. The Lord adds the saved to it as they are being saved (Acts 2:47). He added those who were being saved at the beginning of the church on the day of Pentecost and He still does. Those who obey the Lord’s plan of salvation are members of this divinely “called-out” body of redeemed people. They are not members of any man-made sect or denomination. There is not a doctrine or practice, engaged in by the Lord’s church, that originated with any man. The members follow the teaching of Christ, recorded in the New Testament. They wear the name of Christ, and are called “Christians.” If all people would follow only the Bible, we would all be teaching and practicing the same thing—nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different. The church of our Lord Jesus Christ is not the same human origination that began on the American frontier some one hundred fifty years ago. Sowing the seed of the kingdom, the word of God (Luke 8:11), is an absolute must for the survival of the Lord’s church in any area of the world. But the church is eternal (Dan. 2:44; I Peter 1:23). There is a difference between the church described in the New Testament and Protestantism. Christ’s church is not a Protestant denomination. The word of God does not produce denominationalism, but it will produce Christians. Let us, therefore, not be ashamed today to stand for primitive, New Testament, undenominational Christianity, as many of our forefathers have done.⁶ We must be opposed to all false religions.

Conclusion

Let us restore the teaching of the Bible. Let us read the Bible, love the Bible, and live by the truths of the Bible. This is God's source of strength for the Christian. A knowledgeable membership is one of the church's greatest defenses against apostasy.

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (Eph. 5:17).

Endnotes

1 Some younger men who have been schooled in denominational theology and methodology are now trying to incorporate erroneous doctrines and practices among faithful people of God. Their efforts must be resisted with the Scriptures (Titus 1:9-11). The gospel does not change (Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3).

2 Some modern dictionaries clarify these terms for those who need plainer language: "male prostitutes" and "homosexual offenders;" "catamites" and "sodomites" (Cf. Lev. 18:2; 20:13.) Marriage was ordained of God "at the beginning" (Matt. 19:4-6).

3 Repentance is a change of mind involving a reformation of life (Jonah 3:10; Matt. 12:41; 21:29).

4 A report from Washington showed that 72 percent of all young offenders are victims of divorce. It has been said, "What strengthens the family strengthens society." So, the converse is true: Whatever weakens the family, likewise weakens society. The best manual on "Marriage and the Home" is the Bible. God who created us knows what we need better than we do. Also, it is reported that unborn children are being aborted at a rate exceeding 4,000 every day. By the year 2000, four out of every five couples who marry will have already been living together.

5 See the authors tracts: **The Bible—God's Inspired Book Versus Direct Holy Spirit Guidance** and **The Holy Spirit in Conversion** (Privately published).

6 Alan E. Highers wrote: "Indifference is one of the greatest dangers to the body of Christ. It leads to worldliness, compromise, and liberalism...We have lived to see the day when churches have been overcome by error, led into liberalism, tainted by false doctrine, and in some cases, re-structured beyond recognition. It requires only

one generation of non-distinctive preaching for the church to change” The Spiritual Sword, “**The Country Preacher From Tekoa**” (Getwell Church of Christ, Memphis, TN: Vol. 26, No. 4, July 1995), p. 14.

Owen Cosgrove stated: “A well-informed and scripturally knowledgable membership is one of the church’s greatest defenses against apostasy” Fort Worth Lectures, FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH, “**The Importance of Sound Doctrine**” (Bedford, TX: Brown Trail Church of Christ), p. 460.

Chapter 3

Jesus: Our Example, Leader, Tempted One, And Overcomer

Michael Hatcher



Michael has been preaching for over twenty years. He graduated from Harding College (1976) with a degree in Bible. He has worked with congregations in Texas, Oklahoma and Florida. He has been a frequent speaker for youth, gospel meetings and lectureship programs. Michael presently preaches for the Bellvue congregation in Pensacola, Florida. Michael and Karen have two sons.

Peter gives us a beautiful description of the life of Jesus when he says,

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (Acts 10:38).

What a great summary of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, “He went about doing good.”

Man is looking for heroes to follow today. Sadly, we often look for those heroes to emulate from Hollywood or sports. We have the adage from the commercial, “Be like Mike” expressing the desire to be like the great basketball star. When Micky Mantle died, many people recounted how they wanted to be like the Mick. They wanted to walk, talk, swing, run, etc., just like Micky Mantle. Recently, after seeing the movie **Forrest Gump**, many young people would come up and say, “My name’s Forrest, Forrest Gump” trying to sound just like Tom

Hanks in the movie. While these are just some examples, we often look to the wrong places to find our heroes. Sometimes we find the most vile, immoral, ungodly characters to be our heroes. Neither Hollywood nor sports should set the standard for Christians. Jesus is the greatest hero man could find. Christ and His Law should be the one to which we turn.

Example And Leader

Man is going to follow someone, seventy-five percent of what we learn and do is the result of what we see in others. God gave us His Son as an example. Christ lived a sinless life. His life was perfect in every way. Thus, He should be the example of our life. Jesus told His apostles,

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you (John 13:15).

He is that perfect and sinless example for every situation we might face within life. There is no man that measures up to this high and noble standard. Man sins, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23; see also Gal. 3:22; I John 1:8,10). Isaiah wrote,

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6).

Knowing man’s nature is like sheep, Jesus said,

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice (John 10:4).

Jesus is the good shepherd.

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily,

verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep...I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep (John 10:7,11).

He goes before us and we are to follow His voice, His commands as revealed in the New Testament.

As a shepherd, Jesus leads and walks before us. We, thus, must walk after Him. John would write, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:6). To walk as Christ walked we must first come to know Him, see where and how He walked. When Jesus gives His great invitation (Matt. 11:28-30), He says,

Take my yoke upon you, and **learn of me**; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matt. 11:29).

Paul had the desire to learn of Christ when he says,

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death (Phil. 3:10).

He knew that the only way to eternal salvation is through a knowledge of God and of His Son (John 17:3).

The wise man informs us that we are what we think. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7a). Jesus teaches the same principle when He says,

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies (Matt. 15:19).

Thus, to follow the lead and example of Jesus we must learn of Him and develop within our mind His mind. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"

(Phil. 2:5). Through developing His mind in ours we then begin forming His will in us.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you (Gal. 4:19).

We die to self so Christ can live with us.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world” (I John 4:17).

Obviously, Paul was successful in following Jesus’ example and leadership. Near the end of his life Paul would summarize his life. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (II Tim. 4:7). Likewise, others were and are able to follow the example of Christ and will receive a crown of life. Paul places those who love the appearing of Christ in this category.

Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:8).

This gives us hope. We know that we can follow the footsteps of Jesus, overcome, and receive the crown of life.

Tempted One

One specific area in which Jesus is our example is in temptation. Jesus was tempted in every way in which we are tempted.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).

Jesus is like all people in the things which He endured.

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. 2:17-18).

Satan has three avenues of temptation. John categorizes them in I John 2:15-17.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh**, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

As Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, he used all three of these.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat,

and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:6).

Eve was tempted by the lust of the flesh in seeing that the tree was good for food, by the lust of the eyes in that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and by the pride of life in the desire to make one wise. As we know, Eve succumbed to these temptations bringing sin into the world.

Jesus went “into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matt. 4:1). Satan used the same avenues of temptation he used on Eve to tempt Jesus. After fasting forty days and nights Satan wanted Jesus to forget the spiritual and think only of the physical by turning rocks into bread, the lust of the flesh (Matt. 4:3). Then, Satan takes Jesus and sets Him on the pinnacle of the temple and encourages Him to jump off and allow the angels to bear Him up, tempting Him with the pride of life (Matt. 4:5-6). Then, Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and tells Him I will give these to you if you will fall down and worship me, tempting Him by the lust of the eyes. Each time Jesus overcame the temptation by the proper use of the Scriptures. Satan used every avenue of temptation that was available to him to tempt Jesus to sin. Satan uses those same avenues to tempt us to sin. Jesus was able to overcome them, and so are we.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10:13).

There are not only temptations to sin, there are

also temptations relating to the trials and afflictions that one must suffer and endure. Jesus not only had to overcome the temptations to sin, but there was a great deal of suffering and afflictions which came upon Jesus. As Isaiah prophesied of the coming Messiah, he did so under the figure of a suffering servant. Notice the great prophecy from Isaiah 53.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isa. 53:3).

Jesus was a man of sorrows. Often he felt grief and pain within His earthly life.

While there is no record in the Bible of Jesus laughing, we often see Him in grief and sorrow. As Jesus faced the trials of life, He had no permanent home, no where to lay His head.

And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head (Matt. 8:19-20).

No doubt Jesus recognized that He was just a stranger and pilgrim passing through this world (I Peter 2:11; Phil. 3:20). However, this would be a great difficulty and today would cause most people great sorrow and heartache as is evidenced by the homeless in our society.

Jesus grieved over and because of others. Jesus' purpose in coming to earth was to save sinners. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Yet, those to whom Jesus came rejected Him. John writes, "He came unto his own, and

his own received him not” (John 1:11). Jesus went to his hometown and even they rejected Him (Matt. 13:53-58). Then His own earthly family rejected Him and His mission. “For neither did his brethren believe in him” (John 7:5). Those close to Him thought He had gone insane,

And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, he is beside himself (Mark 3:21).

We see how this grieved Jesus when He was about to heal a man on the Sabbath and the people were watching Him to see what He would do. They planned to accuse Him. It says of Jesus,

And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being *grieved for the hardness of their hearts*, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other (Mark 3:5).

Toward the end of Jesus’ earthly life, we see His sorrow over the people’s rejection as He overlooks Jerusalem and laments,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matt. 23:37).

Adding to His discouragement because of the people’s rejection would be the discouragement resulting from the lack of understanding. The Jews had the “oracles of God” committed to them. One of the purposes was to bring them to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Thus, the Old

Testament law should give them an understanding of the Messiah. Adding to this, Christ had spent over three years teaching and instructing them. The Jews as a whole misunderstood Him, but what would be greater discouragement is that even those closest to Him misunderstood. Jesus was continually having to correct the improper thinking of His apostles. Even at the close of Jesus' earthly ministry, the apostles did not understand. One can almost see the frustration of Jesus as He says:

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? (John 14:7-9).

Even after His death and resurrection the apostles did not have a correct understanding of Christ and His kingdom.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? (Acts 1:6).

The idea they presented to Christ is Him setting up an earthly kingdom like unto David's where He would rule on a physical throne in Jerusalem. This is the same error the premillennialist makes today. No doubt Jesus felt frustrated and a little bit discouraged.

Then Jesus faced the temptation of pain. Certainly there was the great pain relating to His death. His was

no ordinary death, it was the death of the cross, crucifixion. This was the most painful, agonizing, and horrible death that has ever been devised by man. However, the pain and agony begins prior to His crucifixion. Jesus’ agony was so great while He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane concerning His resurrection that the Bible records,

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:44).

After His arrest by a mob, He faced five trials, most unlawful. There was no justice in any of these trials; Jesus was innocent of any crime against the state, yet never released. During these trials he was slapped, mocked and humiliated. However,

...when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (I Peter 2:23).

Then prior to His crucifixion, He was scourged by the Romans. This alone killed many individuals. Those who lived from the scourging would be left a bloody mass. The flesh, tendons, and ligaments would be a shredded mass. Then, He was made to carry His cross to Calvary where they crucified Him. Crucifixion was so terrible that it is reported that “even among the raging passions of war pity was sometimes excited.” The victim would literally die a thousand deaths. With the combinations of the spikes in His hands and feet, the loss of blood, the spikes causing traumatic fever, the unnatural body position, the insufferable thirst, the exposure and inflammation of the wounds leading to gangrene, the

arteries of the head and stomach surcharged with blood causing terrific throbbing headache and nausea, and tetanus with its attending convulsions tearing the wounds, to name a few of the effects of the cross would cause indescribable pain. When death finally came, it was a great blessing. Jesus endured this freely for us.

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17-18).

While many people think that the victory was won for Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, this is far from the truth. This victory was won before He ever came to this world. As great as the pain of the cross was, the greatest pain and anguish would have been the leaving of heaven's home and coming to this world. Paul vividly portrays this anguish when he teaches us about the need for humility.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8).

The word "form" means to have the inner nature of and express it outwardly as Christ was (is) God, inside and out. He was equal to God in every way. Yet, He emptied or humbled Himself to come to this world to face the

death of the cross. The Hebrew writer expresses it in this way:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2).

The word “for” in the phrase “for the joy that was set before him” is from the Greek word **anti**. The meaning of this term is opposite to, for, instead of. Thus, we learn that as opposed to the joy that was set before Him or instead of the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. What was the joy that was set before Him? An eternally equality with the Father in heaven was set before Christ. By far the greatest difficulty ever presented to our Lord was emptying Himself to leave heaven and eternal equality with the Father to come to this world for the purpose of dying on the cross. As Paul says,

For ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (II Cor. 8:9).

Overcomer

Often those who have fallen into some great evil and escaped the evil, thus overcoming it are heralded as great people and as ensamples for us to follow. I have often wondered why use those who fell to the temptations, why not use someone who has overcome the temptations, who never fell into the temptation. Jesus was faced with every temptation known to man (Heb. 2:17-18). Yet the prevailing thought throughout

the Scriptures is that Jesus overcame the temptation and sufferings to live a perfect and sinless life.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet **without sin** (Heb. 4:15).

Before His crucifixion, Jesus affirms that He has been victorious over the world.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

John describes the end of all those who fight against the Lamb of God.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

John, as per the theme of Revelation, also shows that since Christ overcame the world those who are with Him are also overcomers.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (Rev. 3:21).

The great comfort that we have is that Jesus suffered, in that suffering He left an example for us to follow. When we follow His example we, like Christ, will overcome as He overcame.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an

example, that ye should follow his steps (I Peter 2:21).

When we are faced with the temptation to sin; we, like Christ, are able to overcome these temptations.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10:13).

When we are faced with discouragement; we know that we can overcome it, just like Christ. When others forsake us, we, like Christ, can carry on. When others persecute us for the sake of righteousness, we know that we can overcome, because Christ lead the way giving us an example. We also know His promises that He will be with us.

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. 13:5-6).

What marvellous encouragement that God has given to us in the example of Jesus.

Conclusion

As we conclude this lesson there is one more principle we should notice. Peter writes,

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin (I Peter 4:1).

Peter reveals that Christ suffered in the flesh. The suffering of Christ has direct reference to His death upon the cross (see Luke 24:46-47; Heb. 9:26; 13:12; I Peter 3:18). We must arm ourselves with the same mind, to suffer in the flesh. The reason is that those who have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin. If the suffering of Christ refers to His death, then it seems that our suffering should be unto death. This is the situation. We must suffer unto death. While Christ's death was physical, our death is spiritual. We must die to the old man of sin. Paul puts it concerning his life as,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

This death to sin is what baptism is about.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin (Rom. 6:3-7).

In that death to sin in baptism, we are raised to walk in newness of life—ceased from sin (I Peter 4:1). We have been freed from sin and its power over us, so we yield

ourselves “unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:13b). When we live in this way, we overcome the world and have hope of eternal life with God in heaven.

Section II
The Christian



*The Christian Under Attack
It Is Possible To Live A Faithful Life
We Can Know We Are Saved
To Aid Me In My Christian Life, I Have...
God Is Able To Deliver Us From Temptation*

Chapter 4

The Christian Under Attack¹

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American culture is currently experiencing catastrophic upheaval and undergoing swift transformation. The shift is away from the value system and moral principles upon which this nation was founded. Sociologists now designate America to be a “post-Christian nation.”

The church is unquestionably mirroring the trends of secular society. We are facing in the church the same widescale apostasy/digression that churches of Christ faced one hundred years ago. A sizeable portion of the church is buying into the notion of **change** and following eagerly behind the liberal leadership of the change agents.²

The primary focus of the attack upon Christians from within the church today centers on worship. The change agents are expending most of their efforts upon transforming the worship assembly of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Church Music

For example, music in the assembly is receiving tremendous attention. Many would have no problem bringing in the instrument, and some have done so for weddings. But for the most part, the older generation has done such a good job of expressing opposition to instrumental music over the years that the change agents appear unwilling to make it the battleline. Instead, they are concentrating their efforts on the use of “special music,” i.e., solos and choirs, in the regular worship assembly of the church. But the New Testament is extremely clear on the matter. Singing is to be congregational, i.e., the entire church participating **together** in the singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Paul’s reference to “each one has a psalm” (I Cor. 14:26) is a reference, not to solos, but most likely to inspired hymn writers who provided the infant church with suitable psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. No authority exists for solos and choirs in the assembly.

Drama

Another area where today’s Christian is under attack is in the matter of drama—costumed actors and actresses performing in plays in the assembly. But this medium was available to Christ, the apostles and the early church as a prominent phenomenon of Graeco-Roman culture. Yet divine directions for the dissemination of the gospel message are conspicuously silent regarding drama. In giving the Great Commission, Jesus did not say, “Go, into all the world and **act** the gospel to every creation!” Instead, “it pleased God through the foolishness of **preaching** to save those who believe” (I Cor. 1:21).

Lord's Supper

Change agents are also insisting that the Lord's Supper can be observed on any day of the week in addition to Sunday. But if we are going to let the Bible govern our practice, non-Sunday observance is unauthorized. If one will simply gather together every passage that has any relevance to the subject (i.e., Matt. 26:26-29; Acts 2:42; 20:6-11; I Cor. 10:16-21; 11:20-34; 16:1-2), the conclusion is inescapable: New Testament Christians, under the divine guidance of the apostles (Matt. 16:19; 18:18-20; 19:28; John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13), partook of the Lord's Supper **every** Sunday and **only** on Sunday.

Dedicating Babies

Some churches are incorporating into their worship assemblies opportunities (usually at the invitation song) for young couples to come forward with their newborn infants. Typically, the preacher holds the child and faces the congregation together with the parents. He will say a few words of admonition that the child be raised to give his life to the Lord and then lead the congregation in prayer on behalf of the parents and child. Baby dedications are popular in the denominational world (e.g., among Methodists and Mormons who reject the Catholic notion of original sin). Certainly, praying for parents and children is authorized and has always been practiced among churches of Christ. But creating a new worship ritual that goes beyond the praying that we have always done is an unauthorized invention of mere men that finds no shred of support from the Bible.

Lifting Up Hands

A very popular practice currently characteristic of the charismatic, pentecostal brand of denominationalism is lifting up of the arms. The Bible identifies at least seven distinct prayer postures, one of which consists of arms outstretched and elevated with palms up—the posture of request (e.g., I Kings 8:22; Ezra 9:5). This posture was used in antiquity to approach a king or even a pagan deity. The posture was not simply a meaningless positioning of the body, but rather communicated the idea of appealing to the higher authority in hopes of securing his approval for the specific request being made or his favor and acceptance in general.

But those who lift up their arms in our day do so with palms down, arms swaying from side to side (sometimes with only one arm raised), and they do this—not usually during prayer—but during singing and preaching! In other words, they are doing something which is totally unknown in the Bible! They are simply mimicking the denominational practices spawned by false religion. The purpose? Lifting up one’s arms is strictly a way to **feel** religion. It is a way to substitute *feeling* in place of actual compliance with biblical worship action.

Handclapping

Handclapping is occurring in our assemblies in two forms. First, some clap in rhythm to their worship in song. As such, the clapping is used as musical accompaniment and therefore constitutes musical expression that is unauthorized. Striking the hands together while singing is no more acceptable to God than striking the hands on a drum while singing.

Handclapping is simply a “natural” form of “mechanical” instrumental music. If one can clap hands as musical accompaniment, then one could also stomp (e.g., clogging or tap dancing), snap fingers, or slap knees.

Handclapping is also taking place in the form of applause—usually after a baptism or during a sermon. Some argue that handclapping is a 20th century parallel to the use of “amen.” However, handclapping in American culture conveys excitement, approval, recognition. Americans clap at concerts and ballgames as a spontaneous outburst of their excitement and to communicate the fact that they *like* what they see and hear. Americans applaud to express their agreement with and approval of a performance—the focus being upon the talents and skills of the performer.

However, “amen” in both the Old and New Testament is a vocal affirmation of the **truthfulness and certainty of God’s word**. It doesn’t even matter whether the hearer **agrees** with God’s words, or **likes** God’s words. God’s word is true and binding and deserves to be affirmed as such. Whereas handclapping is aimed at the **performer** whose skills merit recognition, “amen” in the Bible is aimed at the words, the message being spoken. The skill and prowess of the speaker are completely irrelevant and, in fact, should **not** be extolled (I Cor. 2:1-5; Rom. 16:18). Handclapping in worship is simply not authorized!

Female Worship Leaders

Feminism is making its influence felt in the worship assembly. Women are gradually being incorporated into leadership roles, including waiting on the Lord’s table, singing solos and directing choirs,

reading Scripture, and leading prayer. Some feminist spokesmen are insisting that the restrictions on women stated in Scripture are actually simply cultural limitations that pertained to the peculiar circumstances of the first century. Others say the passages refer to specific women of that day who were domineering and overbearing and apply today not to women in general but only to those women who would behave in a similar manner.³

But the change agents must engage in “hermeneutical ventriloquism” and meander through a maze of convoluted manipulation of the Bible to dismiss the consistent emphasis upon female subordination in worship. The differentiation of roles based on gender in God’s scheme of things transcends **culture** and is rooted in **Creation**. While male and female are **equal** in God’s sight in terms of worth and salvation status (Gen. 1:27; Gal. 3:28), God chose to assign different functions and responsibilities to males and females. Among these distinctions is the fact that God wants only the adult **males** to lead in mixed worship settings (I Tim. 2:8,11-12).

The foundational Creation premises upon which this distinction is based include the following. The head (i.e., authority) of woman is man (I Cor. 11:3). While both were created in God’s image, the male uniquely manifests the glory of God while the female reflects the glory of the male (I Cor. 11:3). The male was created **first** (Gen. 2:7; I Tim. 2:13) implying a leadership role. The female was fashioned from the male’s own body (Gen. 2:22-23; I Cor. 11:8). While male and female compliment each other, the female was uniquely created **for** the male in a way that he was not created for her

(I Cor. 11:9).

Finally, God's original intention with regard to the sexes is seen at the fall when He reiterates what He intended at Creation. He said to Eve,

...Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you (Gen. 3:16,
NKJV).

This language parallels God's admonition of Cain when He warned Cain that sin's desire is for you, but you should rule over it. In other words, just as sin was attempting to lead Cain's actions, he should, instead, take charge and not turn his responsibility of directing his own behavior over to the control of sin. Likewise, God was admonishing Eve to resist the inclination to lead the home. Instead, she should submit to her husband and allow him to lead.

All of the efforts of change agents to dilute and diffuse these Creation principles cannot succeed. The shifting sands of culture and human civilization will not alter what God has decreed from the very beginning of the human race. Men and women will give account to God as to whether they conformed themselves to their respective roles and assigned responsibilities. When the church at Corinth tolerated females leading in the assembly, Paul leveled these stinging questions that change agents need to hear today: "What, Came the Word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?" (I Cor. 14:36).

Religious Holidays

Christians once understood that they could participate in Christmas and Easter festivities—not as religious holidays—but as national, non-religious

celebrations. Christmas trees, lights, gifts and meals were simply cultural expressions of thanksgiving and appreciation for family and friends. Hiding easter eggs was fun for the kids. Christians understood that these holidays were not religious observances and so generally avoided symbols that affiliate the holiday with false religion (e.g., angels, nativity scenes). Christians understood that the Bible enjoins the religious observance of Christ's **death** every Sunday in the Lord's Supper. If God had wanted us to observe Christ's birth, He would have so indicated in Scripture.

This widespread understanding has dissipated dramatically. Now churches are placing trees in their church buildings, holding Christmas services and including Christmas pageants and choral performances in their assemblies. This change is simply one more example of the sellout to false religion and human feeling. Commemoration of the birth of Christ is no more authorized than formal commemoration of Christ's appearance at age twelve in the temple (Luke 2:42-52) or His cleansing of the temple (John 2:13-17). There would be no end to the formulation of religious holidays if left to the whims of man. But those who wish to allow God to govern their behavior will conform themselves to the instructions given in Scripture.

Fellowship

Turning now to matters not directly connected to the church worship assembly, we come to the unbelievable attack that has been launched against Christians in the matter of fellowship. Four specific items are included. First, change agents are saying churches of Christ in the past have not understood *grace*. But

this claim is absurd. Christians have been preaching, singing and living the biblical doctrine of grace for centuries. What the change agents have discovered is cheap, denominational grace. Their grace allows people to feel acceptable and justified while remaining out of harmony with God's commands.

Second, some are saying *baptism* needs not be understood to be the point at which sin is forgiven. But the Bible is clear. To be baptized scripturally, the individual must **understand** that forgiveness does not occur until baptism. The person who thinks he or she is saved **before** immersion has not been scripturally baptized. Third, the fellowship issue is being advanced under the guise of regard for **unity**. They clearly place unity **over** the biblical necessity of doctrinal correctness. But the Bible teaches that the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17 can be achieved **only** upon the basis of uniformity in doctrine (I Cor. 1:10; Amos. 3:3; I John 1:3,6-7). This doctrinal correctness includes not only the fundamentals of the gospel message (i.e., the death, burial, resurrection and Lordship of Jesus), but everything else enjoined in the New Testament as well—including such matters as sexual sin, use of alcohol, covetousness (I Cor. 5:11), idleness (II Thess. 3:6), unbiblical dietary regulations (I Tim. 4:3), and failure to care for relatives (I Tim. 5:8). The “core gospel” proponents are simply wrong in their efforts to extend fellowship to all who agree on only a few central doctrines.

The fourth item related to fellowship pertains to the status of the **denominations**. The conspiratorial cry is loud and widespread that saved Christian brothers and sisters in Christ exist throughout the denominations

and that the church of Christ is simply one denomination among man—no better and no worse than any other religious group that claims to be Christians. But the Bible still teaches that (1) only those who obey the **gospel** plan of salvation have been placed into the church of Christ and (2) only those Christians who live the Christian life faithfully will remain in a saved condition and be saved eternally (John 3:5; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21; Rev. 2:10; II Peter 1:5-11).

Authority Of Elders

Yet another target of those who are assaulting Christians is the effort to dismantle the authority of the eldership. This attempt is to be expected since the younger generation has been in a state of rebellion against authority ever since the sixties. Also their effort to change the church is most naturally opposed by the older generation—which includes the elders who, by definition, are older men.

But the Bible speaks too directly and definitely on this matter. God wants the local church to be positioned under the oversight or governing management of a plurality of **qualified** men who act as shepherds of the flock (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:17-31). While these men must not make up their own laws, they do have the right to decide expedient ways to carry out the responsibility assigned to them by God. In matters of option, the members are to submit to their lead (I Thess. 5:12-13; I Tim. 5:17-20; Heb. 13:7,17). Elders are not to act as dictators or Lords, but they are to oversee the congregation (I Peter 5:1-3).

The effort to soften the authority of the eldership is simply the natural fruit of a generation in rebellion

against authority. It is one more effort by the change agents to eliminate roadblocks in their way that hamper their attempts to revolutionize and restructure the church.

Moral Issues

The Christian is facing a massive attack upon his moral sensibilities. The church is being inundated by worldliness and materialism. These forces have critically eroded moral value and cheapened life and human behavior. Divorce and remarriage are out of control. Use of alcohol is commonplace and widespread. Gambling, whether by casino or lottery, is spreading quickly throughout society. Immodest, indecent dress is seen everywhere—from television and cinema to the streets. Homosexuality is on the verge of gaining social, political, and legal sanction and most Americans endorse abortion under at least some circumstances. The very fabric of civilization is unraveling and the very heart and soul of society is contaminated.

But God has not changed His stance on these matters. The Bible still condemns divorce and remarriage—except for fornication (Matt. 19:9). The Christian approach to alcohol is abstinence (Prov. 20:1). Gambling violates a host of biblical principles, including the golden rule (Matt. 7:12), the work ethic (Eph. 4:28; Gen. 3:17-19) and the need to refrain from greed and covetousness (I Tim. 6:8-11). Christians will dress in such a way that sexual purity is promoted as well as a sense of propriety, discretion and moderation (I Tim. 2:9-10; I Peter 3:3-5).

The Christian will take a kind, but firm and uncompromising, stand against homosexuality,

recognizing that God condemns the behavior as perverted and unnatural (Rom. 1:24-28; I Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1:10). The Christian will not bow to the enormous pressure exerted by a declining culture. The Christian will also oppose abortion as the unequivocal killing of an innocent child (Exod. 21:22-25; Psm. 139:13-16; Isa. 49:1,5).

The Holy Spirit

A final attack upon the Christian that is being made in our day relates to the Holy Spirit. Faithful, conservative men have differed over how the Spirit indwells the Christian. Some have held that the Holy Spirit actually indwells the body of the Christian personally. Others have insisted the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian representatively only through the Word of God. However, these brethren have stood absolutely united in their mutual conviction that the Holy Spirit does nothing to anyone today that can be felt or that is miraculous. These men have strongly agreed that every Christian must study God’s word in order to grow and develop and be equipped to live the Christian life.

But the change agents are taking an outright charismatic position regarding the Holy Spirit. They are saying that the Holy Spirit is doing things to them that they can feel. They refer to moments when they feel urges to act or speak which they attribute to the Holy spirit prompting them. Nevertheless, the Bible still draws a clear distinction between the miraculous activity of the Spirit and the non-miraculous, providential care of God. The miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit was confined to the first century with its unique attendant circumstances (I Cor. 13:8-12; Eph. 4:7-16; Acts 8:14-21).

The viewpoint that those in churches of Christ have traditionally held (despite variations regarding the **how** of indwelling) has been consistent with Scripture and has not interfered with an accurate practice of New Testament Christianity. But the view being promoted by the change agents is leading them into the charismatic, pentecostal, Calvinistic brand of Christianity and thus into a state of apostasy. In reality, they are simply cloaking their fixation upon **feeling** religion and self-centered religious practice under the guise that the Holy Spirit approves and promotes their error.

Conclusion

All of these activities share at least two attributes in common: rejection of the principle of authority and a desire to **feel** one's religion through artificial stimuli. The Christian and the church of Christ are under heavy attack. Satan is doing all he can to transform faithful Christians into lost souls. Those orchestrating change in the church are his willing accomplices (e.g., Matt. 16:23). While they speak of freedom and love and acceptance, they are actually subversive enemies of the cross who are damaging the body of Christ and leading people down the pathway of apostasy. May God help us to renew our courage and commitment to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ **at all cost** and to do all we can to engage the forces of darkness in an effort to snatch some from the fire (Jude 23) and the clutches of the devil (II Tim. 2:26) before it is everlastingly too late.

Endnotes

1 This lecture is based upon the author's book, **Piloting the Strait**. For detailed treatment of each of the topics discussed in this

“The Christian Under Attack”

lecture, the reader is urged to secure a copy from: Brown Trail School of Preaching, P. O. Box 210667, Bedford, TX 76095.

2 Perhaps the three most influential voices of the liberal movement are Rubel Shelly, Lynn Anderson and Max Lucado.

3 See **Piloting the Strait**, Sain Publications, Pulaski, TN., 1996, for examples of these viewpoints.

Chapter 5

It Is Possible To Live A Christian Life

B. J. Clarke



B. J. received a B.S. from Freed-Hardeman College in 1983. He held a public debate on baptism and apostasy in 1987. His father, Ted J. Clarke is a faithful preacher also. B. J. worked in Knoxville, TN for almost six years but presently works with the Southaven, Mississippi congregation. He also serves as editor of the *Power* paper, and directs the *Power* lectureshp. B. J. and Tish have three children.

Over 2,500 passages in the word of God demonstrate the possibility of apostasy. These passages are significant and should not be ignored, whether in private study, or public proclamation of God's word. In fact, a serious doctrinal error in the religious world is the Calvinistic doctrine of "once saved, always saved." This author conducted a public debate in 1987 for the purpose of demonstrating the fallacy of such a doctrine. No one believes any more than I do in the possibility of apostasy.

Having said this, I believe it also important to point out that the same Bible which demonstrates the possibility of unfaithfulness, also reveals the possibility of faithfulness. So often, one extreme begets another. We should be careful to avoid going from the false doctrine of "once saved, always saved" to the doctrine of "once saved, never quite sure thereafter." The *possibility* of apostasy should not be proclaimed as the *probability*

of apostasy. There is security, yes, even eternal security, available to the *believer*. Please put proper emphasis on the word “believer” in the preceding sentence. If one ceases to be a believer, then he also ceases to be secure. On the other hand, if one continues to believe in Jesus and follow His teaching, that believer is secure for as long as he continues the practice. Isn’t this what Jesus taught in the gospel of John?

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of the Father’s hand (John 10:27-29).

False teachers mutilate this passage by interpreting it to say that one is *unconditionally* “once saved, always saved.” The fact of the matter is that this very passage, which is misused to uphold the erroneous Calvinistic doctrine of “once saved, always saved,” does, in fact, teach that one can be once saved, always saved, **if he continues to hear the voice of Jesus and follow Him**. Hence, according to Jesus, His sheep can be eternally secure, but not unconditionally so. Two conditions are set forth as necessary to continued safety and security in Jesus. The sheep to who eternal life will be given, the sheep who will never perish, the sheep who can never be plucked out of the Father’s hand by man, are the sheep who meet the conditions of verse 27: (1) they hear the voice of Jesus, and (2) they follow Jesus. The sheep who refuse to hear the voice of Jesus, and the sheep who cease to follow Him, are promised no

security whatsoever! Sadly, such apostate sheep are headed for the ceaseless torment of a devil's hell (Acts 8:13-22; Rev. 21:8).

Faithfulness Personified

Perhaps the best way to define faithfulness is to see it personified, i.e., lived out in the lives of the men and women of Holy Scripture. The Sacred Writings are replete with such manifestations of faithfulness. These demonstrations of faithfulness are personified in both Testaments. For example, Jehovah described Moses as "faithful in all his house" (Heb. 3:2,5). And why was Moses considered to be faithful? Is it because he never made a mistake? Certainly not! We cannot forget his unfaithful action at Kadesh (Num. 20:1-13). The Lord spoke unto Moses and rebuked him for not believing, and for not sanctifying God in the eyes of the children of Israel (Num. 20:13). In this particular episode of his life, Moses failed to hear the voice of God and to follow it. However, this action on the part of Moses was an aberration, and not par for the course.

Survey the remainder of the Pentateuch, and you will find that God gave Moses command after command which Moses promptly and decisively obeyed. Furthermore, his repentance for his sin at Kadesh is implied by the fact that he continued to lead God's people in faithfulness until the day he died in the land of Moab (Deut. 34:5). In fact, before Moses died, God granted him the opportunity to see the land which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut. 34:4). Hence, the reason why Moses personifies faithfulness is not because of his *perfection*, but rather because of his *direction*. He was dependable, trustworthy, and reliable.

Though he stumbled and fell in an act of haste and anger, Moses got right back up, heard the voice of God, and walked in the direction of God.

Moses is not the only Old Testament character tagged with the description of faithfulness. Hezekiah was good and right and faithful before Jehovah his God (II Chron. 31:20). Nehemiah gives further evidence of the possibility of faithfulness:

Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many (Neh. 7:1-2).

Was Nehemiah describing his brother Hanani as the faithful man who feared God above many, or was he referring to Hananiah, the ruler of the palace? Authorities are divided on this matter. Some lean toward the rules of English grammar and suggest that the nearest antecedent to the description is Hananiah. Others suggest that the Hebrew language gives emphasis to the first mentioned, and that the latter part of the verse is simply the completion of Nehemiah’s description of his brother, Hanani. In reality, both men were probably faithful, else Nehemiah would not have appointed them to such an important position. But, he does seem to single one of the men out as an individual who feared God more than many. Be that as it may, the obscurity of the precise character under consideration does not obscure us from the main point to be gleaned from the passage: faithfulness is possible!

Two chapters later, Nehemiah speaks of Abraham

being found faithful before God (Neh. 9:8). An entire lesson could be spent exploring the faithfulness of Abraham, and at the end of such a lesson, the half would not yet have been told. Space limitations prevent such an investigation in this chapter. Near the close of the book, Nehemiah records that he appointed certain ones as treasurers “because they were counted faithful” (Neh. 13:13). The men Nehemiah appointed as stewards of the treasury were appointed because they had demonstrated the quality of faithfulness. They were men of integrity and reliability. Incidentally, our faithfulness in handling finances can be a barometer of our faithfulness in other more significant areas of life and vice versa. Jesus said:

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least and is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? (Luke 16:10-12).

Paul echoed this theme when he wrote, “Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful” (I Cor. 4:2).

Is it possible to be faithful? The life of Daniel answers with a resounding “Yes!” Although the presidents and princes of the kingdom spied upon Daniel in an attempt to gather incriminating evidence against him,

...they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error found in him (Dan. 6:4).

In fact, Daniel’s faithfulness to God was the very thing these evil men were counting on when they brought their wicked request to the king for a decree banning prayer to anyone but the king for a thirty day period. They knew that Daniel would be faithful enough to keep on praying to God, in spite of the decree to the contrary. And they were right! Daniel’s faithfulness in prayer landed him right smack dab in the middle of a den of hungry and ferocious lions. But even then, Daniel’s faith stood firm. Dire circumstances did not suppress his faith and commitment to God, and neither did God abandon Daniel.

Faithfulness is also personified in a number of New Testament texts. Jesus depicted the faithful and wise servant as the servant who is found doing his Master’s will when the Master returns. Contrariwise, the unfaithful servant rationalizes that the coming of the Master is far off, and consequently, lives in his own willful way, only to be found embarrassed and unprepared at the coming of his Master (Matt. 24:45-51). Jesus advances this same train of thought into Matthew chapter 25 in His recital of the parable of the ten virgins, and the parable of the talents. The wise virgins were faithful; they were dependable and prepared (Matt. 25:1-13).

So likewise were the dependable servants who increased the talents which had been entrusted into their care (Matt. 25:14-30). In our proclamation of this parable we must be careful to avoid *exclusively* focusing upon the unfaithful servant in the latter portion of the story. Focus upon him should not be neglected, for it is a part of the text, but proper emphasis should also be given to the presence of the two faithful servants in the parable.

This is an important lesson for us, even today, in our brotherhood. While we must not hesitate to identify the unfaithful servants among us, let us also remember that not all is dark and gloomy in the kingdom of God. There are still thousands of faithful servants who haven't bowed the knee to Baal (I Kings 19:18). Similarly, there were faithful servants in the kingdom which Jesus depicted in Matthew 25. To these faithful servants, the lord in the parable (no doubt representative of Jesus, the Lord) said:

Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Matt. 25:21,23).

As noted earlier, we cannot ignore the presence of the unfaithful servant described in the closing section of the narrative. In sharp contrast to the two faithful servants who duplicated their talents, we find that the "one-talent" man buried his in the earth. He is the epitome of an unfaithful steward. It should be observed that he is labeled a "wicked and slothful servant" (Matt. 25:26) and "unprofitable" (Matt. 25:30). And what is the basis of such a negative description? Was he an adulterer? A murderer? A violent criminal? No. No. No. Why then was he described as wicked, slothful and unprofitable? It is because he was lazy, indifferent and unreliable. We need to recognize that unfaithfulness encompasses far more than absenteeism from the church assemblies, infidelity to one's spouse, embezzlement from the company treasury, and a thousand and one other so-called "serious" sins. Laziness, neglect and indifference towards the work of the Lord are matters of

unfaithfulness and those guilty of such are appointed a place of outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30). If the tree isn’t faithful to bear fruit, then it should be cut down and cast into the fire (Mark 11:13; 20-22; John 15:1-6).

Paul’s epistles are resplendent with reference to faithful Christians. He describes Timothy as his beloved son, and faithful in the Lord (I Cor. 4:17). Similarly, Tychichus is a “beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord” (Eph. 6:21). Paul spoke to the Colossians concerning Epaphras, a “dear fellow-servant and faithful minister of the Lord” (Col. 1:7). He also enjoined the wives of the elders and deacons to be “faithful in all things” (I Tim. 3:11). He exhorted Timothy to take the things he had heard from Paul and to commit those things “to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (II Tim. 2:2). If it is not possible to be faithful, then why did Paul command such? If it is not possible to be faithful, then why does the writer of Hebrews 11 occupy an entire chapter chronicling the faithful obedience of men and women of old? If it is not possible to be faithful, then why did Peter refer to Silvanus as a “faithful brother” (I Peter 5:12)? If it is not possible to be faithful, then why did Jesus encourage the Christians at Smyrna to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10)? And why did Jesus speak of Antipas, His faithful martyr, if faithfulness is not possible (Rev. 2:13)? It is possible to be a faithful Christian!

Faithfulness Perpetuated

Whereas it is possible to be a faithful Christian, we are also reminded in the Parable of the Sower, of some who,

...receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for awhile believe, and in time of temptation fall away (Luke 8:13).

This passage alone ought to settle the controversy concerning whether or not a believer can fall away. Furthermore, Paul's statement, "Wherefore, let him that standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12), decisively demonstrates that one can fall. In fact, in this very context in which Paul made this affirmation, he wrote of how twenty-three thousand of God's covenant people committed fornication and were destroyed by the destroyer (I Cor. 10:8).

The parable describes yet another category of hearers as those that

...go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:14).

Then, Jesus closed the interpretation of the parable by observing that there are some who receive the seed of the kingdom, the word of God (Luke 8:11), into their hearts, and bring forth fruit with endurance. Thus, three general types of hearts are under consideration in this parable. First, there is the heart that is unwilling to accept the word in the first place (Luke 8:12). Second, there is the heart that accepts the word, believes it, and subsequently falls away (Luke 8:13-14). Third, there is the heart that hears the word, believes it, and remains faithful (Luke 8:15).

Hence, an important question arises: Why did some hearers remain faithful while others became unfaithful? What made the difference? Since it is possible for a Christian to become unfaithful, what measures can be taken to perpetuate faithfulness? We have learned that

it is possible to be a faithful Christian, but is there any thing that can be done to enhance the possibility of remaining such? Yes. God has provided us with the necessary resources to be able to live a faithful Christian life.

Some years ago, a friend of mine preached a sermon listing four simple ways to remain faithful and to prevent backsliding. I do not know whether the outline was original with him, but I have always remembered the points, and have often preached them in lessons designated to perpetuate faithfulness. Thus, it is possible to be a faithful Christian if you:

(1) Let God Say Something To You Everyday.

I am not suggesting in this statement that God speaks to us in any miraculous fashion or by some still, small voice in the night. Nor am I suggesting that God speaks to us by putting some feeling into our heart. But, God does speak to us in these last days by His Son (Heb. 1:1-2), and His Son speaks to us through the words which He has spoken which will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). These words are recorded for us on the pages of Holy Scripture. In fact, these words encompass more than just the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The epistles are also the words of Christ because the Holy Spirit received the message He gave to the inspired writers from Christ (John 16:12-14; I Cor. 2:13-16; 14:37).

Therefore, a persistent study of the written Word of God is one of the greatest means by which we can remain faithful as Christians. The apostle Paul knew that knowledge of God’s will has a tremendous capacity for strengthening our faith. No doubt, this is why he told the Colossians:

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness (Col. 1:9-11).

The Psalmist declared, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee” (Psm. 119:11). In fact, virtually the entirety of the 119th Psalm extol the strengthening virtue of God’s Holy Word. The following is just a small sampling of the 176 verses therein:

I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path...Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments (Psm. 119:101-105; 128-131).

Furthermore, the manner in which our Lord remained faithful during the onslaught of the tempter is particularly instructive to those who desire to remain

faithful to Christ. Each time Satan hurled a temptation at Jesus, our Lord responded by quoting Scripture (Matt. 4:1-11). He had hidden the word in His heart that He might not sin. His persistent reference to the Word of God sent the devil packing. Likewise, if we resist the devil, he will flee from us (James 4:7), and one of the best ways to resist him is to let God say something to us everyday through the vehicle of His written word. Show me a man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates therein both day and night, and I will show you a man who

...walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth
in the seat of the scornful (Psm. 1:1-2).

Many excuse themselves from their neglect of Bible study by saying that they are just too busy to find time to delve into the Word everyday. Yet, most of these same individuals find time to let Hollywood say something to them everyday via the television or the big screen. We usually find time to let the Reader’s Digest, Ladies Home Journal, USA Today, or the local daily newspaper say something to us everyday. Why is it that a man can find time each day to read a 600 column newspaper, but the same man just can’t find time to read the Word of God? It all boils down to perfecting our priorities. We find time to do those things that are most precious to us.

Before we leave this particular point, please observe that the men and women of Scripture who serve as personifications of faithfulness, each possessed a healthy respect for the Word of God, a knowledge of God’s will, and a commitment to obeying that will. Remember the heart in the parable of the Sower that remained faithful.

Do you remember why this heart was described as faithful? It is because they “having heard the word, keep it” (Luke 8:15). On another occasion Jesus said, “Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (Luke 11:28). Concerning the book of Revelation, John wrote,

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear
the words of the prophecy, and keep those
things that are written therein (Rev. 1:3).

Thus, faithfulness is equated with hearing the word of God and keeping it. Therefore one of the major keys to being a faithful Christian is to allow the seed of the kingdom, the Word of God, to keep on remaining in us, so that we might be strengthened thereby and not practice sin (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16; I John 3:9). The Bible each day helps keep the devil away.

(2) Say Something To God Everyday. One of our greatest privileges and blessings as a Christian is also one which we often neglect—prayer to God. Jesus taught that men ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1). The word “faint” in this passages comes from a Greek word which means “to be remiss in duty, to be slothful.” Hence, one of the purposes of prayer is to keep ourselves strong in the faith. If we are regular in prayer, we will not likely be slothful or remiss in our duty. Saying something to God every day in prayer has a way of strengthening our faith. Some years ago, in the midst of premarital counseling, a preacher told my wife and me, “It’s hard to do wrong when you are praying to do right.” Someone else had said, “Prayer will either make a man leave off sinning or sin will make a man leave off prayer.”

The apostle Paul admonished the Ephesians to be strong in the Lord by putting on the whole armour of

God. The reason for doing so was in order that they might stand against the wiles of the devil. Paul wanted the Ephesians to be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one. Thus he wrote:

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:17-18).

Please observe the tremendous emphasis Paul ascribes to the power of prayer in maintaining faithful Christianity in a world where Satan walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). No wonder someone said, “A lot of kneeling keeps you in good standing with God.” Many times we cannot get the courage to stand on our feet until we first get on our knees.

Our perfect example and role model, Jesus Christ, attributed great importance to the power of prayer in getting Him through the daily affairs of life upon earth. In fact, He assigned such importance to prayer that

...in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed (Mark 1:35).

The Lord prayed all night before He selected His apostles (Luke 6:12). He prayed so fervently as He faced the shadow of the cross that He was in agony and “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). He believed so much in the power of prayer to help keep us faithful that He taught His disciples to pray, “and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13). Prayer is a powerful

weapon in perpetuating faithfulness. Therefore, say something to God every day!

(3) Say Something For God Everyday. We can say something for God everyday in at least two ways. First, we can say something for God by our manner of life. This is what Paul had in mind when he exhorted the Philippians to let their conduct be worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). He reminded the Corinthians that they were an epistle, known and read of all men (II Cor. 3:2). In the sermon on the mount, Jesus commanded His hearers to let their lights so shine before men that the Father who is in heaven might be glorified (Matt. 5:16). Paul echoed this sentiment when he told the Philippians that they were to shine forth as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (Phil. 2:16). As the song says, “We are the only Bible this careless world will read...what if the type is crooked? what if the print is blurred?”

In the second place, we can say something for God everyday with our lips. The crux of the great commission has to do with our speaking up for God and proclaiming the saving gospel (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). In the midst of a secular world, our prayer should be “Lord...grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak the word” (Acts 4:29). Far too many members of the Lord’s church fail to say something for God, because they are ashamed of the gospel and some of the words of Jesus. We would do well to remember the words of Jesus:

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38).

May we, like Paul, confidently proclaim that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16).

Someone may ask, “But how does saying something for God everyday help one to remain faithful?” Such helps us to remain faithful because it is very, very hard to be sincerely speaking on behalf of God one minute, and defiantly violating His will the next. Furthermore, when we speak up for God and let the world know where we stand, some temptations are automatically reduced. This is true because some individuals in the world would not dream of asking someone who presents himself/herself as a Christian, to go out and engage in certain sinful activities. Therefore, the more clearly we draw the line between us and the world and its ways, the more difficult it will be to cross that line and be conformed to the world and its carnal ways. Satan’s children are not ashamed to say something for him everyday by encouraging sin. Let us resolve to give God equal time by saying something for God everyday.

(4) Do Something For God Everyday. We are to be doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22). Doing the things of God is not only our obligation and privilege; it is also a powerful means of keeping us faithful. It is more difficult to become entangled in the pollutions of the world when we are busy serving in the vineyard of the Lord. Paul exhorted the Galatians to remember the importance of doing something for God by doing something for their fellowman:

And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:9-10).

It would not be an exaggeration to say that one of the separating factors between the lost and the saved on the day of judgment centers around what we have or haven't done (Matt. 25:31-46). Those who did not do, will receive eternal punishment. Those who did do, will receive life everlasting.

With reference to doing something for God everyday, we need to get away from the idea that we must do something extraordinary in order to make any significant impact upon people's lives. When the call for service comes, too often we give the excuse of weakness, inability, or lack of training. Christians fail to count on the omnipotence of God to take their small talents and use them for the accomplishment of His purposes. The story is told of a passenger on an Atlantic steamer who lay in his bunk during a raging storm with a severe case of seasickness. Suddenly he heard the cry, "Man overboard!" "May God help that poor fellow," he prayed, "but there's nothing I can do." Then he thought, "I can at least put my lantern in my small window," and with an effort he did so. The man was finally rescued. In recounting the story the next day, he said, "I was going down in the darkness for the last time when someone put a light in the porthole. It shone on my hand and a sailor in the lifeboat grabbed it and pulled me in." Weakness is no excuse for not putting forth the little strength we have.

It is often the small things that make the biggest difference. General Eisenhower once rebuked one of his Generals for referring to a soldier as "just a Private." He reminded him that the Army could function better without its Generals than it could without its foot soldiers. "If this war was won," he said, "it would be

won by Privates.” In the same way, the common, ordinary, one-talent Christians are the very backbone of the church. We have our great evangelists, our strong congregations led by godly elders, and our wealthy brethren who are able to finance great works. But, if the work of the Lord is to be done, if the gospel is to be taken to the lost, it will be the “ordinary” Christians who will do it.

Don’t ever underestimate the difference your deeds can make to individuals in this world. One early morning, an elderly man walking with a cane, went down to the beach. Another gentleman on the beach watched as the elderly man seemed to be surveying the part of the beach left exposed by the receding tide. Every now and then the elderly man would bend down, pick up something, and toss it into the ocean. The other gentleman finally realized that the man was looking for starfish. Every time he saw one lying helpless in the sand, unable to get back to the ocean on his own, he would lovingly pick it up and toss it gently back into the sea. The younger man approached. As he arrived, the elderly man explained, “The starfish are left behind after the tide goes out. If they don’t get back into the ocean they will dry up and die beneath the hot summer sun.” The younger man replied, “But there are endless miles of beach and there must be millions of starfish. Surely you don’t think you can save them all. What difference can your efforts possibly make?” Slowly the old man bent over and picked up another starfish. As he tossed it into the ocean, he looked up at the young man and said, “It makes a difference to that one.”

It is so easy to become discouraged when we see the sheer magnitude of the task that Christ has given

to us in the church. We must not forget to focus on the value of a word fitly spoken, and a deed kindly performed on behalf of even one soul. We are called to be faithful in scanning “the beaches” and in making a difference to “that one” and “that one” and “that one” in the name of Christ. Moreover, as we busy ourselves with this task, we will be strengthened and encouraged to remain faithful as Christians.

Conclusion

It is possible to be a faithful Christian. We have seen faithfulness personified in both the Old and New Testaments. We have observed that faithfulness must be and can be perpetuated by (1) letting God say something to us everyday through the written word, (2) saying something to God everyday through the avenue of prayer, (3) saying something for God everyday through evangelism, and (4) doing something for God everyday by doing good works unto all men and letting our lights shine before men.

We close this lesson with the interesting story recorded in First Samuel, chapter 30, concerning faithfulness. King David and his men were away at battle. While they were away their foes came in and laid the city of Ziklag in ashes, carrying away the wives and sons and daughters of the absent soldiers. When the men returned they were overwhelmed with grief. The scripture says they “lifted up their voices and wept until they had no more power to weep” (I Sam. 30:4). They began to blame David. Then David selected 600 men and set out to rescue the captives. When they came to the brook Besor, 200 were so faint they could not cross over the brook. “Very well,” said David. “You two

hundred stay here and mind the baggage and the others of us who are stronger will go on.” They went on, made a great recovery, and returned with the spoil. When they returned to the brook Besor, a protest arose on the part of those who went to battle. They did not want to share the spoil with those who had stayed behind. It was then that David made a great statement about faithfulness:

As his part is that goeth down to the battle so shall his part be that tarried by the stuff. They shall part alike (I Sam. 30:4).

The point is that though not all are equally strong, yet all can be equally faithful. The 200 that did the best they could were just as worthy of the reward.

The same is true in the kingdom of God today. A reward awaits all who are faithful, regardless of whether they are faithful in little or much. May we live our lives in faithfulness, as did Paul, so that we might also say,

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Chapter 6

We Can Know We Are Saved

Winford Claiborne



Winford has been preaching the gospel for over fifty years. Previously he taught in the Bible department at Freed-Hardeman University and directed their annual lectureship. He is the speaker for the **International Gospel Hour**, broadcasting on over 100 radio stations nationwide. He presently preaches for the West Fayetteville, TN congregation. Winford and Molly have two sons.

Knowledgeable members of the body of Christ may be tempted to assume that everyone—especially those who claim to be religious—use language in the same way we do. For example, we may naively believe when the word “Christ” is used, those who use it always mean our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the one who is, and who was and who is to come, the Almighty (Rev. 1:8). We think of Christ as God manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16), the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Col. 1:15-17), the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2) and the one who performed the very works of God the Father (John 5:36). We have in mind when we talk about Christ the one who is revealed in the scriptures.

But not all religious people mean the same when they speak of Christ. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Christ was a created being—not one who was co-eternal with the Father. Their mistranslation of the New

Testament renders John 1:1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word
was with God, and the Word was a God.

Liberal theologians pretend to honor Christ but often deny His equality with the Father, His miracles, His resurrection and His second coming. In the same cases, liberal theologians speak of a “Christless Christianity”—Christianity without Christ—a contradiction in terms. New Age adherents claim to love and to honor Christ, but they are generally speaking of “the Christ spirit”—not the Savior of mankind. They classify Christ as a great psychic or one of the grand masters of the universe—a guru along with hundreds of other gurus.

The Meaning Of Salvation

Just as the religious world in general is confused on who Jesus is, the significance of His church, the nature of biblical inspiration and on many other fundamentals of the faith, they are also confused on the meaning of salvation. Liberation theologians have sought to effect some kind of synthesis between Christianity and Marxism or Communism. Liberation theologians may be Roman Catholic or Protestant, but they share the hope of saving the world through Christianity’s amalgamation with the teachings of Marx and Lenin. Their definition of salvation generally means nothing more than relieving people from political and economic oppression. They believe that our economic free enterprise system not only oppresses our people but the people of the so-called “third world” as well. Salvation will come when the shackles of capitalism are thrown aside for a communistic form of government. Oddly enough, thousands of Roman Catholic priests in South

America and in Latin America actually carry weapons to use against their oppressors. Hundreds of churches—Methodist, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and others—support liberation theology throughout the world. Liberation theology emphasizes salvation in the here and now—not a pie in the sky by and by.

Feminism is a form of liberation theology. Some feminists—especially those who themselves are either “biblical feminists” or “Christian feminists”—may give lip-service to eternal salvation through Christ, but they do not usually mean what New Testament Christians mean by the term “salvation.” The radical feminists and the goddess feminists seem to care nothing about an eternal home in heaven. Their main concern is relief from patriarchal religions, such as, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and from patriarchal homes. Even some so-called “Evangelical feminists,” such as Virginia Mollenkott, Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, lay greater stress on salvation from patriarchy than on salvation from sin and for eternity.

Unbelievers—whether atheists, agnostics or secular humanists—seem to be uninterested in the salvation of their souls. They deny the realm of the supernatural, the existence of human souls and all other fundamentals of New Testament Christianity. Corliss Lamont’s **A Humanist Funeral Service** (Buffalo: Prometheus Books) says we human beings are greater than we have ever imagined. When we die, we return to the ground from which we came. Our earthly remains will exist throughout eternity and will contribute to our on-going universe. If your becoming fertilizer provides any comfort to you, then you think differently from most of humanity.

The Greek word translated “save” (**sozo**) appears

one hundred eleven times in the New Testament. Sometimes the word is used of deliverance from physical danger or suffering. For example, when the disciples were about to perish in the “great tempest,” they awoke Christ and begged Him, “Lord, save us: we perish” (Matt. 8:25). On another occasion, Christ spoke of the extreme suffering men would experience at the destruction of Jerusalem:

And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, he has shortened the days (Mark 13:20).

The Greek was used in the New Testament times of saving from sickness.

But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole (**sesoken**: perfect active indicative). And the woman was made whole (**esothe**: first aorist indicative passive) from that hour (Matt. 9:22).

Jesus encouraged the early Christians to call for the elders to pray for the sick.

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick (**sosei**: future active indicative), and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him (James 5:14-15).

As concerned as we are and ought to be about delivering men and women from physical danger and suffering and from sickness, our main thrust as Christians should be the salvation of our souls and of the souls of others. When New Testament writers use the words “save,” “salvation,” and “Savior,” they almost

always are speaking of God's arrangement for our going to heaven when we die. The Philippian jailer may have wondered about being delivered from the wrath of the Roman government when he asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?", but we know how Paul and Silas interpreted his question. They said to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house" (Acts 16:30-31). Their commanding him to believe on Christ would not have saved him from any punishment which the Roman government would normally have assessed against him. Paul and Silas were telling him how to be saved eternally.

When the angel announced the birth of Jesus Christ, he said,

And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

The apostle Peter unquestionably had heaven in mind when he said to the Jews,

This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:11-12).

The following are other well known passages which use the word "save" of eternal salvation: John 3:17; Romans 10:9-10; I Corinthians 1:18,21; 15:2; Ephesians 2:5,8; I Timothy 1:15; James 1:21; I Peter 3:21.

Can Human Beings Know?

Many movements in our world—liberal religion, postmodernism, the women's movement—have convinced

many people in our day that human beings are inherently incapable of “knowing” any truth, except that one—that we cannot know anything. Modernistic theologians have been especially vocal about man’s inability to know the truth. Victor Paul Furnish, a professor of New Testament at Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, denies man’s capacity to know and to find answers to our moral and spiritual questions. There are no clear and specific answers to our particular ethical questions in the writing of Paul.¹ If we cannot find answers to moral and spiritual questions in Paul’s writings, how does one explain what Paul meant when he wrote of adultery, fornication, homosexuality and such like (Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 6:9-11)? How could Paul have made more clear and specific his condemnation of sin—all sin? Can we know that we cannot know whether or not there are clear and specific answers to our particular ethical questions?

One of the most radical theologians in the United States is John Shelby Spong, bishop of the Newark, New Jersey diocese of the American Episcopal Church. Bishop Spong glories in the “death of authority, the joy of uncertainty.”² “If theological and biblical relativity cannot be embraced,” according to Bishop Spong, “if the rigid control systems of the past cannot be opened, then I see little future in the church.”³ If we sacrifice theological and biblical authority and certainty, what is left of New Testament Christianity? If the Bible is not true in all its propositions—the inerrant and infallible word of God—what difference would it make whether or not the church has a future? Incidentally, Bishop Spong has become the darling of the Women’s Liberation Movement, the Gay Liberation Front and other radical elements in

American society. He has made the round of many of the talk shows and is favorably received by Larry King and by Oprah Winfrey.

Jim Leffel and Dennis McCallum examine the works of Joseph Campbell, a so-called “expert” on myths and author of **The Masks of God** and the TV Series, **The Power of Myth**. According to Leffel and McCallum, “Joseph Campbell weaves a creative tale of the religious quest. Unfortunately, from the outset he is committed to the belief that spiritual truth is subjective and experimental, never objective or rational.”⁴ Campbell wrote: “The person who thinks he has found the ultimate truth is wrong. There is an often-quoted verse in Sanskrit, which appears in Chinese Tao-te Ching as well: ‘He who thinks he knows, doesn’t know. He who knows he doesn’t know, knows. For in this context, to know is not to know. And not to know is to know.’”⁵ Leffel and McCallum comment: “The only remaining absolute truth is that we cannot know truth.”⁶

If I have ever heard or read “double talk,” Campbell’s quotation from Sanskrit fits that description. How can a world-renowned scholar in any field be so absolutely illogical? Yet Joseph Campbell has been honored as one of the greatest experts on myths. His pronouncements never give the impression Campbell thinks “to know is not to know.” In a nationally televised discussion of myth, Campbell spoke as if from Mt. Sinai. The influence of such scholars cannot be known in this life. They have succeeded in removing the basis of the Christian faith, at least, for many of their students and others as well.

After reviewing briefly the writings of such men as Victor Paul Furnish, John Shelby Spong and Joseph

Campbell, it is refreshing to turn to the pages of God’s word to examine what the Bible says about knowing. Never does the Bible writer leave the impression that men and women cannot know what God wants them to know. They knew and we know the limits of human knowledge, but Bible writers constantly encouraged men to learn and to obey God’s will. If we cannot know what God’s will is, how can we be sure we are obeying it? Modernistic theologians and other scholars who deny man’s ability to know make absolutely no sense.

The Old Testament used the word “know” (**yadah**) 943 times. This fact should give us some insight into how important knowing was to the inspired writers of the Old Testament. As I have already indicated, there are literally hundreds of uses of the word “know” in the Old Testament, but I shall mention only passages from Jeremiah,

And the Lord has given knowledge of it: then thou didst show me their doings (Jer. 11:18).

The prophet Jeremiah outlines in some detail the coming of the new covenant.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:34).

The Hebrew writer records the fulfillment of this prophecy (Heb. 8:6-13).

When God affirmed that all people under the new covenant shall know Him, does He really mean that? Can we know God? If we cannot, how can we be a part

of the new covenant which Jesus Christ came into the world to establish? According to Jeremiah, scholars and theologians were not the only ones who could know the rules and regulations of the new covenant. "The least of them" would know God and His will for mankind. There is no doubt in my mind that Bishop Spong and other liberal theologians have read these words from Jeremiah 31 and from Hebrews 8, but they simply discount their application to us. How tragic that men lead others into error!

The New Testament uses several words which are translated "know" or "knowledge." I shall look briefly at three of these words: **ginosko**, **oida** and **epiginosko**. The word **ginosko** appears 223 times in the Greek New Testament. According to W. E. Vine, the word "signifies to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand, or to understand completely."⁷ John alone uses the word eighty-five (85) times in his five books. Two passages will have to suffice.

Then said Jesus unto them, When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things...And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free (John 8:28, 32).

Oida (eideo, eido) in some form is used 663 times in the New Testament. The word means to have perceived or seen; hence, to know, to have knowledge of. **Oida** is in the perfect tense and means "I have come to know and I still know." I have chosen four passages from Paul's writings to illustrate the meaning of this Greek word.

Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9)?

How can we know the truth?

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you which you have of God and you are not your own (I Cor. 6:19)?

We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (II Cor. 5:1).

How miserable we would be if we did not and could not know that truth!

For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (II Tim. 1:12).

Theologians may deny what Paul and other inspired men have written, but surely they cannot misunderstand the meaning of these great passages.

The apostle Peter used some form of the word “know” sixteen (16) times in his second epistle. An intensified form of the word **ginosko (epignosis)** is used six times. The theme of II Peter is that salvation is the better knowledge. Following are some of Peter’s uses of the word “know.”

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge and to knowledge temperance (II Peter 1:5-6).

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:8).

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen (II Peter 3:18).

Maybe Peter, Paul, John and other Bible writers were wrong about what we can know or whether we can know. But there is no doubt about what they thought and taught. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, we learn from men who claimed to be inspired that we can know the truth and are held accountable for knowing and doing it.

If you know these things, happy are you if you do them (John 13:17).

The word “if” in this text does not suggest any doubt about knowing. This is called “condition of the first class” and is assumed to be true. The verse could be rendered: “Since you know these things, happy are you if you do them.” There was absolutely no question about their knowing what Jesus was teaching. They had witnessed His washing His disciples feet and understood what He was showing them.

What Can We Know?

One gospel preacher in Kansas City foolishly observed, “Anyone who claims to know is a ‘perfect knowledgist.’” Nobody in his right mind claims to know everything. Only God is all-knowing, all-wise. Even though we cannot know everything, we can know something. God created us as intelligent creatures. He has revealed His word in such a way that men can and must understand that word.

Jesus taught that men can know what they need to know to be saved and to keep saved.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32).

If we cannot know the truth, how can we be sure we are continuing in His word? Our Lord does not express—either here or elsewhere—any doubts about men’s ability to know and to obey the truth. If we cannot know the truth, how can we know we are free from sin and free to serve God? Was Christ trying to deceive men into believing what they could not know?

Paul was deeply concerned about the judaizing teachers who were troubling the churches of Galatia. He would not make compromises with the false teachers because he wanted the truth of the gospel to continue with them (Gal. 2:5). Paul criticized Peter and other Jews for not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:14). Paul asked the Galatians,

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you (Gal. 3:1).

Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth (Gal. 5:7).

If men cannot know the truth, how could the Galatians know whether or not they were continuing in the gospel? If human beings are so finite, so incapable of knowing, how could Peter and the other Jews understand that they were not walking uprightly according to the gospel? If we cannot know the truth, it is foolish to hold men accountable for not obeying the truth. We are not surprised when secular scholars deny

man's ability to know the truth. We expect liberal theologians to take the same position. But how discouraging it is when men who claim to be gospel preachers deny that we can know. Do they know that we cannot know?

How Can We Know We Are Saved?

When we read what God says about salvation and do exactly what He requires in the way He says do it, there is no reason to doubt our salvation—unless we believe God has tried in some way to deceive us. When I fly into major airports, such as, Nashville or Memphis or Atlanta, I know the tower frequencies and what runways are available. How do I know these things? Because I have a flight manual before me telling me what I need to know to fly and to land safely. By the same token, I know what God expects of alien sinners, of erring children and of His faithful children. How do I know? I have before me a manual which tells me the truth on these vital matters.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (II Peter 1:2-3).

Paul instructed Timothy to meditate on what Paul had written to him. He added:

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt

both save thyself, and them that hear thee (I Tim. 4:15-16).

He also wrote to Timothy:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17).

If we cannot know the word of God, how can we become mature (“perfect”)? If we cannot know what God has revealed, how can we know we are equipped unto all good works?

What Must We Do To Be Saved?

As I was growing up in Middle Tennessee listening to gospel preachers, such as Harold Sain, W. L. Totty, G. C. Brewer and others, I never dreamed the day would come in my lifetime when gospel preachers would be afraid or ashamed to tell men and women what to do to be saved. But it is happening in our brotherhood today. A preacher friend of mind was speaking to a fellow preacher and said to him, “What we must do is get back to the basics.” The second preacher replied, “If you mean preaching faith, repentance, confession and baptism, I do not intend to do that.” How can anyone be so blind to the requirements of the Bible? These truths are not optional; they are commandments of God almighty. To neglect to preach them means we leave people in darkness. I do not want the blood of my hearers on my hands. I want to be able to say with Paul,

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I

have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27).

Have some gospel preachers ceased reading the book of Acts or do they no longer believe it? The inspired record of conversions should stimulate every faithful gospel preacher to tell men and women what the Jews on Pentecost and the people at the household of Cornelius did to become New Testament Christians. We ought not to be ashamed to open our Bibles and read the conversions of the Samaritans, the Corinthians and the Ephesians. All of these conversions should be taught faithfully and regularly—and not just to outsiders but to the members of the body of Christ as well. Otherwise, our own members may not be sufficiently informed where they can teach others how to be saved.

The Ethiopian Eunuch

I have made it a practice—both on radio and from the pulpit—to preach regularly on the cases of conversion which are recorded in the book of Acts. All of the Bible cases of conversion and non-conversion need to be preached. But I have found that no conversion seems to be easier to understand and to teach than the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. The elements of that conversion are so simple and so easy to explain. It seems to me it would take considerable help to misunderstand that conversion.

Since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17), it was necessary that the eunuch have the word preached and explained to him. As he was riding along in his chariot, God sent Philip the evangelist⁸ to preach to the eunuch. When Philip arrived on the scene, he found the eunuch reading from

Isaiah 53. Isaiah had written concerning God’s suffering servant:

The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth (Acts 8:32-33).

The eunuch wanted to know of whom the prophet was speaking.

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8:35).

There is no point in our speculating about the content of Philip’s sermon. We do not know what he said about Christ, about the kingdom of God and about other truths relating to Christ. But we know what occurred as a result of Philip’s preaching Jesus. They came to some water and the eunuch said,

... here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God...and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

Philip asked about his belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. When he had confessed his faith in Christ, Philip baptized him (Acts 8:36-38).

Who can read this simple and powerful story without understanding it and without being moved by the conversion of the eunuch? Could modern preachers

do any better than to know this story and to preach it often, with great vigor and without any doubts? What we have said about this conversion can also be said about the other conversions recorded in Acts.

Conclusion

There probably has never been a time in the history of New Testament Christianity when so many so-called “intellectuals” doubt man’s ability to know what to preach, what to believe and what to do. Such an approach leaves men and women confused and keeps them out of the kingdom of God. There is no excuse for this approach to scripture and to Christian living. We can know the truth. God will hold us accountable for knowing the truth and for preaching it to others.

We can know we are saved when we have carefully and prayerfully studied God’s book and obeyed it from the heart.

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18).

Endnotes

1 Victor Paul Furnish, **The Moral Teaching of Paul** (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p. 28.

2 John Shelby Spong, **Into The Whirlwind: The Future of the Church** (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, 1983), p. 16-19.

3 Ibid., p. 19.

4 Dennis McCallum, General Editor, **The Death of Truth: What’s Wrong with Multiculturalism, The Rejection of Reason and the New Postmodern Diversity** (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), p. 220.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 W. E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), p. 627.

8 Robert Schuller recently explained on this television program that he did not want to be called an evangelist because he was not attempting to convert anyone to his religious beliefs. Evangelism, according to that position, would be arrogance.

Chapter 7

To Help Me As A Christian, I Have...

Tom Holland

Tom has been preaching the gospel about fifty years. Holds several degrees, including Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University. Preached at Crieve Hall church in Nashville for seventeen years. Has authored over 50 books. Presently lives in Brentwood, Tennessee and will soon retire from David Lipscomb University and work in full-time evangelistic work. Tom and Linda have five children.



A good man in a lot of pain declared that man born of woman is of few days and “full of trouble” (Job 14:1-2). This man, Job, was a righteous man. However, he suffered. Being right and doing right does not keep the righteous person from suffering. Suppose it did. Think of the people who would want to become God’s people from no higher motive than a desire to escape pain.

Dr. M. Scott Peck, M.D., is a popular author and lecturer. The opening sentence in his book, **The Road Less Traveled**, asserts, “Life is difficult.” This in essence is what Job had said centuries ago.

Perhaps we could understand why the unrighteous and the ungodly suffer. However, the problem of human suffering also involves the people of God. One contemporary author tried to explain why “Bad Things Happen to Good People.” The Psalmist nearly lost his faith because of the problems of evil people prospering

“To Help Me, I Have...”

and good people suffering (Psm. 73).

The problem of the righteous suffering is addressed in detail by two of the New Testament epistles, namely, II Corinthians and I Peter. God’s people sometimes suffer because they are God’s people living among the ungodly. However, God’s people may suffer because of foolish behavior (I Peter 2:11-20; I Peter 4:15).

God does not isolate His people from pain, but He does provide help for them in their suffering. This lesson will identify and recommend that when God’s people need help they may recognize that help is available. So to help me I have...

A Great And Gracious God

Comfort is one purpose of Old Testament Scripture for a New Testament Christian (Rom. 15:4). Although David was a man “after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22), David was a sufferer. He suffered because of Saul’s envy. David had to run for his life. David brought a lot of suffering on himself (II Sam. 11–12), by taking another man’s wife and having the man killed. David suffered from problems with his children. But through it all David could say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psm. 46:11). He quotes the Lord as saying,

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. (Psm. 46:10-11).

Isaiah emphasized the help which God provides for His hurting people.

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:31).

The God who is my helper is an Almighty God. He can take the hurts of life and out of them He can bring great blessings. Gold is purified by an exposure to heat whereby the impurities come to the top and can be removed. Job searched for good that could come out of his suffering (Job 23:10). The apostle Peter said that the trial of faith was more precious than gold tried with fire (I Peter 1:5-9).

God has promised to work all things for good to those who love Him and those whom He has called (Rom. 8:28).

The Son Of God

In our obedience to Christ He not only becomes our Savior (Heb. 5:8-9), He also becomes our High Priest. He continually serves God's people as a High Priest who ever lives to make intercession to God on behalf of God's people (Heb. 7:25). He is both a "merciful and faithful high priest" (Heb. 2:17). Having been in the "form of God" and with God from the beginning (John 1:1-2), He surely understands God's holiness and God's call for His people to be holy (I Peter 1:13-17). However, our Lord took upon Himself the "fashion of a man" (Phil. 2:5-11), and therefore really understands the nature and power of temptation (Heb. 4:15). Consequently, He is a "merciful high priest." Since He is understanding and merciful we should not despair of hope when we sin. We should repent and return to the Lord (Isa. 55:7).

“To Help Me, I Have...”

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).

When our Lord gave the Great Commission He also gave a precious promise, “I will be with you always...” (Matt. 28:18-20).

How many times have we sung, “Does Jesus Care”? Does He care when “my heart is pained too deeply for mirth and song?” Does Jesus care “when I’ve tried and failed to resist some temptation strong?” Does Jesus care “when I’ve said goodbye to the dearest on earth to me?” Remember the response? “Oh, yes, He cares. I know He cares!”

The Holy Spirit Helps

God’s Spirit has inspired the people who wrote the Scriptures (Eph. 3:1-6). I can find great comfort in the Spirit’s inspired words (II Thess. 4:18).

There are four basic human emotions: glad, sad, scared, and mad. There are degrees and variations of these emotions. The Spirit’s word helps us with any or all of these emotions. Read the book of Psalms and observe the reality of these emotions and God’s help when His people are struggling with one or all of these emotions.

Furthermore, there are times in life when the “walk of life overtakes us. Hopes deceive and fears annoy.” There are times when we may have difficulty adequately expressing to God our perceived needs and the nature of help we need from Him. So what does the Spirit do for us?

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as

we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26).

So through the inspired Word of the Scripture and through the intercession of the Holy Spirit I have Divine aid to help me when I hurt.

God's Family

As a child of God I am in the family of God, the church (I Tim. 3:15). The people of God have become my brothers and sisters. They love me “with a pure heart fervently” (I Peter 1:22-23). Therefore, they reach out with caring hearts and loving arms to help me in my need. They have cause to understand that my “misfortune is their opportunity.” They serve the Lord by serving His people and thereby become instruments in God’s hands by and through which He blesses people (Gal. 6:10; II Cor. 9:8-12). If my need is for food, shelter, and clothing, God’s people will provide it (I John 3:17-18). If my need is emotional, God’s people reach down to lift me up and they hold me so I can stand up (I Thess 5:14). Note: “feble-minded” means “faithhearted,” NKJV). If my need is spiritual, God’s people respond with caring discipline and/or exhortation (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20).

My Immediate Family

To be loved by brethren is an inexplicable blessing. However, the love of one’s own family is different. The love of a wife who stands by you in illness or weakness is a special source of strength. The love and closeness of children and grandchildren enriches the life and brings comfort to the heart. Brothers and sisters to whom we are bound by cords of love are a rich source of strength.

“To Help Me, I Have...”

Your own family loves you when you win or lose. They stand by you when you succeed or fail.

Through Service To Others

Some of my greatest help comes from reaching out to others in Christian service: teaching a lost person what to do to be saved (Matt. 28:18-20); converting one who has erred from the truth (James 5:19-20); visiting the sick (Matt. 25:36-40); helping the old and the lonely, or, rendering any act of kindness and love.

Dr. Karl Menninger was once asked what he would do if he thought he was losing his mind. He said that he would immediately “go across the tracks and start helping someone.”

God tells us that “through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). It may seem ironic that we are helped by serving others, but that is the way life really works. In the “golden chapter” of the Bible God tells us to be patient or steadfast in tribulation or trouble then He explains the way to keep on, to hold on, and to hold up in trouble:

...continuing instant in prayer; Distributing
to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality
(Rom. 12:12-13).

We are helped by helping; we are served by serving; we are loved by loving; we gain friends by being a friend; and we serve God by serving our fellowman. “God’s greatest blessings always flow from hands that serve Him here below.” The beautiful hymn, “Something For Thee” has a line which says, “Give me a faithful heart, likewise to Thee, that each departing day henceforth may see – some work of love begun, some deed of

kindness done, some wanderer sought and won.
Something for Thee.”

God loves His children with a special love (I John 3:1-2). He provides for them. He helps them. He is concerned when they hurt. He uses their pain for their spiritual gains. He comforts, He sustains, He forgives, He brings hope, He saves, He blesses, and He will save eternally those who love and obey His Son and those who are faithful even unto death (Rev. 2:10).

As a child of God I have help from a Great and Gracious God. In the struggles of life I have help from the Son of God. I have help from the Holy Spirit of God. I also have help from the family of God, my own family, and through opportunities to serve others.

So let us resolve anew that we shall bravely walk through the storms of life with a hope whereby we “never walk alone.” When pain afflicts our bodies and minds, let us with a resolve born of faith determine to follow Him who is the way, who shows the way, and one who has already walked the way (I Peter 2:21; John 14:6).

Let us remember that the storms of life will pass. The sun will shine again. Happy days are ahead. Eternal joy awaits the saints of God.

Chapter 8

God Is Able To Deliver Us

Dave Miller



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Early in the 6th century B. C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon constructed a statue of gold that was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide, erecting it on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. At a national dedication service, a decree was issued requiring all peoples to fall down and worship the image when a plethora of instruments were sounded. Those who failed to comply with the edict were to be placed immediately into a burning furnace.

Of course, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to observe the edict and their behavior was promptly reported to the king. Enraged, he ordered the trio to come before him. The king asked if it was true that they were refusing to serve Babylonian gods and worship the image. He stated firmly that if they were worshipping the image, all would be well. But if they refused to worship, they would be immediately thrown into the fiery furnace. His final comment to them was: "And who is the god who will **deliver** you from my

hands?”

These three young men gave a verbal response to this pagan king that echoes down the corridors of time directly to our hearts, inspiring us to be convicted by the same confidence and trusting determination. To paraphrase their affirmation, “O Nebuchadnezzar, it’s not even necessary for us to give you a response. If you choose to throw us into the furnace, our God whom we serve is able to **deliver** us from your hand, O King! But even if he chooses not to do so, you need to understand that we are not going to serve your gods nor worship the gold image which you have set up.”

You remember how that declaration so enraged the king that he ordered the execution oven to be heated seven times hotter than normal. He commanded soldiers of valor from his military to bind the trio and throw them into the furnace. They lost their own lives in the process due to the extensive heat. When the three Hebrews fell down in the midst of the furnace, a fourth figure appeared, no doubt an angelic being sent by God. The pagan king was stunned and astonished when he saw four figures walking freely amid the flames unharmed. He called for them to come out of the oven. As government administrators and court officials crowded around the trio, they saw that not only did the fire fail to burn them, their hair was not singed and the smell of smoke was absent from their clothes.

Nebuchadnezzar summarized his amazement and the point of this lecture,

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and
Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and
delivered his servants that trusted in him...
(Dan. 3:28).

My friend, our God is able to **deliver** us!

Some years later, after the demise of the Babylonian Empire, Daniel was able to survive the transition to a new government and was appointed by the king to serve as one of three governors who had charge over the 120 satraps—provincial ministers—who, in turn, were over the entire Persian Empire. Daniel so distinguished himself in the execution of his governmental responsibilities that the king decided to place Daniel over the entire realm. The jealous governors and satraps plotted against Daniel, hoping to find some failing in his conduct, but were unable to do so. Consequently, they knew the only way they could bring him down would be to bring his governmental duties into conflict with his religious beliefs—knowing that Daniel would be true to his God first and foremost.

So they convinced the king to issue an edict banning all prayer except that directed to the king himself. (You see, the supreme court ban on school prayer is not new). The penalty for violating this new decree was consignment to a den of lion’s lair. Daniel knew that the edict had been signed, but went to his room and prayed to the God of heaven as he had always done. The conspirators observed this behavior and reported it to the king. Realizing he had been manipulated and not willing that the law should be applied in Daniel’s case, he did everything he could to avert sentencing—but to no avail.

He ordered Daniel’s consignment to the lion’s den—but not before he spoke personally to Daniel, his honest and trusted administrator. Here’s what the king said to Daniel as they were about to place him into the den: “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will **deliver**

you” (Dan. 6:16). When the king hurried back to the den early the next morning, he cried out full of grief:

Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God,
whom thou servest continually, able to **deliver**
thee from the lions (Dan. 6:20).

Of course, you remember the response of Daniel on that occasion. He pointed out that God had, indeed, shut the mouths of the lions (Dan. 6:22; cf., Heb. 11:33). Daniel’s accusers were thrown into den along with their families—and the lions tore them to pieces before their bodies hit the ground.

The king then issued a decree that called upon the entire empire to show the proper respect to the God of Daniel, and notice these words:

...for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever,
and his kingdom that which shall not be
destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto
the end. He **delivereth** and **rescueth**... (Dan.
6:26-27).

Even this pagan Medo-Persian monarch understood that the God of Heaven is able to **deliver**. Brethren, our God is able to **deliver** us!

Some four to five hundred years earlier, a young shepherd boy was sent by his father with supplies to check on his three older brothers who were engaged in military service. Fifteen miles west of his home village of Bethlehem, the Israelite army camp and leaving the supplies with the supply keeper, David proceeded on to the battlefield where both the Philistine and Israelite armies were drawn up in battle array. Upon greeting his brothers, David became aware of the massive Philistine champion who stood out in front of his fellow soldiers issuing his taunting words of defiance,

challenging the Israelites to send forth an opposing combatant to face him.

David was incensed. His attitude was,

...who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God (I Sam. 17:26).

His determination to face the giant landed him an interview with the king himself. The king insisted that David was too young and too inexperienced in fighting. But David related how he had killed both a lion and a bear in his effort to protect his father's sheep. David bravely affirmed these words in the presence of his king.

The LORD that **delivered** me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will **deliver** me out of the hand of this Philistine (I Sam. 17:37).

My friend, our God is able to **deliver** us!

Some five hundred years before David, Moses was commissioned by God to orchestrate the release of the Israelites from the oppression to which Pharaoh had subjected them. On that occasion, as Moses hid his face, afraid to look upon God who spoke to him from within the burning bush, God said:

And I am come down to **deliver** them out of the hand of the Egyptians... (Exod. 3:8).

Deliver them He did. By the hands of Moses and Aaron, God inflicted Pharaoh and the Egyptian population with ten catastrophic afflictions, stunning plagues, that demonstrated God's power and God's presence (e.g., Exod. 9:16). Pharaoh relented and the Israelites exited Egypt. Our God is able to **deliver** us!

But Pharaoh changed his mind and set out in hot

pursuit with his military, including 600 choice chariots. The people panicked and began to regret their departure from Egypt, when Moses announced the population: “Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the **deliverance** of the Lord...” (Exod. 14:13). He then stretched out his rod over the sea and split the waters in two, forming a wall of water on the left and one on the right. The Israelites crossed that body of water on dry ground (Exod. 14:22; Heb. 11:29). As the Egyptian military pursued them into the midst of the sea. God caused the waters to collapse, drowning the Egyptian soldiers, whose dead bodies washed up onto the seashore (Exod. 14:30). My friend, our God is able to **deliver** us!

Nearly four centuries prior to this amazing event, a young Hebrew teenager was sent by his father to check on the whereabouts of his older brothers. When he found them they considered murdering him on the spot, but were convinced, instead, to throw him into a dry cistern. When a trade caravan passed by, they decided to sell their own brother for twenty pieces of silver. After enduring these cruel and **callused** acts, he was then sold into slavery. In that predicament, he was falsely accused of sexual misconduct and sent to prison. There he remained until one day he interpreted dreams for two of Pharaoh’s court officials. Yet when the chief butler was reinstated to his butlership, he promptly forgot about Joseph, who sat in prison for two more years.

Through all of these negative circumstances, notice how God was able to **deliver**. The brothers were going to kill Joseph, but instead he was sold to the trade caravan. God **delivered** his life. In Egypt, he had to become a slave, but he was made overseer of Potiphar’s estate. God **delivered** him from worse circumstances.

He was falsely accused and thrown into prison, but he was made assistant warden. God **delivered** him from a less favored status. Finally, when Pharaoh called him forth from prison to interpret his dreams, Joseph was elevated to the prominent political post of Prime Minister over the Egyptian Empire. Through it all, my friends, our God is able to **deliver** us!

What about Job? Here was a righteous man—a man who was busy living life to the best of his ability in harmony with the will of God. Suddenly, at the instigation of Satan himself, Job lost nearly everything. Bedouin raiding parties swooped down upon his herdsmen, killing them, and carrying off his livestock—500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and 3,000 camels. A massive electrical storm destroyed his 7,000 sheep and perhaps the same turbulence caused the house where his ten children were having a birthday party to collapse, killing all ten kids. His own body was then infected by the terminal skin disease that left him in constant excruciating pain and abject misery. He had lost his health, his wealth, and his family—with the exception of his wife. Yet she only contributed to his anguish by urging him to curse God and die—throw in the towel—and abandon his integrity.

Despite Job’s prolonged misery, that lasted at least for months (Job 7:3), was God able to **deliver** him from the clutches of Satan? Oh, yes. God restored his health, and prolonged his life another 140 years, doubled his economic condition, and blessed Job with ten more children.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (James 5:11).

My friends, our God is able to **deliver** us!

Ask Jeremiah. Did God preserve and protect him through every adverse circumstance? Listen to these words spoken by God Himself:

Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to **deliver** thee, saith the LORD (Jer. 1:7-8).

And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. And I will **deliver** thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible (Jer. 15:20-21).

God made the same promise to us all in Psalm 91:14-15:

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I **deliver** him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will **deliver** him, and honour him (Psm. 91:14-15).

No wonder the Psalmist declared:

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid (Psm. 27:1).

No wonder Micah announced:

Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me (Micah 7:7).

No wonder Solomon said, “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but **deliverance** is of the Lord” (Prov. 21:31). No wonder Paul wrote,

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us (II Cor. 1:9-10).

“And the Lord will **deliver** me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom” (II Tim. 4:10).

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (II Peter 2:9).

I ask you, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14). “Has the Lord’s arm been shortened?” (Num. 11:23).

Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee (Jer. 32:17).

“For with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

God does not operate **miraculously** any longer (I Cor. 13:8-10). However, He does still operate. He continues His providential care and guidance over the universe. He sent His son “to preach **deliverance** to the captives” (Luke 4:18). If we will obey His gospel plan of salvation and then commit our lives to faithful, loving service before Him, my dear friends, we can live life assured of the fact—our God is able to **deliver** us!

Section III
The Christian Home



*A Provider Of Strength ~ The Christian Home
Strength From Godly Families, As God Desires
Strength From Husbands / Fathers
Strength From Wives / Mothers*

Chapter 9

The Christian Family: A Provider Of Strength

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



Robert has been faithfully proclaiming God's word for almost fifty years. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb and George Peabody Colleges. He is an outstanding writer, having more than two dozen books in print. He has written for many journals, and brotherhood publications. He has worked with the fine Ripley, TN congregation for over twenty years. Robert and Irene have two children.

Marvelous and majestic are the concepts most of us hold toward "home." It is one of the sweetest words in the king's language. Precious memories cluster above, about and underneath it. By the marvels of memory we think of loving mothers, sacrificial fathers and a child's laughter. We think of the sweetness of marital majesty and household happiness. We think of family harmony. We think of the place where we have been treated the best and perhaps grumbled the most. We think of the education we received within God's basic unity of society. Literary language can never do justice to the lovely legacy of a good home. The dividends it bears defy aptness of description.

During the War between the States, 1861-1865, opposing armies were encamped across the river from each other. In the early evening the band on one side struck up "Yankee Doodle." The band on the other side

struck up “*Dixie*.” Then one band played “*Home, Sweet Home*.” Soon both sides were in full musical and emotional harmony. Men from both sides momentarily forgot the hatreds and hostilities of war and thought of the precious homes from which they had come. Some of them had come from very humble homes and yet there were the sweetest sentiments attached to such. Coming to mind in both armies were mental pictures of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, wives and children. Thoughts of home stirred their deepest emotions.

Home and family are as old as is the race. Adam and Eve composed the first family on earth. They formed a family the very day Jehovah God made them in His image and in His likeness (Gen. 1:26, 27). Deity’s initial directive to them was to multiply and replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28). Here sons and daughters are envisioned and anticipated. Humanity thus began within a family framework. For one of our college lectureships some years back I spoke four days on “*Families In Genesis*.” I found it a very challenging study.

Families are vastly important throughout the Bible. One of the beautiful concepts we have of the Lord’s church is that of a family. We are the household of faith in Galatians 6:10; we are the household of God in Ephesians 2:19 and I Timothy 3:15. Paul’s masterpiece of the church, Ephesians, speaks words of weight and wisdom, “*Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*” (3:15). A golden gem of Psalms says that “*God setteth the solitary in families:...*” (68:6).

The focus of this study will be upon the stately strength to be derived from Christian families where Dad is a Christian, Mother is a Christian and their precious offsprings become Christians as they mature

into responsible roles in youth and for the remnant of their days on earth. Exactly one dozen segments will be employed in the dynamic development of this most challenging theme of thought. I will number, name and then amplify on the points presented.

(1) Strength Of Commitment

This forms the glue for marital mates, for parents and children and for siblings in their brotherly and sisterly roles. Commitment permeates Genesis 2:24 just after Eve's creation by God's generous hand of love, power and goodness. Moses wrote, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*" The glue was still there when Jesus addressed marital matters in Matthew 19:3-9; it was still there when Paul wrote of the marvels and majesty of marriage in Ephesians 5:22-23. It is an essential in marriage relationships for a stately surety.

Likewise, it is an essential between parents and children. Eli was not committed to the right rearing principles of Hophni and Phinehas, his irreverent and immoral sons (I Sam. 1-4). Ahab and Jezebel were not committed to the right rearing of Athaliah, their daughter, as we see in the chronicles of Israelite kings and families of royalty. "*As is the mother, so is her daughter*" (Ezek. 16:44) finds precise personification in this mother-daughter team in the Old Testament. Herodias and Salome form their counterpart in the New Testament. All four of these women were wickedness personified. They wrote the book on how to be more wicked every day one lives.

Children are not always committed to parents as they should be. Absalom proves that to be the case in

the Old Testament; the prodigal son and his older brother prove that to be the case in the pearl of all parables (II Sam. 16-18; Luke 15:11-32).

Siblings are not always as committed to each other as they should be. Cain comes readily to mind in Genesis 4; Joseph’s brethren displayed Cain’s attitude of hatred and hostility toward innocent Joseph in Genesis 37.

Commitment is indispensable for attaining and maintaining household harmony, holiness and happiness. There is nothing to replace it when it is gone or never has been an integral part and parcel of the family framework.

(2) Strength Of Character

Reputation is what others deem us to be; it is largely external in nature. Character is what we are internally; it is what we are in the dark; it is what we are when alone; it is what God deems us to be; it is the built-in reserve that provides enabling power to cope with the crisis of life with all their vicissitudes, frustrations, disappointments, etc.

Enoch, seventh from Adam, had character and exhibited it during the three hundred or more years he walked with God (Gen. 5:21-24; Heb. 11:5; Jude 14, 15). Abraham had character. His faithful walk with God exhibited it during the full century he tabernacles in Canaan’s land. Isaac had character which was regally reflected in his pilgrimage of peace. Jacob developed real character when he went from a supplanted one and a conniver and became Israel, a spiritual giant who prevailed in power with God. Joseph had real character which was reflected in how he met brotherly hatred, the seductions of an abandoned woman in Egypt, false

accusations from her, an unjust prison sentence and the power that fell at his feet when called into high office as Egyptian Governor. Samuel and a faithful line of prophets who followed him bore deep character in courage, conversation and conduct. John the Baptist, apostles and New Testament evangelists exhibited character with par excellence. The Christ possessed character in absolute perfection.

There is no finer place for character development than membership in two families--the Lord's spiritual family, the church, and a strong, solid Christian family. If part and parcel of both, we ought to be grateful a thousand times over!

(3) Strength Of Role Models

We all need role models. Paul sought to be such as reflected in sage counsel he gave Corinthian Christians and Philippian saints (I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17). He wanted both Timothy and Titus to be such and issued inspired directives insuring their success in the same (I Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7, 8).

Current America is suffering a definite dearth in having few worthy role models for our youth. Washington, the sports world and the entertainment field no longer furnish role models with any degree of consistency. We, the older generation, frequently let our youth down in this regard.

The Lord's church and Christian families can and should fill this void. Parents, grandparents, gospel preachers, able Bible teachers, sound elders, working, reliable deacons and faithful, fervent Christians were my early role models and still are. My parents and grandparents have long been gone from earthly scenes

but memories persist and ideals taught linger ever on my heart and in my life.

We need moms who will be models to the boys and girls they have brought into the world. We need pops who will be a pattern to their children and later to precious grandchildren. We need older brothers and sisters who will be role models to their younger siblings.

The Christian family is in a position made to order in filling this ever noticeable vacuum in our almost empty society. Let us seize this golden opportunity laid at our feet and fulfill it with patience and persistency.

(4) Strength Of Togetherness

Some people are loners but not many of us wish to fill this unenviable category. There is an innate desire to belong, to be with other people. Adam was not at his best when alone. Sensitive Jehovah surveyed this less than desirable stance of man and proceeded to do something about it in Genesis 2:18-25 by making beautiful Eve.

Solomon knew that finding a worthy wife was a good thing (Prov. 18:22). Paul knew that men and women needed marital mates to avoid lascivious liaisons of fornication (I Cor. 7:1-5). God’s plan for procreating the race has always, is and ever shall be within the framework of the family. In such hallowed environments children can be nurtured; they belong; they know the vast value of togetherness. There are no better or more beautiful realms of togetherness than in God’s family--the church and in one’s own Christian family. Dad is respected; mother is appreciated; children are loved, cared for and provided with the discipline and authority that will carve them into responsible beings who can

help our weary, wicked world to become a better place in which to reside.

Family togetherness is an intense imperative for our time. What a powerful provider of moral and spiritual strength it can be, should be and must be!

(5) Strength Of Family Worship

Cain would never have slain his righteous brother Abel had he worshipped and served God after the due order (Gen. 4; I John 3:12). The way of Cain was irreverence toward God and brotherly hatred of Abel (Jude 11). What a marked contrast to Andrew and Peter and James and John who loved God and their brothers respectively.

There is something very impressive about Noah and his family of seven worshipping God just subsequent to their exit from the ark in Genesis 9. In Genesis 22:5 Abraham informed his servants that he “*and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*” Provisions were made for family worship among Israelite families (Deut. 6:4ff). As tabernacle worship beckoned at Shiloh, Elkanah and his family were in attendance (I Sam. 1:3ff).

The beloved physician Luke tells of Joseph, Mary and the twelve-year-old Christ journeying from Nazareth to Jerusalem for Passover observance in Luke 2:41-52. They TOOK Christ to the place of worship--not SENT Him. Today, grandparents frequently do the TAKING while the children's dad hunts, fishes or plays golf on Sundays and their mother “sleeps in” till time for lunch preparation. What a sorry legacy they pass on to their impressionable children. Aquila and Priscilla worked as a team to make a living and worshipped and served

God as a team to make a life (Acts 18; Rom. 16; I Cor. 16; II Tim 4). Peter envisioned husbands and wives as praying effectually together (family worship) and on their way to heaven TOGETHER (I Peter 3:7). Shortly after the death of his father, a young man told me of the times during his youth when the entire family would sing, read the Bible and pray together. I remarked to him how precious that memory was. He said, “*I would not take a million dollars for it.*” Many who read these lines can relate to the majesty of this memory. Others will wish they could,; but cannot.

A restoration of the family altar of worship would do much to stabilize crumbling homes in our secular and sensual society. Happy, holy and harmonious are homes that love God, each other and worship together both at home and when the local congregation assembles.

(6) Strength Of Sexual Purity

This is one of the reasons God provided Adam a wife and Eve a husband. Sexual intimacy was comprehensively included in this precious provision. Both pleasure and procreation inhere this exhibited wisdom on Jehovah’s part. Sexual privileges belong exclusively in marriage--NEVER casual dates, one-night stands or even serious courtships between couples in love but yet unmarried.

Solomon counseled in Proverbs 5:15-19,

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers’ with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind

and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.

Pauline counsel in the New Testament reinforces this shield against sensual sins in corrupt Corinth. He wrote in I Corinthians 7:1-5,

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Further Pauline counsel along this line is couched in Ephesians 5:22-23 and Hebrews 13:4.

Jesus summed it up well by stating, “*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*” (Matt. 5:8). The carnal contrast reads, “*Cursed are the impure in heart: for they shall see Satan*” (I Satan 5:8).

Here is the sure way to build a permanent shield against lascivious liaisons outside marital majesty.

(7) Strength Of Successfully Resisting Temptation

Potiphar’s wife in Genesis 39 should have turned to her husband for sexual needs and not to the handsome Hebrew servant recently acquired by them. David should

have turned to one of his own wives in the palace for pent-up sexual needs in II Samuel 11 and not to Uriah’s beautiful wife. The woman in I Corinthians 5 should have turned to her own husband for sexual fulfillment and not to her step son. The guilty son likewise should have followed a strict hands off his father’s wife. She did not belong to him nor he to her.

From all reports sexual harassment is on the rise in today’s workplace and really in all areas where men and women are frequently together. As these lines are written in February of 1996, a popular comic strip, Dr Rex Morgan, is dealing with this in a hospital setting. Magazine articles and newspaper coverage often report its common occurrences in our sexually-charged society. Such could be stopped dead in its tracks if men would touch sexually their own wives and save sexual language for the marital bedroom, not the workplace. It could be stopped if women would touch sexually their own husbands and not make sexual advancements, either in language or actions, toward the husbands of other wives. Likewise, extra marital affairs appear to be in epidemic stages in our highly charged sensual society. Likewise it is vital that youth not use sex as a plaything. It is to be saved for marriage. Premarital sex is fornication just as extra marital sex is adultery. Both sins form a beaten path to hell for a surety. Keeping sexual language and action between mates in marriage is the heavenly-approved way to resist fornication and adultery. God anticipated just such precautions when He, in His omniscience, (all-knowing, all wise) provided for marriage.

Truly Christian families treat sex outside marriage as strictly taboo.

(8) Strength Of Proper Procreation

In Genesis 1–2 Deity (all the Godhead were involved in this crowning climax of earthly creations) made Adam and Eve. They were made on the same day. This would have been the sixth day. Adam was created a bit earlier on this day than Eve. But Eve was surely made on this day. We know this was the case because the Timeless Trinity concluded their breathtaking work of creation on the sixth day as per Genesis 2:1, 2. They rested on day seven which meant that creation activity had already ended. Adam and Eve were bonded together in marriage that very day. All-wise Jehovah and His fellow colleagues of creative activity did not intend for them to constitute all of humanity for the future. A divine directive is given them in Genesis 1:28. They were to “*multiply and replenish the earth,...*” Divine wisdom was wrapped up in this previous provision. The race was to be perpetrated within marriage--not outside its precious precincts. Cain, Abel and Seth were not conceived outside marriage but inside its holy precincts as per Genesis 4. Abraham and Sarah had long been married before Isaac blessed their family framework in Genesis 21. Isaac and Rebekah were married twenty years before the twins, Esau and Jacob, were born to them related in Genesis 25. Joseph was married to Asenath before Manasseh and Ephraim graced their household as valued babies. The same could be said of many Old Testament couples. Behaving as they did, they did not face paternity suits which are quite common in our society of loose standards.

In the New Testament Zacharias and Elisabeth were long married before little John came as their long-prayed-for baby boy (Luke 1). Paul summed it all up in a marvelous manner and with heavenly wisdom

permeating each written word, “*I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully*” (I Tim. 5:14). Note the one-two-three order of procreative priority--marriage first, conception and birth of children next and then their wise and well-disciplined management or rearing.

Our sensual, highly sexed society spurns this wisdom that comes down from above. It is often sex on the first date, or soon thereafter, with children en masse conceived and born to ill-prepared boys and girls who had NOTHING going for them except chemical attraction and NO real preparation for babies and their proper care and keeping. Love and commitment were absent from their lascivious liaisons; lusts and carnal conquests were on the throne of aroused emotions way OUT of control.

Desperate is our need to make a return to God’s way of race continuation -- marriage first, sexual intimacy next, conception and birth of children next and then successfully rearing them to responsible manhood and womanhood. God DEMANDS such; little children DESERVE such.

(9) The Strength Of Selflessness

Selflessness and selfishness begin with the same alphabetical letter but there the similarity ends with stunning abruptness. They are poles apart. Like the proverbial east and west, never shall the twain meet and surely will never merge. They are like light and darkness. Where the one is, the other will make a prompt exit.

Selfishness is looking out for Number One and NO

ONE else. It is the philosophy built squarely on ME and MINE. The BIG I prevails; the LITTLE YOU is on a distant back burner. Ahab was full of cruel selfishness relative to Naboth's vineyard and his consuming desire to make it his in a hurry (I Kings 21). The rich farmer in Luke 12:16-21 was selfish to the nth degree and then some. All his present and future plans centered around himself exclusively.

Too many, FAR too many, enter marriage with selfishness ruling all marital intents, "*What can he/she do to make me happy?*" This is selfishness gone to seed and then some. Many homes begin on this note and never rise above it. Childless couples, as they face the sunset years, have been known to regret not ever having children because they will have no one to care for them when older and helpless. This smacks of selfishness--not selflessness.

Selflessness looks out for others. It takes care of one's needs but does not stop there. Marriage begins on a far nobler and happier note when each can say, "*Now what can I do to make him/her happy and contented in our marriage?*" As children begin to come along wise parents will think in terms of what is best for the children.

Marriage and the family constitute a built-in environment for developing greater degrees of needed selflessness. The I, ME and MY disposition, often characteristic of the single state, gives way to WE and OUR priorities. When a man has a family he has others of whom to think rather than just himself--wife and children. When a woman has a family she has others to consider daily--husband and children. Marriage and family responsibilities are excellent feeders of noble

selflessness. Selfishness is impotent of great good accomplished; selflessness is powerful in producing delightful dividends. Need I write more on this point of priority?

(10) The Strength Of Making The World A Better Place In Which To Live

Becky Burris once wrote a tract suggestive of this very principle, *A Better World Begins With Me*. For many years I have preached a sermon entitled, “*A Better Congregation Begins With Me*.” The same principle works in a twofold way relative to homelife: (1) a better home begins with me and (2) a better world begins with better homes.

The world in which we live during the closing decade of the twentieth century is inundated with problems many and dangers beyond count. This has been a century of wars--devastating beyond accuracy of assessment. What if Hitler had been reared to become and remain a gospel preacher? What if Karl Marx of the nineteenth century, father of twentieth century Communism, had been reared in a truly Christian home and had become a writing defender of Christianity instead of a literary penman with a deadly political philosophy to propagate into world-wide prominence of such cruelty and callousness? How different the twentieth century might have been.

Our world is filled to overflowing stages with dangers and perils on every hand. Criminal elements are increasing far more rapidly than we can build jails and prisons to incarcerate them. Rape is on the rise; drug addiction is at an all time high; child abuse is in epidemic stages, abortion on demand is common in our

amoral society; our city streets are unsafe by day and night; our children may be gunned down by gun wielding thugs at school or on their way going or returning; our homes are no longer havens of safety and security.

Those who make our world insecure and unsafe have come from homes. The year of 1996 could be written on a much higher and happier note than it will be if homes were universally Christian and a generation were being reared to love God, fear Him, keep His commandments and to love others as we love ourselves and as Christ has loved us (Eccl. 12:13; Matt. 22:36-40; John 13:34, 35). Our society is not going to get better until we get our act together in the framework of the family, until we turn back to God and until we begin to read, believe and obey the Bible again. Homes out of moral and spiritual control help breed the hatred, hostility, immorality, dishonesty and violence of the 1990's.

(11) Strength For Building Better Homes For The Future

Sons and daughters growing to maturity in dysfunctional homes are deprived from learning by experience and observation what is really required to make homes solid and families secure. Many of them grow up in one-parent homes and may never know who their Dads are. Too many are abandoned by both parents at early ages and become wards of the state knowing only foster home care that may be good or far less than desirable. Many of them grow up in totally irreligious environment where the names of Deity are never employed except by way of cursing. They never hear Dad pray; they never see Mom read the Bible; they never

know what a Sunday morning Bible class room looks like with a smiling teacher and a group of enthusiastic young learners eager to learn more about Jesus whom they love and who loves them. Fighting and feuding parents, even if together, do not show impressionable children what it means to love God and one another in that one-two order of precious priority. They receive instruction about marriage preparation before they arrive at marriageable ages. Violence in the family is a way of life and makes impossible a serene, peaceful type of homelife. Broken marital vows frequently lead to handicapped children bearing lifetime scars. The type of homes most children come from in our day makes impossible the *Christ In The Home* concept to reign in spiritual sovereignty. Better homes for tomorrow will not be built upon the debris of collapsed families and destroyed homes today. Our children deserve better care and keeping than they are receiving in the homes in which they are growing up toward and into maturity.

(12) Strength For Attaining The Heavenly Home

Abraham and Sarah not only journeyed from Ur to an earthly Canaan but, more importantly, they journeyed hand-in-hand and heart-on-heart to the Heavenly Canaan. Both lived and died in the warm embrace of fervent faith as per Hebrews 11. Isaac and Jacob were a father-son team in patriarchal times. Both lived and died in faith as related in “*Inspirations Hall of Faith ad Fame*”--Hebrews 11. Matthew 8:11 assures Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will all be in heaven at last. Right now, minus questions or quibbling to the contrary, all three of these are in the comforts of Hades. This place of

paradise for righteous spirits between death and judgment is even styled by the Lord Jesus as “*Abraham’s bosom*” in Luke 16:23. How fundamentally fitting.

Aquila and Priscilla constituted a team of truth and a couple of consecration. They were headed toward heaven and they made the journey of preparation together.

In I Peter 3:7 Peter envisioned husbands and wives whose household harmony kept their prayers from being short-circuited on the way to Heaven’s throne of petition reception and as being heirs together of the grace of life.

I have a book in my library telling of an aged Christian couple sitting at a table with an open Bible. The husband is blind; the wife is reading to him. As she read John 11 he asked her to read again the Lord’s statement about being the resurrection and the life and “*he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*” (John 11:25). Here is a couple who had built on the rock--not the shifting sands of infidelity. They faced life’s sunset with firmness of faith, with hallowed hope and with the warm glow of love divine living in them.

Conclusion

The Christian family is a beautiful beacon in a world filled with dense darkness. Our weak, wicked and weary world needs the strength that Christian families alone can tender. How strong is your Christian family, Dear Reader? How strong is mine? God knows and we should have a pretty good hint.

Chapter 10

The Family That God Desires

Winfred Clark



Winfred has been preaching for fifty years. He is presently serving in various ways with the Hobbs Street congregation in Athens, AL. He directs the School of Bible Emphasis, which conducts excellent classes across the country. He is the editor of “*The Expositor*” publication. He recently wrote a new tract, “*Moderation In The Phillipian Context.*” Winfred and Polly have two children.

All men should be concerned about those things which God would desire for we are indeed accountable to Him. David was well aware of the fact of God’s desire.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
and in the hidden (part) thou shalt make me
to know wisdom (Psm. 51:6).

Being conscious of such will help us in every facet in life. However, we will address the matter of God’s desire as it pertains to the family for there can be no doubt about His concern for the family. This is seen in a number of ways. One, it is seen in the fact that such was His own creation (Gen. 2:21-22). The first family, and those which follow after, would owe their existence to God. Second, the family is to be *guided* and *governed* by the word of the Lord. Third, the family is protected by the word of the Lord. One can see this to be a fact by some of the instructions given to Moses on the mount.

Herein one will find instructions that would protect the family as God ordained it (Exod. 20:15-17). On and on one could go with evidence related to God’s concern for the family so that we have no doubt about the desire of our Father relative to the family.

Where God Is Loved And His Word Is Respected

We can know this by a number of references. We shall take a few cases. Note the following.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:4-9).

Can there be any doubt about the desire on the part of God concerning the family as set forth in this passage? Can there be any doubt about the kind of family one would find if they follow the instructions given here? One can see the need for a supreme love for God demanded. Note, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God.” That tells us who we are to love. Note again, “with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” This tells us how much we are to love God. Not only is there a need for supreme love for God: there is

also the need for supreme respect for the word of the Lord. Note, “and these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.” One can see God’s relationship to His word. The words in this case would have to do with those which He commands. That makes these especially important. They must be respected as the word of God. That means they are superior to all words. Such an attitude will insure that one would never allow the words of men to supplant the words of God. Not only is there to be the matter of respect for the fact that these are the words of God; one must also base his convictions upon these words. Note again what God would have to say about this matter. He commands that those words of which he spoke “shall be in thine heart.” This means there should be some heart convictions because of the words of God. This will mean faith and assurance based on the word of the Lord. One can have no question about the need for such convictions in our day. One can surely see the need for such convictions concerning the family. But there is not only the need for convictions; there is also the need for concern. Do you notice that God will then instruct these people to “teach them diligently unto thy children?” Take a moment to think about this, and the sequence in which this is found. One should note that God begins with the parents to assure they have proper respect for God and His word before he speaks of the children. He would demand that they have some convictions about His word. When such convictions are in place there will surely be the matter of concern. This will insure the parents teaching the children because they are concerned that their children know what they are to know. But one needs to note also that there is not only the matter of conviction and

concern; there is also the matter of continual interest. The matter of teaching and instruction is not a one time proposition. This teaching is to be done, “when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” One can surely see within this a continual process. One can see such concern in almost every waking moment of the day or night. But this would mean a continual interest in the word of the Lord and a continual respect for and convictions concerning the word of the Lord. We all know of the dire need for this very kind of thing in our day. We have seen some parents who show a concern for a time but then for some reason do not continue. We all know of the dire consequences such can have upon their children. One is also able to see another thing in this text before us. There is the personal identification with the word of God. Such was to be bound as a sign upon “thine hand” and frontlets between “thine eyes.” Can there be no doubt about the demand for personal concern for the word of the Lord? But one can also see in this text that there is to be no fear of such identification with the word of the Lord for these commands of God are to be written upon the posts of the house and on the gates. This would mean the children would find themselves in an environment that was saturated with the word of God. It would mean they would grow up in the family where they would know their parents were not ashamed of the word of the Lord. They would know how every problem was to be settled and they would know whose word would be the last word.

Where The Proper Example Would Be Found

All of us realize the impact of an example. Surely the Bible addresses this very matter. One can find the right kind of examples being encouraged again and again in God's word. We will take one case. This would have to do with a man by the name of Abraham. This is what God had to say concerning this man.

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:18-19).

There is surely much we can learn about those things which God would desire in a family. Herein we have God's words which address some facets of such. First of all there is set forth the face of parental authority. God said, "he will command his children and his household." This cannot be done unless he has the authority to do so. But the very words of the Lord in this passage will show forever that God endorses the idea of parental authority. God said, "he will command his children and his household." This cannot be done unless he has the authority to do so. But the very words of the Lord in this passage will show forever that God endorses the idea of parental authority. Not only does he endorse such, He expects such. The clear implication is that if such authority is not exercised Abraham would be held responsible. God would hold Abraham responsible for his household. But this is not an exception. One is well

aware of the stirring words of a man by the name of Joshua.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Josh. 24:15).

One can find within these words a man who speaks for himself and his house. There was no question about the matter of parental authority on the part of Joshua nor Abraham. One is reminded of this fact concerning the qualifications of an elder.

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (I Tim. 3:4).

But we find not only the matter of parental authority; we find also the matter of personal example. You will note that God says, “he will command his children and his household after him.” This just means that we would find in this man the kind of example one would need to find. He would not expect the family do anymore than he is willing to do. His example of faith would surely have an effect on one like Isaac at a later time. How could Isaac ever forget the great faith he would have seen demonstrated on Moriah (Gen. 22)?

Where The Lord’s Cause Is First

We have no doubt about this being the case for the Lord Himself said so.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

There is no way an honest heart can miss the import of this passage. The demand that the Lord's cause come first is heard loud and clear. None of us would think the family would be excluded from such a demand. With this in mind we can look at any number of families where this was the case, but we propose to take the family of Aquila and Priscilla. One will find six references to these good people and a study of such would be very profitable. First,

And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them (Acts 18:2).

Our introduction to them will show that they had to face persecution and disruption. Because of who they were made them victims of such. But one is surely able to see that such persecution and opposition does not make them bitter, nor do they turn their back upon God. These folks would offer the hospitality of their home to Paul in the city of Corinth. These folks would have the opportunity to be with Paul for eighteen months. That would mean they would hear this apostle preach and pray a number of times. But note another reference.

And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow (Acts 18:18).

One is impressed with the fact that these are still faithful even though they move from one place to another. The fact that they faced changes does not mean they should be less than faithful to their Lord. Yes, Paul had taken

a vow and we do not know all the details but these good folks would allow him the liberty in matters of opinion. But note another reference to these two good people.

And he began to speak boldly in the synagoge: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:26).

One would have to be impressed with the fact that these two were pretty well informed concerning the way of the Lord. This is seen in the fact that when they heard Apollos, something was lacking. They did not ignore the deficiency for that would not be fair to others who heard him nor to Apollos himself. So what will they do? They show their concern for him and the church by doing all they could to help the matter. They would courteously take him aside and teach him privately. They did not want to cripple this man nor did they want to harm the cause. They would seek to preserve a good man who could be of great use later. We could be sure that Apollos would be thankful for such people who show this kind of concern. But note another reference.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ (Rom. 16:3-5).

Can there be any doubt about the place of the church in the hearts and minds of these two? They expose themselves to great danger for Paul. This is surely in keeping with the admonition of John when he says,

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (I John 3:16).

Here is an example of people doing the very thing John would say they ought to do. But note again the fact that there is “the church in their house.” But this is noted elsewhere.

The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house (I Cor. 16:19).

It is indeed wonderful that where you have folks like these you will have the church. We do not know how large it was from the numerical standpoint but we do know it was respected in the mind of Paul. The size of the local congregation was not the real important thing. The appearance of the building in which they met was not the major thing. But the kind of people who made up the congregation and the kind of people who met in the building would be the main thing. Just think what these folks would mean to a local church. Would it not be wonderful to have such couples in local congregations today? They would be great assets.

Where Spiritual Values Abound

One can find this kind of home in Caesarea. Note,

And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy (Acts 21:8-9).

We are informed concerning Philip being an evangelist. We are told of the daughters and what they were able to do. But knowing what we do of the man who was the head of this family we are not surprised about the spiritual values that seem to abound in this family. We know for a fact that Philip was willing to accept his spiritual responsibility. This is recorded in an earlier part of the book of Acts. Herein we learn of a time when the need arose for men to serve tables. Philip was one of the men selected for the task (Acts 6:3-6). Yes, this would be a difficult job but here is a man who is willing to accept spiritual responsibility for such. But his spiritual concern does not cease in the city limits of Jerusalem. This is seen in the work he would do in Samaria where he will go and preach the word (Acts 8:4-6). But this does not exhaust the record of his spiritual concern. Note,

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship (Acts 8:26-27).

One is impressed with the fact that this good man would go in spite of the fact that he might be left to preach to only one man. You will find him meeting his responsibility whether he is in Jerusalem, Samaria, Azotus, or Caesarea. One can see the good of that kind of influence in the lives of the daughters inasmuch as they are also children of God.

We find not only a man who will meet his spiritual

responsibility, but will also extend Christian hospitality. Was this not the case when Paul and his companions arrived in Caesarea? Note the fact that “We tarried there many days” (Acts 21:10). Here is a good man and his family involved in the support of others who are preaching and teaching the blessed gospel of our Lord. Everybody would know where this family stood in relation to the gospel. But one needs to stop a moment and notice to whom this hospitality is being extended. Remember Philip was one of the seven selected in Jerusalem. Remember that Stephen was also one of these. Remember that Saul, now Paul, was the one who had a part in the killing of Stephen. Remember that it was because of the persecution of Saul that Philip and many others in the church were scattered from Jerusalem. Remember that it was because of this persecution that Philip was in Samaria and later in Caesarea. But now, the very man who had been a persecutor is being welcomed into his home to receive his hospitality. From this one can see this good and his would not be one to hold bitterness in his heart. He would not be a person who would never forgive. Now take a moment to think of living in a home like this. Think of being a part of such a family. Can we not see this is the kind of family our God would desire? Can we not see how much better the church would be with families like this? Surely we can see the good of such a family and that such a family is a blessing to all it will touch.

Conclusion

From the foregoing we can see the kind of family God would desire. We can see the tremendous effect

“The Family God Desires”

such would have if all men were committed to being the kind of people one can find in these families. May God help us to be those people.

Chapter 11

Strength From Husbands And Fathers

David P. Brown



David has been preaching for thirty years. He received his B.A. and M.Ed. degrees from Oklahoma State University. Has served as director of the Southwest School of Biblical Studies. David is actively working with the *Contending For The Faith* publication. Presently, David works with the Spring, Texas congregation, directing the Houston College of the Bible. David and Joann have four children.

This is the first writing regarding the home that I have done since we celebrated my mother and father's Golden Wedding Anniversary. God willing, later this year my wife and I will celebrate our Silver Wedding Anniversary. It is difficult to realize that my father and mother are great-grandparents. Moreover, it seems so very strange to think of my wife and me as grandfather and grandmother, and, my son and daughters as father and mother. But, such is the nature of time; it seems to move ever so slowly, then one turns around a time or two and a multitude of years have come and gone. Of course, these observations regarding the brevity of life are common to all mankind (Job 7:6; 9:25; Psm. 78:38; 103:14-16; I Peter 1:24; James 4:14).

I am thankful and very happy to be able to say that my memories of home are many; and for the most part exceedingly warm and pleasant. Indeed, with the old song, "Precious Memories," we joyfully sing,

Precious father, loving mother,
 Fly across the lonely years;
And the old home scenes of my childhood,
 In fond memory appear.
Precious memories, how they linger,
 how they ever flood my soul.
In the stillness of the midnight,
 Precious, sacred scenes unfold.

It is very sad and heart breaking to know that a vast amount of those born after World War II and especially since the 1960's have not known a responsible and secure home.

The strength coming from each member of our family was never without flaw, but no home endures, unless each family member derives proper strength from one another. To accomplish what God intended within our families, we must properly use the seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years that comprise our lives in discharging our obligations to Him and thereby to each other. This means that each member of the family must learn the unique position and relationship that he (or she) holds, and has to the other family members. I am sharply aware of the influence my parents have had in my life, as well as the influence my wife and I have had on one another, and on the lives of our children. As regards this present study, impressed on my memory is my father's own impact in my life. Moreover, I am acutely alert to the strength that God expects me to supply to my wife and children; and, yes, my grandchildren.

In this chapter we will study the strength for the family that only a husband and father can properly supply. In the restoration of the home as God created it, this is a necessary component part in making it the

blessing that God intended it to be, and thereby, well pleasing in the sight of God. It is God's will that each spouse should strengthen the other so that each may be the best spouse and parent possible. To that end, this material is offered to the reader.

The Place Of The Man In The Home

The home is for the good of man on earth; however, the results of the home have an eternal bearing. The home as God designed it and as we should want it to be, placed man in the position of the husband. This is the way God desires it and that is all it takes to make something right (Gen. 22:2; Acts 22:16). Also, this is the nature of pure, positive law; it is right for one reason, and one reason only, **God said so.**

By the fact that man was first created, and the woman was taken from him, evidences the truth that man is better suited for ruling the home than is the woman; every feminist movement on the face of the earth not withstanding. God through his inspired apostle wrote:

For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man (I Cor. 11:8-9).

Furthermore, he penned, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (I Tim. 2:13). Now, this is God's truth of the matter, whether we accept it or not. It only behooves those who love the truth to put it into practice, teach it and defend it.

The only way that these things do not matter is if there is no God and if the Bible is not the absolute, objective, humanly attainable, infallible, inerrant,

complete, and final revelation of God to man (II Tim. 3:16-17; John 7:24; 12:48). But, God does exist, the Bible is His inspired word, and all mankind will be judged according to its principles and mandates (John 12:48; Rom. 1:16; 2:2; 14:10; II Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27). Man, therefore must obey his God in all things; the formation, organization, and operation of the home included.

In their twisted minds, men and women may pervert God’s plan for marriage and the home by forming “homosexual marriages.” However, these ungodly marriages are against God’s will as much as idols are against the one true and living God. Men and women who love the truth of God’s saving gospel will speak out and oppose in every right way man’s ungodly meddling in affairs not his own (Jude 3f; Rom. 1:24-32; I Cor. 6:9).

Furthermore, ungodly men and women feverishly labor to teach doctrines, the design of which will destroy the distinctiveness and differences in the male and female. As we shall emphasize in this present study, God has a special function for the man and the woman; and man dare not declare that these things do no matter when God says they do (Col. 3:17; Rom. 10:17; II Cor. 5:7; Rev. 22:14, 18-19).

The Husband

“House” and “band” are the two English words that combine to give us our singular English contraction, “husband.” Actually, a husband is a “house-band.” Thus, within the very makeup of the word “husband” is the basic and fundamental principle of strength. In the Christian home the husband is the strong band around the family to keep it functioning as God would have it. Only the husband can be this singular band of strength

around the house; thereby, giving it the unity and stability that God intended. While the wife's sphere of influence in the home is also singular in its powerful influence, God never charged a woman with the responsibility of the husband.

The Husband Is The Head Of The Family

No institution can correctly function without a head. Someone must have the "final say-so," that is, be the final authority in determining what is to be or not to be. In the case of the home, God has placed this responsibility on the man. Paul wrote,

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body (Eph. 5:23).

Hence, as Christ insures peace, stability, and order for all those will be guided by His word, so it is with the husband in directing the home. What a distinct and singular obligation rests upon the shoulders of the husband!

The Husband Must Exercise Self-Control

In discharging this obligation, the husband must be the ruler, provider, and protector of the home. He must **not** rule, provide, and protect according to his own likes and dislikes, but according to the will of Jesus. This means that no man is ready to be a husband until he has mastered himself. Successful control of another is highly dependent upon the would be "controller," being in control of himself.

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

The Husband Must Love His Wife And Family

What is the correct motive for the husband as he seeks to rule, provide, and protect his home? Husbands are to love their wives.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25; Also see Col. 3:19).

Now, I do not know of any husbands who flawlessly love their wives “as Christ also loved the church.” However, as in everything else in the Christian’s life, Jesus is the example for husbands to follow, in learning **how** to love their wives.

Notice the attitude of Christ toward the church. (1) His life was devoted to building the church (John 15:20). (2) In order to accomplish His task He endured unjust criticism, privation, persecution, and finally death (John 15:20; Note Isa. 53). A husband should have this kind of devotion to his wife and family.

Matthew 7:12 and Ephesians 4:26 are two rules that must not be forgotten by husbands. The first is the “Golden Rule.” “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The second is do “not let the sun go down on your wrath.”

Why should the husband love his wife? Because it is the right thing (as God defines the right) for him to do. Furthermore, he should love her because she is the necessary, God ordained, compliment to fulfill his needs. She is her husband’s other identity or nature. Hence, she is precious to him; fulfilling what no one else can fulfill. She is worth all the proper care and nourishing that such a position and relationship demands (I Peter 3:7). She shares in all that is good and wholesome in

his life. She, therefore, is deserving of all the protection and strength that is due her unique position.

What Love Means And Does Not Mean

The inspired apostle Paul helps us to understand our Lord's love for the church and thereby we may learn how to incorporate such love into our own lives. Paul says love is long-suffering, kind, humble, patient, unselfish, and courteous (I Cor. 13:4-8).

Now because of our corrupted human concept of these character traits it is very important to emphasize that love never rejoices "...in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (v. 6). The practice of long-suffering does not allow for compromising the truth of the gospel, kindness does not equate with condoning error; the state of being humble does not mean that one allows the truth to be violated in one's attempt to remain friends with people; the exercise of patience does not mean winking at evil; unselfishness has nothing to do with permissiveness (ignoring the sinful acts of others and allowing what God will not allow); and the practice of courtesy does not forbid sharp rebukes and corrective discipline when such is demanded.

While many scriptures could be cited to prove the points just made, sufficient proof is found in the very life of Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus was perfect in long-suffering, but He never compromised the truth of the gospel; He was flawlessly kind, but He never condoned error; He was faultless in His humility, but He did not think that such an attitude meant that He could not stand for the truth and oppose error; He was perfect in patience, but He never ignored evil in anyone's life; He was the epitome

of unselfishness, but He never confused that wholesome trait with the hellish practice of permissiveness; and He was flawless in courtesy, but He delivered some of the most pointed, candid, frank, and blunt rebukes that could ever be uttered. **But, mind you, everything that He did and said was in seeking the highest good of the persons for whom He suffered, bled, and died; that highest good, being the saving of their souls from hell.** Peter wrote,

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (I Peter 2:21).

Hence, Christ is the pattern for us to follow in every walk of life, especially in the home.

Note the following tremendous difference in what Jesus attacked and what He willed Himself to suffer. Christ never did respond to attacks made against His person. But, He always descended on false doctrine and those who practiced it with the sword of truth even as Samuel with actual sword in hand came upon King Agag and hewed him in pieces (I Sam. 15:32-33). Men who love and practice evil are never to be dealt with as those who love and obey the Lord. Unless this fundamental principle of godly conduct is first incorporated consistently in the home, the church and the nation will treat evil as good and good as evil. Though a pitiful state of affairs, this has always been (Isa. 5:20; Jer. 18:20; Amos 5:14; Rom. 12:9,21).

If the husband is to be true to his God, wife, and family, he must rule from a foundation of truth with deep concern that all those who are under his headship will learn to hate evil and love good. Of Abraham

God said,

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

Truly, faithful Abraham was a band of righteous strength around his whole house. He loved them with love unfeigned.

The Husband Must Honor His Wife

Peter wrote:

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (I Peter 3:7).

As a proof text this passage was previously cited. However, the truths contained therein need greater study and emphasis.

A “would be husband” should understand the nature of the female; at least as much as he can. Does he know what the Bible says regarding why woman was created? Does he understand the sphere in which God has created woman to function? Does he comprehend what the Bible teaches regarding the wife’s responsibilities? Does he know what motherhood is? Does he understand that these responsibilities can become more than a wife can bear alone? Is he interested in making her life happy rather than making her life a drudgery? Honoring one’s wife demands that the husband have the biblical answers to these questions.

To honor her is to have empathy, sympathy, and understanding of her needs and responsibilities. The planning done by the husband will reflect his wife’s needs and her biblical work as well as that of the children.

One’s wife is honored and thereby strengthened by her husband when she knows that she is a participant in the whole of her husband’s life. The wife is a joint heir with her husband in the grace of life. His concerns are her concerns and vice versa. When God’s will for husband and wife is carried out in their lives, no closer and intimate relationship may exist. Thus, she deserves and needs his tenderness and affection. In these ways he demonstrates that he is worthy of her.

The Husband Must Be Faithful To His Wife

From over a third of a century of preaching, coupled with my studies and knowledge that comes from my association with other faithful members of the church, as well as my work with troubled families, I never cease to be amazed at the unfaithfulness of husbands and wives to one another. However, when one takes into account the materialism and general permissiveness of the country, the sexual promiscuity at every level of society, the divorce rate, lack of respect for an objective absolute standard of morality, ignorance and lack of respect for biblical authority as well as marriages that are marriages in name only, should we be surprised when husbands and wives are unfaithful to one another? Until men and women are brought back to believing that they must abide by God’s laws on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, or be lost in an eternal hell, little can be done to stem the tide of unfaithfulness between husbands and wives (Matt. 5:32; 19:4-9).

Be these things as they may, whether such is restored or not, God's will on this matter has not changed. God's word still declares:

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4).

Furthermore, Paul wrote,

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband (I Cor. 7:2-3).

These scriptures as well as the whole Bible will read and mean the same thing on the day of judgment as they do today (John 12:48).

The Husband Must Support His Wife

As a part of what Timothy was to preach to husbands Paul wrote,

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (I Tim. 5:8).

A godly husband does not consider his income as belonging only to him. He understands that his wife has obligations in the home that demand money in order for her to fulfill her responsibilities. In the use of the money in the home the husband always remembers that he and his wife are co-heirs (I Peter 3:7). It is a grievous sin for a husband to fail, because of laziness, selfishness, irresponsibility, buying alcohol, and other drugs, to provide for his own. The home should be a place of security; and, the wife needs to know that her husband

will support her as she manages the home and all that such activity implies.

The Father’s Strength For The Home

From our weak and frail human perspective keeping the home godly may seem an insurmountable task. Nevertheless, Fathers must strengthen their families to do so. How does he accomplish this great task? By the way he lives. The first impression of manhood in the child’s life is his father. The father must be a clean, true, and honourable example before his children. The father does this by living the Christian life before them, as well as disciplining his children with the word of the truth of the gospel (Eph. 6:4). Boys must be taught the truth and trained regarding their responsibility of husbands and fathers. Girls must be taught and trained in the responsibilities of being a wife and mother. The children must be taught not to be ashamed of their God ordained roles. To the contrary they must exalt the divine instruction regarding male and female, husband and wife, father and mother.

The father must see that his children know that marriage is for life (Rom. 7:2-3). He is to make sure that they realize that marriage is the only place sexual gratification is allowed by God. The faithful father will constantly emphasize that God loves us and His guidelines are for our good; the regulation of sexual gratification included. By example and divine precept the father strengthens his family to abide by the principle of putting the kingdom of God and His commandment’s first in his families’ lives (Matt. 6:33).

Spiritually to strengthen the home, the father must teach the truth about the authority. He must teach his

family from the Bible that all authority inheres in God. He must further teach that God has given all authority to His son, Jesus Christ. Jesus via the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles of Christ and miraculously empowered them to enable them to lay hands on others for the purpose of conveying to them miraculous gifts. One of these gifts was the gift of prophecy. Hence, the apostles and prophet wrote the inspired word of God. Furthermore, the father must teach the truth of the gospel (the plan of salvation) regarding how to become a Christian. He must teach the truth about the church in organization, work, worship, conduct, and destiny. This will mean that he convey the truth that denominations are no part of the Lord's church and that there are no faithful children of God in them. In summation he must teach his family that unless we have biblical authority for every thing we believe and practice we sin (Col. 3:17). Thereby, the father teaches all in his home to love and obey the truth in all things (John 14:15; I John 2:5; 5:3).

Fathers fail when they are indifferent, too busy, and unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices to be godly fathers. Hence, as far as godly standards are concerned the great majority of homes are failures today. In this day of every one fighting for his rights, what has happened to the child's right to be strengthened by his father. Every child has a right to be loved, dealt with fairly, and, yes, to be disciplined. It is the responsibility of the father to see that these things are done correctly over the home he heads.

For one to practice love, he must be loved (I John 4:19). Today's quarreling, contentiousness, jealousy, and all manner of strife cannot create love, security, and a

sense of well being in the home. It does create insecurity and serious antisocial attitudes. Assuredly, a father understands the need of love expressed in word and action if the home is to accomplish what God intended.

Partiality has caused all manner of problems in the home. Remember Jacob and Esau as well as Joseph and his brethren. If a father is to strengthen his home he will be mindful of objective fairness in dealing with his wife and children.

Discipline basically means “to teach.” Paul tells us that in this way Timothy was disciplined in his childhood (II Tim. 3:15). We may well call this preventive discipline. By correct teaching we learn what is right and wrong (Prov. 22:6; Gen. 18:19; Eph. 6:4; II Tim. 3:14-15; 1:5; Heb. 12:11). Corrective discipline may only be properly applied when the child has been taught correctly. But it must be applied (Prov. 3:11-12). However, never in anger and revenge (Eph. 6:4).

The father strengthens his children when he trains and teaches them to accept responsibility for their acts. This is one of the fundamental principles of correct conduct missing throughout our nation today. In every stratum of society people are being taught that they should lay the blame for their problems on someone or something besides themselves. This mind-set is the fruit of selfishness; the basic source of societies’ ills at any time in history.

Conclusion

Sharp upon my mind are the mistakes made by me as a husband and father. But, I have always tried to acknowledge my shortcomings, with the full realization that this was my first time down this path. If a husband

and father is to be the strength that God intends for him to be, he must be willing to confess his shortcomings. One of the greatest and good examples the husband and father can set, is to demonstrate penitence by admitting it when he is wrong. For no matter how sincere, cautious, fair, loving and knowledgeable he is, he will from time to time be wrong. When he admits it and apologizes he will know just how forgiving and loving his family can be. Thereby, they will learn the importance of the conducting themselves in the same way. To do otherwise will only create all manner of hypocrisy and every evil work.

Let every husband and father put his whole heart, mind, and strength into becoming good and godly in every thought, word, and action. This will help marriage and the home to be a place that cultivates godliness; and there can never be too much of that.

Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people (Prov. 14:34).

Chapter 12

Strength From Wives And Mothers

Michael Hatcher



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When God created man, God knew that it was not good for the man to be alone, thus He made for man a help meet, woman (Gen. 2:18, 21-25). The woman was the crowning act of all of God's creation and certainly the most precious. With the creation of man and woman, God instituted the home. The home is the bedrock of any society. Without strong homes the society will soon be destroyed. Sadly, this is the state in our country at this time. The reason the home today is in trouble (through divorce, live-in arrangements, homosexuality, fornication and single parent homes, etc.) is because we have left the fundamental principles God established for the home. God has given each family member a certain role and certain responsibilities. When we return to these principles, we will have strong homes. Our lesson will only deal with the role of the female as a wife and mother.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

God Gave Woman A Role That Promotes Her Femininity

At the beginning, God made us male and female. There is a distinction between the two, and God expects us to recognize and respect this difference. This distinction is evident not only outwardly but also inwardly. Women and men are different physically, socially, and otherwise. Women should be proud of their femininity. However, there is a concerted effort to ignore and destroy this distinction. The uni-sex movement of a few years ago made its inroad among us and is still around. Men are to be men and women, women. No doubt Paul commends women having long hair and condemns men having long hair in I Corinthians 11:14-15 to keep the distinction between the sexes. Women should not try to look like nor act like men. Ladies, there is no reason to degrade yourself. Be proud of your femininity that God gave you.

Domestically Oriented

Today there is the effort of many to degrade godly women who choose to do the greatest work in the world, that of being a homemaker. Notice the emphasis of the Scripture.

To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:5).

I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (I Tim. 5:14).

God gives us a description of a virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 and reveals that her price is far above rubies (Prov. 31:10). Notice some of the characteristics of this virtuous woman. She is a cook for her household even getting up before break of day to cook for her family (Prov. 31:15). She provides those things her family needs (Prov. 31:16-21). In this it is interesting that her buying a field is associated with the planting of a vineyard to feed her family; and her selling her merchandise is associated with her making of clothes for her family. The virtuous woman was a business woman, but all her business came in direct relation to her home and family. Thus, the worthy woman is also a gardener (Prov. 31:16) and seamstress (Prov. 31:19, 22, 24). Then she is a shopper, buying food for her family (Prov. 31:14). A virtuous woman bears the burdens of others (Prov. 31:25), and then counsels them in the right way because of the wisdom she possesses (Prov. 31:26). The woman who takes her work seriously, does not have the time to be idle or lazy in any way, she is a very hard worker. Here is a very fulfilling and rewarding work as is evidenced by her children calling her blessed and her husband praising her (Prov. 31:28). The virtuous woman does not feel trapped or unfulfilled in life and does not feel the need to get out into the work force. Instead she feels pride in doing the greatest work upon the face of this earth. We need once again to teach girls growing up to be homemakers, working in the home to keep it tidy, orderly, and beautifully decorated. Making a home is far more than simply keeping house. She will create an atmosphere where love, peace and joy reign supreme. Ladies, make the home a safe haven for each member of the family, but also a place where guests are welcomed

and family can bring friends without being ashamed of the atmosphere which prevails.

Submissive

When God created man, He knew it was not good that man should be alone. Thus, God made a help meet for the man. That help meet is woman. However, notice that the woman was made for the man and as an help meet for him.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him (Gen. 2:18).

Likewise, Paul teaches that the woman came out of the man and was for (Greek **dia** meaning because of, or for this cause, or for the sake of) man.

For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man (I Cor. 11:8-9).

Therefore, by right or order of creation woman is to be in submission to man.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God (I Cor. 11:3).

Additionally, woman is to be in subjection to man because of the origin of sin. When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in the garden of Eden. He gave them commands to be obeyed. Satan came tempting Eve, who succumbed to the temptation (Gen. 3:1-6). Because of this sin, God cursed Satan, Adam and Eve.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou

shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and **he shall rule over thee** (Gen. 3:16).

Paul combines these two thoughts in showing that women are not to take authority over man.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression (I Tim. 2:11-14).

When we come to the home, these principles remain. The general principle is that women are to be in subjection to the man. We naturally expect that in the closest of all possible relations—the home—that role of submission continues. This is what the Scriptures affirm.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord...Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing (Eph. 5:22,24).

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord (Col. 3:18).

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands...For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (I Peter 3:1,5-6).

While women and wives are to be in subjection to man

and their own husbands, that does not mean that women are inferior to men. In many respects, women are far superior to man. It simply is the role that God has given women.

Women’s Role Relating To The Home

She is a helper. God created woman for the man to be one who is a suitable helper to the man.

And the Lord God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him (Gen. 2:18).

The word “help meet” comes from the Hebrew word *ezer* and means help, succour, or one who helps. A woman is a sharer with the man. She will share in his joy and sorrows, his trials and successes, etc. The man and woman go through life together as one.

There is no greater help a woman can be within the home than to help her husband and her children go to heaven. We observe the ideal situation with Zacharias and Elisabeth.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Luke 1:6).

Both were living righteous lives and helping each other get to heaven. However, there are situations where one is a Christian and the other is not. As Paul discusses this type of marriage, he writes,

For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife? (I Cor. 7:16).

The Christian is to live in such a way, as to save his or her non-Christian mate. Peter deals specifically with the

wife's responsibility to live in such a manner that her unbelieving husband will obey the gospel.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear (I Peter 3:1-2).

Wives, be a helper to your husband, especially help him attain heaven.

She is to be industrious and frugal. The Bible teaches that a man is worse than an infidel and has denied the faith if he does not provide for his own (I Tim. 5:8). If such is the case with the man, what about a woman who squanders and wastes that which the man makes? Again the worthy, virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is a beautiful example of a woman who is industrious and frugal.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard...She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff...She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple...She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness (Prov. 31:13-27).

Thus, women and men should learn not to overextend what he makes. Learn to be content with what you have

(Phil. 4:11-12). Do not obligate yourself to make it necessary for the husband to take a second job or for the wife to work. Learn to live within the budget.

Woman’s Role As A Wife

Many of the things already discussed applies to this section, although we will not repeat them at this time. Many of the points we will mention will apply equally to the man as well as it does the wife.

Honor and respect her husband. The Scriptures teach that wives are to honor and respect their own husbands.

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence *her* husband (Eph. 5:33).

In writing about wives relationship to their husbands Peter writes, “While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear” (I Peter 3:2). The word “fear” refers to reverence and respect. The husband should be able to see his wife’s chaste or pure life that is lived out of reverence and respect to her husband to God. Sarah is presented as an example of this type of reverence (I Peter 3:6) calling Abraham lord. Michal, David’s wife, lacked this type of respect for her husband (II Sam. 6:12-23). An American sociologist observed, “The modern husband has lost status heavily. Once he was an august figure. Today he is a sap and a dope.” Within the marriage relationship, man needs respect and reverence while woman needs love. Without either the home will be destroyed.

There are many ways that a wife can show her husband this respect. When they get married she shows

her respect by taking and wearing his name (Gen. 5:2). She shows her reverence for her husband by being in submission to him (Eph. 5:22-24) and fulfilling her obligations in the home (Titus 2:5). A woman showing respect for her husband will avoid criticizing him, especially in front of others, and will not allow others to criticize him. When a wife tries to compete with or dominate or overshadow her husband, she shows she does not reverence him. Realizing that men build their image by mirroring the image their wives have of them, she will always be building him up and never depreciating him. Then a wife that respects and reverences her husband will not henpeck him, even when he needs it.

Love her husband. It is natural for women to possess the attitude of love. Still, Paul teaches that the older women are to teach the younger women that they are to love their husbands.

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children (Titus 2:4).

It is a wonderful situation in the home when both exhibit the disposition set forth by Peter.

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins (I Peter 4:8).

When both husband and wife practice this, they will overlook, hide or cover, the small, petty slights and hurts that come their way. They need to develop the sixteen characteristics of love given by Paul in his great chapter on love,

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not

puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth... (I Cor. 13:4-8a).

The Moffitt Translation has rendered this,

Love is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient. Love never disappears.

Wives keep the love alive within the home!

Share life together. Peter concludes a discussion of the husband and wife responsibilities by saying that they are heirs together.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (I Peter 3:7).

Malachi gives us great insight into the marriage relationship by saying,

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant (Mal. 2:14).

We made a covenant with our mate, our marriage vows. Within those vows there is the obligation to be a

companion, to share life together. This is also involved in leaving mother and father and cleaving to our mate (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5). There should never be a mine and yours within the marriage relationship. Many advocate and take separate vacations, these things should not be. We should share money, success, ambitions, sorrows, leisure time, etc. with one another.

Maintain communication. Effective communication is more than just talking to each other. There must be the sharing of things in common with each other. That will involve a sharing of thoughts, plans, feelings, intents, etc. Notice four areas of communication. There must be a communication of the soul—spiritually. This involves a sharing of our love for God and Christ. It includes our working together for the furtherance of the kingdom of Christ. This goes back to our helping our mate go to heaven. Then there is the mind—intellectually. This is a revealing of your innermost self to your mate. Revealing to him your thoughts, emotions and feelings. It will include a sharing of ideas and concepts on all subjects. There must be the communicating of our body—physically. This involves the sexual relations between husband and wife, which will be discussed later. Last, there must be the communicating of our hearts—emotions. This will include hugs (which all need). It will be the verbal expression of our love, saying, “I love you” or “I need you,” or other expressions of our love. It will be communicating our expressions of thanks, and when mistakes are made, saying “I’m sorry.” Communication is invaluable to the success of our marriage.

Be faithful to her husband. The marriage vows are a sacred trust that must not be broken. Remember the vows you made to each other when you were married.

You vowed to take him “to be your lawful wedded husband, to live with him after the ordinances of God, to love, honor, obey and cherish him in sickness and in health, in prosperity and adversity and keep yourself only to him as long as you both shall live.” No amount of disinterest, problems, or difficulties within the home and between husband and wife give either the right to do anything than maintain their purity within the marriage relationship. A wife never should be like Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:7-20) in trying to seduce another man or Gomer’s wife (Hosea 1–3) who goes into harlotry. Solomon was correct when he wrote, “A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones” (Prov. 12:4). Truly, the virtuous woman is priceless. “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10).

Marital infidelity is fraught with many severe problems. First, the only reason God gives for divorce with remarriage following is for the cause of adultery. Thus, it gives their innocent partner the right to sever the marital relationship (Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9). Second, it shows that the person cannot be trusted. If one cannot be trusted to be faithful to their marriage vows (as serious and binding as they are), how can they be trusted to keep their word in any other area. Finally, unless the one guilty of infidelity repents, they will be lost eternally (Gal. 5:19-21). If we live by the motto: “Do nothing in your companion’s absence that you would not do in their presence” will save many marriages.

Put her husband first. When a man and woman marry, they must leave their parents and cleave to each other. Jesus taught,

...For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Matt. 19:5).

A wife must put her husband before anything and anyone else. Some women become so busy, they no longer have time for taking care of their husband. They must learn to put their husband before parents, children and other relatives. They must put extra-curricular activities and projects behind their husband. A husband should never be made to feel that he is second rate or second fiddle. This also means that we put our spouse before self. Marriage never was and never will be a 50-50 proposition. Your mate comes first.

Give conjugal rights. When Paul shows the value and preciousness of the marriage relationship, he tells us that the bed is undefiled.

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4).

The sexual union is a benefit for the husband and wife in the marriage relationship. As such, one partner must not withhold himself or herself from the other.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (I Cor. 7:2-5).

Biblical sex is very tender, intimate, beautiful, and sacred means of expressing deep and abiding love, commitment and oneness. This relationship is solely confined to the marriage relationship (I Cor. 7:2) between husband and his own wife. It is in no way dirty, or out of the back alley. Never should this beautiful relationship be used as a means of punishment, or to get even with your mate, or to get something from them. Remember that your body does not belong to yourself, but to your mate.

Keep herself attractive. Some might think that I have lost my mind, or simply fallen into the trap of the modern man in looking at the outward appearance. However, let us notice the Scriptures.

She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple (Prov. 31:22).

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth (Isa. 49:18).

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels (Isa. 61:10).

Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number (Jer. 2:32).

Further, let us notice the words found in Ezekiel 16:8-14 on this matter:

Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.

While realizing these are figures God is using, the figures must be based upon the woman taking pride in her physical attractiveness. Do not forget those things that first attracted your husband to you. However, while a wife should not forget her physical appearance, the physical must not overshadow or take precedence over the inner attractiveness. She must remember,

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised (Prov. 31:30).

She must remember where true beauty and attractiveness come from.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (I Peter 3:3-4).

Women’s Role As Mothers

Like above, the principles noticed here are supplementing what we have already noticed. For example, as a wife must love her husband, she must also love her children (Titus 2:4).

Women are to bear children. God created women with the unique ability to bear children. “She is called wo-man, that is, a man with a womb (Gen. 2:23).”¹ He also uniquely designed women physically and temperamentally to provide for young children. Thus, the Bible teaches that women should desire motherhood.

Thy wife *shall* be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table (Psm. 128:3).

Paul instructs young widows,

I will therefore that the younger women marry, **bear children**, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (I Tim. 5:14).

An interesting statement is that women will be saved in bearing children.

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and

charity and holiness with sobriety (I Tim. 2:15).

While this might include Mary giving birth to Jesus, there is much more involved. Women fulfill their purpose and design by bearing children. It is God's plan that husbands and wives have children. He told Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28). God knew that it takes children to make a home complete. They bind parents closer together. Thus, God gives some beautiful examples of godly women desiring children. One of the most vivid would be Rachel's cry, "Give me children, or else I die" (Gen. 30:1). The scene of Hannah in the temple praying to God for a man child (I Sam. 1).

It is truly a sad situation when women enter the marriage relationship with the view of not having children. They do not know the joy they will miss. Sadder still is the situation we see when a woman is carrying a child in the womb, and then has a supposed doctor viciously rip and tear that baby apart, or poison the child while it is still in the womb. Abortion is one of the greatest blights upon this nation, and the world.

Women are to be teachers. There are many statements by famous people showing the importance of mothers teaching their children. Abraham Lincoln said, "All that I am, or can be, I owe to my angel mother." Henry Ward Beecher said, "The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom." Emerson expressed it this way, "Men are what their mothers make them. John Gray put it, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." God also presents to us the responsibility and importance of mothers being teachers. Paul gives instruction to older women to teach younger women concerning the home

and family responsibilities (Titus 2:3-5). While there are certain restrictions upon women teaching (I Tim. 2:11-12; I Cor. 14:34-35), women should and must teach and train their children. If it were not for the teaching of Timothy’s mother and grandmother, he would not have been the companion of Paul and a gospel preacher. The beloved physician gives us the development of our Lord when he wrote, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). Luke gives four areas of development: mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. Jesus was given the proper instruction (teaching) in the home to allow Him to develop in wisdom. Joseph and Mary gave Him the proper nourishment, food, to allow Him to grow physically, in stature. They also gave Him the proper spiritual guidance to allow Him to increase in favour with God. This is what Lois and Eunice provided for Timothy in developing faith within him (II Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). Last, they provided the proper friends and companions to allow him to grow socially, knowing that “evil companionship corrupt good morals” (I Cor. 15:33). How we need parents who will provide the proper environment in which children can grow and develop in the Christian life. We especially need mothers who will stay home and teach their children.

Conclusion

The greatest need in the world today is homes that are directed by and lived according to God’s Word. When the principles God has given are followed by each family member, then the home will be a haven on earth. It will function efficiently and create an atmosphere that will produce Christians. The wife/mother fulfilling her role

within the home is vital to that success. When the wife/mother fails to fulfill her God-given role, the home will fail and society will be devastated. Let us all live by the precepts God has given and honor the responsibilities we have relating to the home.

Endnote

1 Wendell Winkler, “The Man As Husband and the Woman As Wife,” **The Home As God Would Have It and Contemporary Attacks Against It**, ed. Thomas B. Warren and Garland Elkins (Algood, TN: National Christian Press, Inc., 1979), p. 87.

Section IV

We Can Be Victorious!



Strength From Great Biblical Examples
Strength From The Life Of The Apostle Paul
Strength From Worship As God Demands
Strength By Adding The Christian Virtues
Strength To Overcome The Problems Of Life
Strength To Overcome Worldliness/Materialism
Strength To Press Toward The Prize
Heaven ~ Our Reason For Living Righteously

Chapter 13

Biblical Examples Of Strength

Jim Laws



Jim was raised in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and has been preaching for several years. He is the Associate Editor of the *Spiritual Sword* journal, and directs the annual *Spiritual Sword* lectureship. He is an excellent writer. Jim has taught in public schools in Tennessee and at the Christian college level. Presently he is working with the Getwell congregation in Memphis, Tennessee. Jim has two children.

It was certainly a dark time during the history of Israel. God's people had been taken into exile due to their unfaithfulness to Him and His word. They now are in Babylon. A law has just been passed making it a crime to pray to any god or man for thirty days, and Daniel knows this. Yet, three times a day he prayed as usual with the windows open.

The Philistine giant named Goliath of Gath who was nine feet, nine inches tall (I Sam. 17:4), defied the armies of God. The young shepherd David, with five stones, a sling, and a staff went against Goliath and slew him.

Anyone who came before Ahasuerus the king without being called would be put to death. Esther knew it. Yet, to make supplication for her people, who were doomed to extermination, she went.

What is the common link between all three of these people? What would be the outstanding quality behind

their actions? Undoubtedly, it would be the quality of strength of courage and conviction. It is a quality that really counts. It is the kind of quality that can change the world, and it will keep on changing it.

The Bible is filled, with the stories of the lives of men and women

...who through faith subdued kingdoms,
wrought righteousness, obtained promises,
stopped the mouths of lions (Heb. 11:33).

It will be our task to look at the lives of some of these great Bible characters in an effort to better understand the quality of character that made them great and use their lives as an example of living for us all.

The Bible makes clear that examples are a powerful way of teaching. Paul teaches that these Old Testament matters were written for our “learning” (Rom. 15:4). For Paul to use the term “learning” refers to the fact that these matters were written down for our instruction, our teaching, written to provide a “textbook,” if you will, to instruct us on how to live. God knew that example is a powerful method of teaching. In discussing some of the sins of ancient Israel, Paul tells the church at Corinth,

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (I Cor. 10:11).

We are told that Christ is our example to follow:

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (I Peter 2:21).

Examples are a powerful method of teaching. Their

purpose is to illustrate and demonstrate what God would have us to know and do.

The quality of character with which this research is primarily concerned is the quality of strength. This is not a physical type strength but rather a spiritual strength, that is, courage or firm conviction. The quality of character found in these examples is a moral and spiritual determination to resist evil and do that which is right. It is an inner strength (Eph. 3:16) that refers to a determination to act as God demands. It carries with it the idea of a determination of mind, that is, a stoutness of heart (Amos 2:16, RSV).

As one looks upon the tendency of our western world, one soon sees that there is a desperate need for such strength among the people of our day. It will take great strength and courage for an individual to forsake the pleasures and self-indulgences of this world and turn his life over to Christ. It will take great strength and courage to resist the temptations to delay and put off becoming a Christian. It will take great strength to remain a faithful child of God. It takes courage to stand up and be counted; to do and be what God would have us to be, no matter what dangers we face. The need is obvious as each of us have known those who were once faithful but are no longer so. It becomes self-evident that a study of this type is sorely needed.

Joseph As An Example Of Strength

The life of Joseph is one of the greatest stories in all the Bible. The story of Joseph takes up more space in its narrative form than any other Old Testament story unless it be the account of Abraham. God has devoted such space to this discussion because He wants us to

learn about God’s providence over a man and his family who were filled with strength and courage.

Joseph was born to Jacob and his favorite, Rachel. Due to the great love Jacob had for his son, he made him a coat of many colors (Gen. 37:1-4), and for this his brothers hated him. When Joseph related his two dreams which indicated his future superior position, then his brothers hated him even more (Gen. 37:5-11). His brothers conspired to slay him, but Judah proposed to sell Joseph to the Midianites on their way to Egypt. Having dipped his coat in the blood of a kid, they told Jacob he was slain by a wild beast. The Midianites sold him to Potipher, Pharaoh’s officer (Gen. 37:12-36). No doubt the feeling of being sold into slavery by one’s own brethren must have been a heart-rending experience. Though no real fault of his own, Joseph was treated with hatred and disrespect by his own family. Yet, even in slavery Joseph never lost his love for the Lord and his devotion to God’s will, as is evidenced by the efficiency of Joseph in handling Potipher’s house. Certainly, he is an example of great strength of character. Potipher’s wife failed in her attempt to entice Joseph to sin. Having been falsely charged, he was placed in prison. But, even here his strength of character shines through as he is placed in charge of the prisoners (Gen. 39:7-23). While in prison Joseph interpreted the dreams of two prisoners, the king’s butler and baker, which came true. Two years later Pharaoh had two dreams that troubled him. Joseph interpreted them. There would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, and he counseled Pharaoh how to deal with the situation (Gen. 41:1-36). Pharaoh made Joseph his prime minister. He acted wisely, and the storehouses of Egypt were filled

(Gen. 41:37-57).

Without doubt, of all the qualities we find in the life of Joseph there is that unfaltering faith in God which shines so brilliantly in his life. Moses tells us, "The Lord was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:2,21). This expression was given by Stephen in his speech before the Sanhedrin centuries later (Acts 7:9). No doubt it was this knowledge that God was with him and his realization that God would not desert him that sustained Joseph through his many difficult trials of life. His faith in God enabled him to endure the envy, jealousy, and hatred of his brethren. He was forced from his home at a tender age and sold into slavery. It was his faith that caused him to say "no" repeatedly to the immoral advances of Potipher's wife. Faith in God helped him endure being cast into prison for a crime he did not commit. The key to Joseph's mastery of every situation was his never failing and ever growing faith in God. The Lord was with Joseph, and Joseph was with the Lord.

Moses As An Example Of Strength

Moses was born when the Egyptians were slaying the Hebrew male children so as to weaken that race. At that time the Hebrews were the slaves of the Egyptians. A new line of kings that knew not Joseph and were hostile to the Hebrews came to the throne, and they severely oppressed the Hebrew people (Exod. 1). Moses was found in the ark of bulrushes by Pharaoh's daughter, was adopted by her, was cared for by his own mother, and grew up in the courts of Egypt (Exod. 2:1-10). Moses became sympathetic with his people and slew an Egyptian man who was smiting a Hebrew (Exod. 2:11-14). Moses fled to Midian, where he was employed by

Jethro, a Midian priest, to tend the flocks; he married Jethro's daughter. God talked with Moses from the burning bush and sent him to lead the people out of Egypt. Moses expresses his doubts, but is told how to proceed and is assured of God's presence. His brother Aaron was to be his mouthpiece (Exod. 3:1-22; 4:1-17). Moses assembled the elders of Israel together; he appealed to Pharaoh, who refused to let Israel go, and in turn ten plagues were sent upon the Egyptians. The Passover is instituted, and the people leave Egypt. Israel, pursued by the Egyptians, crossed the Red Sea on dry land (Exod. 14:1-15:19). Moses brought Israel to Sinai, and manna was provided (Exod. 15:20-18:27). They remained at Sinai for one year, and Moses received from God the ten commandments, as well as many other laws and institutions for the people (Exod. 19-40; the book of Leviticus, Numbers 1:1-10:10). Because of the unfaithful report of the spies who were sent to Canaan, the Israelites were doomed to wander in the wilderness for forty years (Num. 10:11-14:45). Moses led Israel through the wilderness and after forty years brought them to the plain of Moab. During these last weeks Moses delivered his last addresses set forth in Deuteronomy. During these last acts he gave his charge to Joshua and then viewed Canaan, the land of promise, from a distance. Moses died at the age of 120 and was buried in the land of Moab.

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel
like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to
face (Deut. 34:10).

By looking at the life of Moses one sees immediately that he is a man of faith and strength. First, the Bible tells us that Moses refused to be called the son of

Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. 11:24; Exod. 2:10-11). He refused a life of worldly wealth and honor. He realized that the one who trusts in riches shall fall (Prov. 11:28). One must not labor to be rich because "riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Prov. 23:4-5). He was a man who would lay up for himself treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20-21). Second he chose

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25).

At this time Israel was enslaved—an oppressed and despised people. Moses realized God was not with the idolatrous Egyptians. Rather, he believed in the promises of God with reference to the covenant made with Abraham. Third, he accounted "the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). That is to say that his motivation was not to receive honor, acclaim, and the luxuries of the Egyptian life style, but rather he looked for that which is eternal. This motivated him to accomplish his great deeds of faith. Fifth, he "forsook Egypt" (Heb. 11:27). He forsook Egypt by looking to him who is invisible. Moses' heroic faith was due to his trust in the invisible God. Sixth, he endured seeing him which is invisible. The more men grow in faith in the invisible God, the less they fear anyone, however powerful. Seventh, he kept the Passover (Heb. 11:28). Once again the faith and courage of Moses is seen as no one saw any signs of impending danger and certainly could not see how the killing of a lamb and the sprinkling of its blood could make any difference. But by faith Moses knew in advance what others could

not know with mere human reason. Eighth, he “passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptian assaying to do drowned” (Heb. 11:29). Moses’ trust in God motivated him to lead God’s people into the sea at God’s command and trust in a deliverance, which from the human point of view was impossible. Moses is a great example of strength. The key to his success as a servant of God was his great faith in God.

David As An Example Of Strength

David, the youngest son of Jesse, the grandson of Obed, who was the son of Ruth and Boaz, was born in Bethlehem. While just a young man during the reign of Saul, Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to anoint David king. As Saul was disturbed, David as a young harpist was brought to the court of Saul. Israel was at this point with the Philistines, and Goliath defied any Israelite to meet him in single combat. David accepted the challenge and slew him with a sling (I Sam. 18). A deep love sprang up between David and Jonathan, Saul’s son. It was during this time that Saul became extremely jealous of David due to his popularity. David at this time married Saul’s daughter. Saul commanded that David be slain; however, Jonathan remained loyal to David, who was made an outlaw and was compelled to flee from place to place. With 3,000 men Saul pursued David and his band. David twice spared Saul’s life. Saul was defeated by the Philistines and died by his own hand at Mt. Gilboa. After reigning over Judah for seven years the tribes of Israel accepted David as king. He defeated the Philistines. The ark was brought to Jerusalem, and David subdued his enemies and established the kingdom. He committed sin with

Bathsheba and arranged for the death of her husband, Uriah. He confessed his sin, and judgment was pronounced upon him. The child died, but Solomon was born to Bathsheba (II Sam. 11-12). Absalom, David's son, killed Ammon and fled to Geshur, where he remained for three years. He returned home and raised an insurrection against David. He was defeated and slain by Joab (II Sam. 13-18). Sheba revolted and was slain. It was at this time that David numbered the people, which was punished by a pestilence sent upon Israel. David purchased the threshing floor of Araunah to build an altar, and this became the sight of the future temple (II Sam. 19-24). In his old age David's son Adonijah attempted, by the help of Joab, to usurp the throne. This was defeated, and Solomon was anointed King (I Kings 1:1-2:11).

In Acts 13:22 God gave David one of the greatest compliments any man has ever received,

...I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will (Acts 13:22).

David's great strength and courage are examples for us all. His success as a great servant of the Lord is due to a number of factors. First, he was reared under the influence of a good home. His father had taught him about Jehovah, and he learned the influence of a good home and he learned the importance of work at an early age. Second, he remembered God in his youth as he was just a young man being anointed as King of God's people (I Sam. 16:7). Third, he was a man of great courage and faith as is seen in a number of occasions. Look at David's doing battle with the giant Goliath:

...The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine... (I Sam. 17:37).

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid (Psm. 27:1).

Fourth, David was a spiritually minded man. He was one who prayed often; he continually praised God and willingly sacrificed unto the Lord. Fifth, David was an obedient man:

...my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes (I Kings 14:8).

David was indeed a man after God’s own heart. These qualities made him one of the greatest men of all the ages, and these qualities will surely produce strength of character in us.

Paul As An Example Of Strength

He was born at Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia (Acts 22:3). He was taught according to “the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers” by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). While just a young man he participated vigorously in the persecution of Christians (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3). It was while he was on the way to Damascus that the bright light shone from heaven and blinded him. Jesus appeared to him directing him to go into the city to learn what he was to do. Ananias was sent by the Lord and baptized Saul. Saul went to Arabia and returned to Damascus and began his great work as an apostle (Acts 9:20-22; Gal. 1:17). He went to Jerusalem where at first the

disciples were afraid of him but are later convinced of his character. He preached boldly as the Jews sought his life. He went to Tarsus (Acts 9:29-30) where he was found by Barnabas, and they both went to Antioch. It was from Antioch that the Holy Spirit sent them on their first missionary trip among the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-5). Paul attended the important meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-21), and he returned to Antioch, bearing the decision to the Gentile churches in Syria (Acts 15:22-35). His second missionary tour commenced (Acts 15:36-40), and he traveled from city to city doing much good. At Troas Luke joined the company, and in response to a vision Paul went into Macedonia (Acts 16:8-15). Paul was cast into prison only to be released by the power of God at midnight (Acts 16:25-34). Then they went to Berea, and then to Athens, then to Corinth, and later to Ephesus, touching at Caesarea, then to Jerusalem and returning to Antioch (Acts 18:18-22).

After a brief rest, Paul began a third preaching tour through Galatia and Phrygia. He went again to Ephesus, where he baptized in Jesus' name twelve of John the Baptist's disciples, and he preached for two years in the school of Tyrannus. Paul completed his preaching and headed toward Jerusalem and was warned what awaited him there by a man named Agabus (Acts 21:1-26). In Jerusalem Paul was seized and cast out of the temple but was rescued by a Roman officer. Having been arraigned by the Sanhedrin, Paul skillfully put his judges at odds with each other and was again taken in charge by the Roman authorities. But the Lord appeared to him and encouraged him, telling him that he was to bear witness in Rome (Acts 22:30-23:11). He was arraigned before Felix; Tertullus made his speech of

accusation against Paul which Paul effectively answered (Acts 24). Paul was brought before Festus and Agrippa, and Paul being innocent appealed to Caesar. Paul headed for Rome by ship; they wrecked at Melita, and he sailed on to Rome where for two years he lived in his own hired house preaching the kingdom of God (Acts 28:17-31).

As can be seen from this brief survey, Paul is the model preacher, second only to Jesus Christ. He is the epitome of strength, courage and faith. The adversities which he faced in this life were great and were to a large extent beyond our own appreciation today (II Cor. 6:4-10; 11:23-27). First, notice the emphasis he gives in his inspired preaching to the subject of salvation from sin. Paul did not minimize sin nor the need for forgiveness. In his discussion in Acts chapter 13, one sees the high cost of sin both to Jesus and to God. We must not treat it lightly in our preaching. We are living in a day when sin is not a topic to be discussed. Preachers today are fond of preaching more on the so-called “felt needs” of the congregation. Sadly, these “felt needs” often fail to include a discussion of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). Paul was bold in his preaching, and one of the great themes which he included was a discussion regarding the need for forgiveness. We must always be sure that the focus of our preaching is to turn men from sin. Second, Paul is an example of strength in that he preached the gospel and preached it fully. Paul maintained, “I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 15:19). Paul told the Ephesian elders as he met with them at Miletus,

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and

have taught you publicly, and from house to house (Acts 20:20).

Notice also,

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

It is possible for a man to preach fifty years at a congregation and never preach error and yet not fully preach the full counsel of God. There is such a temptation upon the part of some to tailor out those things which are objectionable and in turn preach only what will be acceptable. The man who fails to preach the whole counsel of God is a dangerous man. He never teaches what the people need to hear in their lives. One may go to worship all one's life only to go to the Lord in judgment and be condemned due to a failure to correct sin because the subject was never addressed. This failure will not excuse the sinner from his error, and it will place a serious indictment upon the preacher as he has allowed people to go to the judgment unprepared due to his failure. It will take strength and courage like Paul to preach the whole counsel of God. Third, Paul is a great example of strength and courage due to the fact that he refused to dodge the controversial subject, but he addressed such matters plainly. Preaching the gospel is controversial. In fact, one cannot speak on any subject without it raising controversy. Whether it be the church, baptism, creation, or whatever the subject might be, the fact that it is God's word means that there will be controversy about it. Just because an issue is controversial does not mean that we back off of it, or shy away from it. Fourth, men of strength will preach forcefully and boldly just as Paul did. In Acts 17 Paul

and Silas are in Thessalonica and it is said of them that their preaching had turned the world “upside down” (v. 6). It is clear that the preaching of Paul was bold and forceful, upsetting those who were lost in sin. It takes strength and courage to be just such a preacher. Powerful preaching does not necessarily mean a lot of shouting, pounding, or screaming. It is powerful and forceful because it is filled with truth as the real power is in God’s word.

Successful Christian Living Demands Strength and Courage

Living the Christian life today will require great strength on our part. There will be times of adversity, and it is during those times that great strength and courage will be necessary. Remember the Lord’s parable of the sower where some seed fell into stony places, but because there was no depth of root when tribulation and adversity came, the stony-soil-type disciple fell away. Such is the case because of a lack of strength and courage. James 1:12 states,

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation:
for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown
of life, which the Lord hath promised to them
that love him (James 1:12).

Strength and courage will be required of each individual who preaches and teaches God’s word properly. God’s word is right. Paul’s charge to Timothy still says, “Preach the word” (II Tim. 4:2). For us to succeed in our evangelistic efforts today, we must do just that. Every individual has the right to hear the gospel at least once in his or her life. They deserve to have the opportunity to either accept it or reject it. It

will take great strength of courage to accomplish the task Jesus has given us (Matt. 28:18-20).

Strength and courage are required in fighting false teaching within the church today. John's admonition must be remembered, "Believe not every spirit" (I John 4:1). It will take strength to "speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11). It is our responsibility to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The child of God must remember,

The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places... (Hab. 3:19).

Chapter 14

Victorious Living: The Life Of Paul

Maxie B. Boren



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The three missionary journeys of the great apostle to the Gentiles comprise some of the most interesting reading in the New Testament. Most of us are truly intrigued by Paul—thrilled and uplifted by the dramatic turnabout in his life following his conversion. From one of the fiercest persecutors of the Way to one of its most ardent proponents, as noted in many scriptural references (Acts 7:54-8:3; Acts 9:1-2; 26:9-20; I Tim. 1:12-15; Phil. 1:20b-21; 3:7-9; Gal. 2:20; 6:14), his life of service and devotion to the Cause of Christ both indicts us and inspires us. Other than the life of our dear Lord, which was the one perfect life ever lived, and which is our one perfect example (I Peter 2:21), I do think that Paul's life as a Christian demonstrates better than any mortal what victorious living is all about.

May our minds return in time to A.D. 58, in the springtime of that year. Having completed his third

journey, Paul had commenced his trip to Jerusalem. He stopped at Miletus, where there he summoned the elders of the Lord’s church in Ephesus to himself (Acts 20:17). When they arrived, he said to them:

Paul’s Discourse To The Ephesian Elders

And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:18-27).

This is about half of what Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders that day, but it will suffice for our purposes.

Paul spent three years at Ephesus. Please observe that those three years (Acts 20:31–A.D. 54-57) in Ephesus had not been easy! They were fraught with many trials and tribulations. Everywhere he went there were many adversaries. And yet, through those trying times of threats, harassments, plots and dangers, he kept right on serving the Lord. Oh yes, tears were shed! There must surely have been those moments of heartache and discouragement. But he did not flinch. He did not stop. His commitment to the Savior and His cause of truth, compelled Paul to persevere.

He boldly proclaimed the truth. With humility of spirit, he taught and preached what the people in Ephesus needed to hear! Not what they wanted to hear, but what they needed to hear! He did not hold any portion of truth back so as to appease those who were enemies of the truth. He was motivated from the deep recesses of his soul to do those people good, and the only way he could accomplish that was by telling them the truth they so desperately needed to hear. Privately and publicly the message was clearly delineated. The need to have faith in Jesus Christ, and to repent of sins, was made clear.

He was dedicated to the Lord. Paul knew in his own heart that he was pure from the blood of all men, having shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God. From this, sincere messengers of our day and time should resolve anew to emulate his example! We must be loyal and faithful to God by the bold and definitive presentation of His will to as many people as we can possibly reach! We must never compromise! We must never hold back any facet of truth! We must never defer! We must “preach the word” (II Tim. 4:2) with a

sense of urgency at all times! The eternal destiny of souls is at stake! As it was then, so is it now.

Danger Identified And Paul’s Declaration Of Faith

The Holy Spirit had borne witness to Paul that continuing bonds and afflictions were yet awaiting him (Acts 20:22-23). When this is considered in full cognizance of all he had already experienced, it should cause all of us some moments of serious reflection and introspection. Personally, it makes me tremble and feel so ashamed for those times when I have allowed problematic situations to get the best of me, because I know full well that I have never been called upon to suffer as he suffered! The very worst things that have come my way have been minimal and insignificant in comparison to what was commonplace in the life of this faithful servant of Christ.

“None of these things move me.” In spite of what he had gone through up until the spring of A. D. 58, and fully aware that more of the same was coming—and perhaps even more intense—he could and did say, “None of these things move me!” None of the pains and hurts of the past, nor yet *what was to be*, Paul declared, would move him away from his singular purpose of accomplishing his course and fulfilling the ministry which was given him by the Lord. No form of persecution would deter him! No deprivation would break his spirit! He was prepared for whatever might come! Even if it should require the forfeiture of his life!

What a tremendous statement he made! In my considered judgment, what Paul said, as recorded in Acts 20:24, must surely be among the greatest affirmation of

faith and fidelity ever spoken! It is truly remarkable! What a declaration of unwavering and selfless devotion to the cause of Christ. Would to God that I was so dedicated and devoted as that! From the bottom of my heart I want to be. But I am too painfully aware of how often I fall short. Probably most everyone among us could and should make a similar acknowledgment. We all seem so easily distracted. We all seem so earthbound in so many ways, so quickly moved away from what is really important, to the mundane and trivial. But not Paul! He had his priorities straight! He knew what his one goal was and **nothing** was going to keep him from tenaciously pursuing it.

Notation Of What He Had Already Endured

In order to plumb the depths of Paul's commitment and loyalty to Jesus Christ and His word, as seen in the statement of Acts 20:24, let us take note of the adversities with which he coped prior to his meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus.

Plots to kill him in Damascus and Jerusalem.

Shortly after his conversion, in the city of Damascus, Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue that Jesus was the Son of God (Acts 9:20). The year was probably about A. D. 37, 38 or 39. The Jews, incensed at his message, "took counsel together to kill him" (v. 23). In order that his life be spared, the other Christians there lowered him from the well in a basket at night. Now think about that for a moment. Can you remember when you obeyed the gospel? Quite clearly I can. Surrounded by those who loved me, I was commended, congratulated, and encouraged. This continued for some while. I cannot conceive what it would have been like to have faced

almost immediate hostility—and especially hostility so severe that my life would have been endangered. If I had faced such, what would I have done? How about yourself? Well, Paul faced it, and this was but the beginning.

Going up to Jerusalem, he attempted to join himself with the disciples there. But they viewed him with suspicion. It required the intercession of Barnabas in order for the church to receive him. Before too long, apparently, it became known that there was a plot underway to kill Paul, so the brethren took him down to Caesarea (Acts 9:26-30). What would many modern-day Christians do if they were to face what Paul did so early in his Christian life? I’m not really sure, but I know what Paul did. He kept right on keeping on. Early on, he obviously purposed in his heart to be faithful to Christ and His Way. He would not allow anything to hinder him.

Persecuted and cast out of Antioch of Pisidia.

Some ten years later, approximately, Paul and Barnabas involved themselves in venturing out to preach the gospel. In Antioch of Pisidia they heralded the good news of “remission of sins” offered through Christ (Acts 13:23-38).

But the Jews urged on the devout women of honorable estate, and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders (Acts 13:50).

Can you imagine that? Being literally thrown out of town for preaching the greatest message of gladness and hope the world has ever known. What would I have done had I been in Paul’s shoes? What would you have done?

Would we have reasoned, perhaps, something like this: “Wait just a minute now. I have not been a Christian too awfully long and it seems like there has been so much opposition. In fact, a lot of people are vehemently opposed. Why, already two plots have been formulated to take my life, and now these folks in Antioch have literally run me out of town. Maybe I should just throw the proverbial towel before it is too late.” Is that what we might well have done? Not Paul. Surely he must have said to himself, “*None of these things move me*. I will not quit. I will not give up. I intend to be faithful to my dear Savior, come what may!”

Paul fled from Iconium to avoid being killed.

Going from Antioch to Iconium, Paul and Barnabas again encountered trouble. Jews and Gentiles alike were stirred against them, and intended to treat them shamefully and stone them. Becoming aware of such conniving, Paul and Barnabas fled (Acts 14:2, 5-6), but continued to preach God’s word unto Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe. Had we been they, would this have been “the straw that broke the camel’s back?”

Nearly stoned to death at Lystra. At Lystra, Paul, through the power given him of God healed a man that had been lame from his birth. The multitude was amazed, and wanted first to cast Paul and Barnabas in the role of gods. But these great men quickly squelched any such attempt and pointed the hearers to the “living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is” (Acts 14:8-15). At that time,

...there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead (Acts 14:19).

In my mind I can almost envision Paul—bleeding profusely, unconscious, dragged out of the city and left for dead. What a horrible experience to go through! Can you imagine how it would hurt to be hit by a rock thrown by great force by a person antagonistic to the cause? There is no way to know how many such stones hit his body. When he came to, what do you suppose he thought? Do you think he was tempted to say something like, “This is it! I’ve had enough. I’m quitting this time for sure, while I still can.” Had he quit, could we stand by at this late date and condemn him for it? I doubt that we could, because deep down in our hearts we would probably be asking the question of ourselves, “What would we have done?”

Perhaps the best way to gain insight into what we would have done in any of the aforementioned circumstances is to take a good hard look at ourselves presently. First of all, we live in a free land and country, surrounded by all kinds of blessings and advantages. We have the liberty to practice and preach what we believe is the truth. Most of us sleep in a comfortable bed from night to night and eat hearty meals each day. We bathe ourselves in modern bathroom facilities with hot running water, and adorn our bodies with nice and stylish clothing. We ride around in air-conditioned automobiles with power brakes, power steering, velour seats and cruise control. We walk into church buildings that are nice and attractive, with carpeted floors, and we sit on padded pews in air-conditioned comfort and listen to an educated and capable preacher impart to us portions of God’s word. But then what do we do? At the slightest inconvenience, we begin to make excuses why we can’t do something to further the Lord’s cause. Or

we gripe and complain if everything doesn't go just "so-so" to suit our every whim and fancy. We give so little of our time, our abilities, our resources and our energies to advance the cause of truth. Would we today endure a tenth of what Paul did without "falling apart?" I doubt it seriously. Let us never forget that the great apostle to the Gentiles said, "None of these things move me!"

Beaten and imprisoned at Philippi. On his second missionary journey, with Silas as his companion, Paul came to the city of Philippi. There he observed wicked men making gain from an unfortunate maiden possessed of an evil spirit. After some days, Paul cast out the spirit of divination from her (Acts 16:16-18). In turn, the wicked men who had profited by her soothsaying, laid hands on Paul and Silas and dragged them to the marketplace and brought them before the magistrates. There they accused Paul and Silas of being troublemakers and guilty of setting forth customs contrary to Roman law. Of course, such accusations were without any basis of fact because nothing had been done except a very good deed and the presentation of the message salvation. But the accusatory words had the desired effect as the multitude was stirred against Paul and Silas. The magistrates were angered and commanded that they be beaten with rods. After many stripes were laid upon them, they were then cast into their inner prison where their feet were placed in stocks (Acts 16:19-24). Paul could very easily have said at this point, "This is it for sure. Nobody wants to hear the message of salvation in Christ. The world is so totally corrupt there is no use in my putting up with any more of this. I have been the object of sinister plots. I have

been persecuted and run out of town, stoned, falsely accused, beaten and imprisoned. I’ve had enough! I quit.” But, thanks be to God, he did not say those things. I doubt that he even thought anything like that. His fidelity to God was so great, his loyalty to the Lord Jesus so deeply rooted, and his commitment to the truth so unwavering, that he was motivated by a singular aim—to,

...accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Deep within his heart was the fierce determination not to allow anything or anybody to move him away from his Savior! And I think, how wonderful it would be if every Christian would say to himself repeatedly, from day to day, *“I’ll give up anything or anybody for Christ, but I won’t give up Christ for anything or anybody!”* As did Paul, we urgently need to have a profound commitment to the Lord and His Way! Jesus Christ, and His cause, His church, and the truth should mean more to each of us than life itself!

But the sad fact is that appalling indifference has permeated our ranks. We have so many brethren among us today who put most everything and anything ahead of Christ and His cause on their priority list. In so many cases, one’s political party, or the PTA, or Little League Baseball, or vacation time, or the golf course, or television, *ad infinitum*, receive ten times more attention than does the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ and the cause of truth and right! How terribly sad! There is no doubt about it—the number one problem we have among us in the church today is *indifference!* We can talk about all our other problems, and they are real and

many, but none of them are hurting the ongoing of the Cause of our Lord as is this one! No wonder that problem was pinpointed by Jesus in His letter to the church in Laodicea so long ago:

...because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth (Rev. 3:16).

We who preach today had better put our brethren in remembrance of what God's word teaches on the matter of being halfhearted and unconcerned over what should be *first* and *foremost* in our hearts continually. Many sermons need to be preached on "seek ye first his kingdom" (Matt. 6:33), and "be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22), and "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). From every pulpit in churches of Christ should be heralded forcefully and plainly, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead" (Eph. 5:14). Far too many congregations have a reputation of being alive when in reality they are nigh unto death, spiritually speaking (Rev. 3:1-3). Even as was the church in Sardis so long ago, so are many congregations of the church today. And like the brethren in Sardis were told plainly they had better repent, so should lukewarm and indifferent brethren today be told they had better repent! No, ifs, ands, or buts about it, *if brethren don't wake up from their indifference and come to understand what true commitment and dedication is all about, many, many souls will be lost!* We need not expect to hear the Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21), if we, in fact, have not truly been faithful!

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Gal. 6:7).

Jesus spelled it out for all of us as clearly as can be in the well-known words, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). It must be called to the attention of brethren today that Jesus did not promise the crown of life to those who are not faithful—faithful even unto death. And notice, my brethren, the Lord did not say faithful “until” death, but “unto” death. *Unto* includes until, but it goes way beyond that. It means that in order for us to have the promise of the crown of life, we must be so dedicated as to be willing to sacrifice our very lives for His cause! Nothing short of that degree of commitment will suffice! That is the reason I warn brethren everywhere that they had better sit up and take notice—that half-hearted, nonchalant, lukewarm, indifferent, “far-off” followers of Jesus are undoubtedly going to be lost! It is long past time that the Lord’s church today be called to repentance over the sin of indifference! Brethren need to have it “laid on the line” plainly and without any “mealy-mouthing” about it, that the lukewarm will be lost!

During the three years he spent in Ephesus on his third missionary journey, Paul was obviously *very busy about the Father’s business* (remember Luke 2:49?), because the sacred record informs us that “all they that dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10) during that time. Ephesus was a city steeped in idolatry, as was Athens and Corinth. The Ephesians had created a goddess all their own, and named her Diana. They had erected a massive and ornate temple in her honor. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world,

and people came from afar to see the temple of Diana. “Diana” became “big business” for many in Ephesus and many craftsman earned their livelihood in business enterprises revolving around her. Thus, a silversmith named Demetrius “who made silver shrines of Diana” and who “brought no little business unto the craftsman,” called them together (Acts 19:23-25), and addressed them, stirring them into a furor, saying,

Ye see and hear, that not alone in Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they are no gods, that are made with hands; and not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account, and that she should even be deposed from her magnificence whom all Asia and the world worshippeth (Acts 19:26-27).

The Bible then tells us that,

...when they heard this they were filled with wrath, and cried out, saying, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians.’ And the city was filled with the confusion; and they rushed with one accord into the theater, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel (Acts 19:28-29).

You talk about a dangerous situation! This frenzied mob was unquestionably so stirred up that they most likely would have literally torn Paul limb from limb if they could have gotten their hands on him. And even though he surely knew that, yet Paul was minded to enter the amphitheater, but the other Christians would not allow him to do so. They figured it would mean certain death.

Why? What had Paul done? All he was “guilty” of was telling the Ephesians the truth that there is *only one true and living God* and that idols made by men’s hands are no gods at all!

Mocked In Athens. Paul had preached this message in other seats of idolatry, such as in Athens (Acts 17:22-30), telling those entrenched in the practice that God commanded them to repent. For this “crime” Paul’s life was very much in danger. Most assuredly he knew beforehand that preaching against idolatry would place him in jeopardy among such paganistic people. Why then did he do it? Would it not have been the easier course to have just let things be as they were? Yes, it would have been as far as Paul’s own temporal life was concerned. But there was something vastly more important to him than his physical well-being and survival. The Lord had given him the great mission to go to the Gentiles and preach the truth to them,

...to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18),

in Christ. This was far and away the most important thing to Paul. He loved Almighty God, and the Lord Jesus. He loved the cause of truth, and the souls of the lost. Such love motivated him to place himself in constant peril and hardship to accomplish this ministry. That is real commitment. That is what fidelity to God is all about. We most assuredly need this sense of mission and purpose in the hearts of Christians today!

All he enumerated in II Corinthians 11:24-28. Following his departure from Ephesus, after the tumult

there, Paul went through Macedonia on his way to Achaia. The time is believed to have been the early Fall of A. D. 57. Titus met Paul, probably in Philippi, and obviously gave him a report of how the brethren in Corinth had received his first letter (II Cor. 7:5-16). Apparently, the report of Titus contained some rather disconcerting news of some in Corinth who were attempting to undermine his apostleship, and thus, hurt his influence. Evidently, Paul felt the matter was urgent enough that he wrote the Second Corinthians letter post haste. In order to minimize the effect that those opposing him might have had on the Corinthian church, Paul responded to their attacks, and part of his response is found in II Corinthians 11:22-28. Therein, he enumerated the things he had experienced up until that point in time:

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils of the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches.

Brethren, please note that none of the five beatings of the Jews to which the apostle referred to is recorded in the book of Acts. Only one of the three beatings he received with rods is recorded (Acts 16:22-23). None of the three shipwrecks Paul mentioned are found in Acts.

So in our minds we need to add all these things to the difficulties and persecutions that are mentioned in Acts in order to gain a fuller perspective of what all this great man of God had endured for the sake of the Lord’s cause prior to his *meeting* with the Ephesian elders at Miletus. It is really quite staggering to reflect upon, but, in so doing, it makes what he said to the elders from Ephesus *so much more meaningful!*

Conclusion

Keeping in mind all that had happened to him before the Miletus meeting, and remembering that the Holy Spirit had borne witness that more bonds and afflictions were yet to be, it makes the statement of Paul even more amazing than just a casual reading would suggest. In my considered judgment, every Christian living today needs to be informed of this data, and prompted to really seriously think about their own measure of loyalty to the Lord as compared with the example at hand.

We would be doing a disservice, and this brief treatise would be incomplete, if we failed to consider what transpired after Paul bade farewell to the Ephesian elders. Journeying toward Jerusalem, he and those who accompanied him came to Caesarea where they abode for several days with Philip the evangelist. It was then that the prophet by the name of Agabus came down to Caesarea from Jerusalem and made a very disconcerting pronouncement concerning what would happen to Paul should he go up to Jerusalem. He would be bound by the Jews and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, which in this case meant the Romans. The scriptures inform us of how the brethren who were present

besought Paul not to go. In my mind’s imagination, I can almost hear them pleading, “Paul, stay here in Caesarea where you will be safe. You have already gone through so much. There is no sense in putting yourself in further jeopardy!” There is no telling what all was said. But then came Paul’s response to his brethren:

What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart?
for I am ready not only to be bound, but also
to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord
Jesus (Acts 21:13).

Acts 20:24 and Acts 21:13 contain the most graphic word pictures with which I am familiar concerning what real dedication and commitment is all about. Paul’s obvious determination to remain faithful to Christ, come what may, is the epitome of true loyalty and fidelity! It thrills me and inspires me to meditate upon it. At the same time, it is so very indicting—to me, and yes, to all of us to one extent or another. I have yet to see an equal to that spirit of sacrifice which characterized Paul’s life and which was clearly pronounced in his verbal declaration of allegiance in these two instances. I am thankful to say that I have known some great Christians in these contemporary times—and have observed some splendid examples of faithfulness to Christ. But I personally have never seen an example of such depth of devotion as has been shared together from the life of this great man of God. Perhaps it is because in our country and circumstances we have never been put to the full measure of testing as was he in the perilous times of the first century. Surely we would see great Christian men and women today demonstrate similar courage, faith and loyalty, even unto death, if the tide of events were to somehow change and place those

demands upon us. I would hope so.

But, in remembering Paul and learning from him, may we allow his own expressions to give us lingering insight into why he was so sure of his course of action:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me. And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, faith which is in the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself up for me (Gal. 2:20).

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing shall I be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. 1:20-21).

To the best of our knowledge, Paul gave his life in the city of Rome in either A. D. 67 or 68. The order was given that his head be severed from his body, according to tradition. Upon learning of this, Paul wrote to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy, and said,

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:6-8).

May I leave you with the thought that Paul was able to face the axeman in Rome with such calmness of soul and such blessed assurance because his Christian life had been characterized by the resolute determination that *“none of those things move me.”* Yes, if you want to

know what genuine fidelity to the Lord is all about, just familiarize yourself with the life and the inspired teachings of this great and loyal servant of Jesus Christ. If we will imitate him as he imitated Christ (I Cor. 11:1), we too will be able to say with precious hope and confidence, “thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:57). Indeed, Paul showed us what victorious living really is.

Chapter 15

Strength From Our Worship To God

Robert McAnally

Robert began preaching at 15 years of age. He attended Athens Bible School, Florida Christian College, and Harding University. He presently preaches for the South Florida Avenue church in Lakeland, Florida (for over 15 years). He is a former preacher for the East Hill congregation. He has preached for churches in Alabama, Tennessee and Michigan. Bob and Evelyn have three children.



The importance of worship demands our thoughtful and prayerful consideration. Worship in the life of a Christian should not be just important—it should be very important. It should in no way be a small and insignificant part of his life. Ideally, a Christian is greatly strengthened by worship. His life is changed, he is taught, admonished, and influenced to become more like the great God he worships.

You are no doubt familiar with the game called **Trivial Pursuit**. Can it be that worship is just another trivial pursuit for a person who calls himself a Christian? To such a one, does it make much difference whether he is present or absent? If he has company, wants to play golf, go fishing, or just stay home and sleep, or whatever reason, he may just miss the assembly of the Lord's church. Is it just a trivial thing? There apparently are a lot of people in our world tonight who regard it as such.

A Joyful Occasion

David said in Psalms 122 beginning in verse one,

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good (Psm. 122:1-9).

“I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the house of the Lord.” What a tremendous statement! Aren’t you glad that there’s someone who said to all of us at one time or another “let us go.” If somebody hadn’t invited you and hadn’t invited me, and hadn’t invited our parents, maybe we wouldn’t be here tonight. Isn’t it wonderful that someone counted it important enough not only to go himself but to invite others to go, too?

Now we are not talking tonight about the physical Jerusalem to which David referred, but the Lord’s church. It is the spiritual Jerusalem that we should be concerned about and praying for. Our prayers should be for that spiritual Jerusalem—the Lord’s church—and we should have the kind of attitude and concern David exhibited when he said, “I was glad when they said unto me let us go up into the house of the Lord.” Our feet, our hearts, and our prayers, should be an active part in

our concern for this the greatest, grandest, most glorious institution this old world has ever known.

Spiritual Health And Strength

Our spiritual well being is directly related to our attitude toward worship. The Bible states that when one partakes of the Lord's supper, he eats and drinks damnation to himself if he doesn't discern the Lord's body. We must have the right attitude as we approach God, not only in partaking of the Lord's supper, but in every act of worship. Surely we need to be concerned about matters of truth, and do exactly what the Lord commands in the way that the Lord has commanded it. We must have a thus saith the Lord for every thing that we do and do everything that the Lord says in the way He commanded it. One problem with the brothers at Corinth was that they failed in this regard (I Cor. 11). In fact, it says that many were **sick** and **weak** and some **dead**. This is talking about spiritual illness and death. Here was a church where some were spiritually dead because they were desecrating the worship. Worship must not be taken lightly. It contributes greatly to our spiritual health and well being. A study of things that contribute to spiritual strength must include the essential nature of worship. Every act of worship promotes spiritual growth.

Strength In The Lord's Supper

Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me." What a source of strength this remembrance is. It is more than a command. Jesus said that without it "ye have no life in you." The Lord's supper is **spiritual nourishment** (John 6:53-56). God is the giver of both physical and

spiritual life and both are dependent upon certain conditions. Spiritual food is necessary, and the Lord’s supper is a spiritual feast. But someone says, “I don’t feel worthy to partake.” This objection is based on a misunderstanding of I Corinthians 11:29 where we are urged to partake “worthily.” Note that none of us is worthy to *pray* or *sing* or to partake of the *Lord’s Supper* or to engage in any act of worship, but we can and must do it in a worthy manner. What a tremendous source of strength this memorial feast can be!

Strength In Singing

Paul said,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16).

And,

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

Singing is a natural outlet for our emotions. It allows us to express our inner feelings in a way that others also may be strengthened and encouraged. The song service teaches and admonishes us and lifts us up from the mundane things of life and transports us directly to the throne of God. What strength we receive!

Strength In Prayer

What a privilege it is to pray. Indeed “more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” We live in strange and troublesome times. As someone stated, “These are times that try men’s souls.”

Notice a number of passages on the subject.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (I Tim. 2:1-2).

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

Pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17).

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1).

Jesus both taught and demonstrated in His life the great strength received from prayer. So did Paul, who said,

...let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7).

Strength Through Study

Paul said, of the gospel “It is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). David said, “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee” (Psm. 119:11). “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine

house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:6-9).

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (Hosea 4:6).

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15).

How faithful are we as students of the word? If we would really grow strong we must “desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Peter 2:2) and not only the milk but also the meat. Recognizing that “meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). Study, both public and private, is the true road to strength.

Strength In Giving

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus how He said “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Jesus didn’t say this to raise money. God wants to bless us and to help us grow.

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his

flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal. 6:6-9).

Paul commanded, “as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him” (I Cor. 16:1-2). God blesses us as we give.

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:6-7).

What marvelous strength we receive when we learn to give as God would have us to. It develops in us a spiritual growth and maturity that cannot be received in any other way.

Not Everything We Do Is Worship

Perhaps we should have asked in the very beginning, what is worship? A false position advocated by some in recent years is the doctrine that “**everything we do is worship.**” This is based on a misunderstanding of Romans 12. Paul said,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice... (Rom. 12:1).

The word here for sacrifice is **latreian** (“service”). The word most commonly used for worship is **proskuneo**. In fact, in the KJV neither **latreian** nor any of its forms

is ever translated worship. To the woman by the well Jesus said,

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

The word here is **proskuneo**. It literally means “to kiss the hand toward one; prostration to do homage; make obeisance” (Thayer). While some try to define worship as merely an attitude, the truth is that scriptural worship always involves **acts** performed. Jesus pointed out three things in the above passage necessary for acceptable worship: (1) it must be directed toward God, (2) it must be in the right spirit or attitude, and (3) it must be according to the truth. Worship builds us up and gives us strength to face life day by day.

We Stand On Holy Ground

When Moses came to the burning bush, the voice of God spoke to him from it and said “put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy” (Exod. 3:5). We must remember that we are in the presence of this same great God of Exodus 3.

In Psalm 111:9 we’re told “holy and reverend is His name.” We should have that kind of reverence for God and for His name and certainly for His worship. We’re not at liberty to desecrate and trivialize any part of the worship. To those Corinthians who had desecrated the Lord’s supper, Paul said, they came together for the worse not the better. They were eating and drinking damnation to themselves (I Cor. 11:29). I sometimes see people talking during the worship service. It particularly bothers me when they talk during the Lord’s supper. Those that sit near them cannot help but be distracted.

Sometimes it is parents who talk to children or children who talk to parents. Some hold a regular conversation even during the Lord's supper. The communion is not just a ritual we go through, it involves the heart and attitude. In fact we are told how to direct our thinking, "discerning the Lord's body." I do not know how someone directs his thinking toward spiritual things while holding a conversation on other subjects. There may sometimes be things that are very important which might need to be said, but not regularly. If so, something is wrong. It disturbs me when people talk while I'm preaching. Strangely, fewer people talk while I'm preaching than during the Lord's supper. It is something I really hate. I would rather people hold conversations while I'm preaching than during the prayers or during the Lord's supper. Think about it!

What God Wants

Now notice the expression "God seeketh." It isn't something trivial as far as God is concerned. We asked the question in the beginning of the lesson is this a trivial pursuit? Some men regard it so, but it is not so regarded by God. From the very beginning God intended that men should worship and worship correctly. Do you remember the problem that developed in the first family as Cain and Abel came with their attempts to worship God? There were some grave problems that arose over a misunderstanding with regard to worship.

Man was not then and is not now at liberty to worship just any way he wants to. We may want to be in control, to make up our own procedures and **do it our way**. We could modernize, secularize and fill the worship with alterations and substitutions for what God planned. But that in a flagrant way demonstrates an

attitude of triviality toward something of such profound importance It gets far away from the reverence that the Lord expects and demands of His people.

In Spirit And In Truth

We need to recognize the importance of worshipping in truth. We must not offer ignorant worship whether as the Athenians or Samaritans or as many do in America. Our Lord wasn't being arrogant or conceited when He said, “We know what we worship.” Salvation was of the Jews. God had given His law to the Jewish people. He had given and instituted a pattern for worship that they were to participate in. That didn't mean all the Jews did was right. Our Lord severely condemned these Jews as He did those that worshipped in ignorance among the heathen, the Samaritans and others wherever they were. And today ignorant worship is not any more pleasing in the sight of God than it was then. “Ye worship you know not what,” the Lord said, “we know...” and God intends that we should know. Continuing in this passage, He says that

...the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

Ignorant Worship In Athens And Samaria

Man has always been a worshipful being whether in far flung India, Africa or wherever one goes. We find even the Aboriginal people to be religious. When Paul came into Athens of old and stood there at Mars Hill he talked about that which he had seen among them. He

had observed that they were very religious people, in fact the American Standard version records him as saying in Acts 17:22, “I perceive that in every way you are very religious.” Paul said this because they worshipped so many gods. They had numerous altars to many strange gods, and fearing they had overlooked one, erected an altar to “the unknown god.” Paul addressed them by saying “whom therefore ye ignorantly worship him I declare unto you.” Paul did not want them to continue in ignorance. In fact he says that God winked at the time of ignorance but now commands all men everywhere to repent. It is still true today that God demands of people that they not continue worshipping in ignorance.

Think of the words of our Lord as He sat and talked to the woman by the well at Samaria in the fourth chapter of John. This woman very quickly got the subject of worship. She didn't particularly want to talk about her background and her marriage relationship. It was too painful for her, so she brought up the subject of worship. She said, tell us where men ought to worship, in this mountain where our Fathers worshipped or in Jerusalem. Jesus said in verse 22, “ye worship ye know not what.” He is saying the Samaritan's worship was *ignorant worship*. It is the same thing Paul said to those Athenians, when he exclaimed, “whom you therefore ignorantly worship.” Jesus said to this woman you don't know what you worship. He stated, we know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews. They were God's chosen people in that era. Our Lord said the time is coming when not in this mountain neither in Jerusalem shall men worship the Father, but they shall worship in spirit and in truth.

With Spirit And Understanding

When we sing our minds should not be thousands of miles away. Paul said, in I Corinthians 14:15, “I will sing with the spirit, I will sing with the understanding also.” It’s a matter of attitude and we need to be understanding what we sing. We need to look at the words, understand the words, think about the words that we sing, not be thinking about things thousands of miles away or what we’ll be doing this afternoon, what we’re going to have for lunch or whatever it may be. Think about what we’re singing. That’s true in regard not only to our singing but certainly our prayers and our study together, to the matter of the taking of the Lord’s supper and the giving of our means. Everything we do is to be an act of reverence. Notice how reverence relates to the definition of worship, acts of reverence paid to a Deity. Worship involves acts. We cannot worship by proxy in the sense of somebody else is worshipping for us. I can’t decide that somebody else can do my singing for me. The Lord commands all of us to sing, all of us to give and all of us to pray. When you say amen to a prayer it becomes your prayer. As you engage in these acts of worship you are worshipping God, you are doing the acts God commands. Worship must involve, not just meditation, not just thinking, not just sitting passively, but it must involve acts.

As we engage in the study, the prayers, the partaking of the Lord’s supper, the singing, and the giving of our means; all of these acts are unto the Lord—not to the church; not to one another—but to the Lord. They are not to be done just in the letter of the law, but in spirit and in truth—right in doctrine and attitude. For such the Father seeketh to worship Him. What a

marvelous truth the Lord revealed to this woman by the well there at Samaria. She was so impressed by Him that she rushed into the city, brought out her neighbors and friends and told them this was the Messiah. She brought them to the Savior. Many believed because of her words, many more because of His words. Thus we ought to be impressed and our worship ought to grow out of that kind of love for God and love for Jesus Christ that causes us to do Heaven's will as God would have us to.

You remember Cain and Abel as they came to worship. Have you ever stopped to think that it was a disagreement over how men ought to worship that led brother to kill brother? The first murder came out of something of profound beauty. I just make this observation to point out it is not trivial and the consequences are not trivial. And the Lord said to Cain after his worship had not been acceptable and the tragic chain of events had begun,

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?
and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the
door... (Gen. 4:7).

Here was a situation where they both had come to worship and the Bible says that Abel's sacrifice was pleasing in the sight of God. "By faith," the writer of Hebrews says, "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Obviously, Cain's worship was not by faith.

Cain Was A Substituter

Faith cometh by hearing the word of God. It is apparent that God had directed them not only to worship

but how to worship and what to do in worship. One did what God commanded and the other did something else. Out of envy and jealousy Cain killed his brother. God said,

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?
and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.
And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou
shalt rule over him (Gen. 4:7).

What a sad commentary that the first murder would come out of a struggle over acceptable worship. Acceptable worship is still important. And it still stirs deep feelings. We must do what God commands. We must do it in the right kind of spirit with the right kind of attitude. We must worship God by faith according to that which is revealed in the book of God. Man is not only to avoid what God has forbidden but also to do only what God has commanded. We are to respect the **silence of the scripture**. We are to follow the pattern that God has laid down in His holy book.

...Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount (Heb. 8:5).

In the words of Psalms 19,

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression (Psm. 19:13).

Substitution is a presumptuous sin and a great transgression.

How Important Is Worship?

Just how important is worship anyway? What about

our use of the Lord's day? Note: it is not just the Lord's hour but His day. It is important that we use this day for the work and worship of the Lord. Actually, all of our time belongs to the Lord. We belong to the Lord seven days a week, twenty four hours a day. All of the hours that we have belong to God, but in a very special way this day is the Lord's day.

God Commanded It

If we take worship out of this day we take everything that really is important away from it. It should be a day of work and worship, not a day of rest, not a day to take it easy, entertain company stay home and sleep or engage in those things many like to do. Why should I attend all the services of the Lord's church? Much more could be added but I will suggest to you four things.

First: Because The Lord Commanded It. The Scripture says,

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Heb. 10:25).

It is a command of God and we must obey all His commands. Jesus said, if you love me, you will obey my commandments. Every congregation I know has a problem of empty pews, especially on Sunday and Wednesday nights. It disturbs us when non-Christians do not understand the nature of obedience or the need for it, but it should disturb us even more when Christians do not understand the importance of obedience.

But, somebody will say, *God didn't command us to be present on Sunday night did He?* Remember this.

The Lord placed elders over His church and we're commanded to obey them that have the rule over us. They are not in the position of making laws, I am not suggesting that at all. But their wisdom, their guidance is to be respected. And as they plan activities and periods of worship, we should strive to the best of our ability to do what they would lead us to do. When they designate Sunday night and Wednesday night services, when they schedule gospel meetings and other activities for the ongoing and spread of the kingdom, out of respect for them and respect for God (that's what it really comes down to, respect for God) we should strive to obey them that have the rule over us. Respect them in that regard. After all the Lord did not say, just one hour. We're commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. And seriously, what Christian would really want to forsake?

Second: We Should Emphasize Maximums Not Minimums. Should we have an attitude of how little can I possibly get by with and still go to Heaven? What is the minimum of service that I can give to the Lord and still be pleasing in His sight? To the contrary our attitude should be not of minimums but of maximums. Jesus said, “knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business” (Luke 2:49). And again He said,

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work (John 9:4).

Third: Our Influence Upon Others. Our family, our friends, our loved ones and the community in which we live are influenced by our attendance. The person who forsakes the assembling of himself with the saints and claims to be a Christian is having an influence but not an influence for good. He is saying by his actions these things aren't very

important. He’s saying to his family, friends and neighbors who see that he’s not going to services that Christianity doesn’t mean very much to him. He has an influence but not a good one.

Fourth: To Feed Our Hungry Souls. I sometimes see pictures of people who are starving to death. You’ve seen pictures of prisoners of war in concentration camps with their bones protruding through their skin, their eyes sunken into their head, their bodies emaciated. They are literally starving to death. I can’t help but think that the person who really doesn’t feed upon God’s Word as he should and take advantage of all these opportunities, while his body may be well fed, his soul is shrunken, emaciated and starving to death.

We need to be in the Lord’s house, and to have the attitude David had when he said I was glad when they said unto me, “Let us go up unto the house of the Lord.” Yes, God commands it. We need to emphasize maximum not minimum. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness. We must exert an influence upon our families and our friends. There are so many good things that can be said about the benefits of worship. We should want to be a part of every service whenever the doors of the Lord’s church building are open. Perhaps you’ve heard a poem that’s been published in many church bulletins across the years. It makes a very strong point in this regard. Someone has written:

I love the church that Jesus built and I know that
it is right;
I go there on Sunday morning but not on Sunday
night.
I love to sing the songs of God, such worship
must be right,
This I do on Sunday morning, but not on Sunday
night.

God bless the preacher too, it gives me pure
delight
To hear him on Sunday morning, but not on
Sunday night.;
I know I need more strength to keep me in the
fight
For help I come on Sunday morning, but not on
Sunday night.

Then it says,

Yes we all must die, I hope I will be right,
So may I die on Sunday morning, and not on
Sunday night.

May God help us to be faithful and to realize that worship is not a trivial pursuit. It is vital and important and just as God took an interest in that first worship and the consequences that came out of it, God still takes an interest. Where two or three are gathered together the Lord is present. It is not a matter of pleasing the preacher or the elders or the brethren for that matter, but a matter of pleasing God. It's not a question of whether or not we can go from the assembly and say how much we got out of it. We should have the attitude, was my worship pleasing in God's sight? May God help it so to be this night, that we're built up and strengthened, that we can be stronger people, that we can love one another more, and love God more, and get the benefits that come from the kind of worship with which God would be pleased, for such the Father seeketh to worship Him.

First Be A Christian

Are you a Christian tonight? You need first of all to be a Christian, a faithful Christian, to be able to worship God pleasingly, acceptably in His sight. It's wonderful to assemble around the Lord's table. It is wonderful to sing

these songs and engage in these prayers, to enjoy the fellowship of faithful brethren, to enjoy all these spiritual blessings we have in Christ Jesus. But first of all one must to be in Christ Jesus, in His body. May we encourage you tonight if you have not obeyed the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, to do it now. Confess your faith in Christ and be buried with Him in baptism. If you have done all of this, but you are out of duty, an unfaithful Christian, we urge you to come back to the Lord and do that tonight. Do it now, as together we stand and sing.

Chapter 16

Adding The Christian Virtues

Bob McAnally



Robert began preaching at 15 years of age. He attended Athens Bible School, Florida Christian College, and Harding University. He presently preaches for the South Florida Avenue church in Lakeland, Florida (for over 15 years). He is a former preacher for the East Hill congregation. He has preached for churches in Alabama, Tennessee and Michigan. Bob and Evelyn have three children.

I want to express appreciation to Paul Sain and to the East Hill elders, Hugh Cooper, Louis Fuqua and Eldridge Woodard for all their work in making this lectureship possible. I appreciate the **Truth In Love** publication and the **Truth In Love** Lectureship. Both of these good works require enormous effort. We owe these brethren a debt of gratitude and I want to say thank you.

The subject assigned to me is “The Christian Virtues.” Notice our reading of II Peter 1:5-12:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity, For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he

that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Jesus loved Peter and we all love him. Impetuous, rash, sinful, wonderful, courageous, stumbling, bumbling Peter. It was he that confessed the Lord in Matthew 16:16-18, “Thou art the Christ the son of the living God,” and then, later, when others turned away, Peter spoke up and said, “We believe and art sure that thou art that Christ the son of the living God” (John 6).

It was Peter who had denied Jesus three times and then later came back to confess his love for Christ three times (John 21).

It was Peter who spoke up, on Pentecost, whose sermon is recorded in Acts 2, at the establishment of the church.

It was Peter of whom the Lord foretold the manner of his death in John 21 and now as an old man nearing the end of his life at the writing of this epistle, he wrote, “shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me” (II Peter 1:14). Forty years earlier, Jesus had said, “When thou art converted strengthen the brethren.” He was still doing that when he wrote this chapter.

“Giving All Diligence”

Diligence is defined as “earnest and persistent application to an undertaking; steady effort.” God’s

people must not be slothful, but diligent in all things.

Jude wrote,

I gave all *diligence* to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort (you) that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 1:3).

Solomon said,

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it *with thy might*; for there is no work, nor devise, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest (Eccl. 9:10).

Anything that is worth doing, is worth doing well. This is particularly true concerning the work of the Lord. May God help us to be ever mindful of the urgency and seriousness of this great work.

“Add To Your Faith”

Let us now look at these qualities individually. Faith is the very foundation. Peter is not saying add faith for he assumes the presence of faith in the Christian. One must have faith in order to become a Christian. “But without faith,” Paul says, “it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Jesus told the unbelieving Jews of His day, if ye do not believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins and where I go ye cannot come (John 8). How we need to see the importance of a living, vibrant, growing faith—a strong

faith that is able to sustain us!

Faith is not the end, but just the beginning of the Christian life. Peter said, “we have obtained that like precious faith” and we are to build upon it. We are to add to that faith these qualities. The expression “add to your faith virtue” is translated in the ASV “in your faith supply virtue.” The implication is that virtue is a natural outgrowth of our faith, that, as our faith grows and matures it produces in us, virtue.

“Add Virtue”

What is meant by virtue? It is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as “manly courage; valor.” While it is frequently defined as “moral goodness, especially associated with femininity,” that is not the meaning here. There is nothing feminine about what Peter is urging us to add. To the contrary, it is a strong and courageous manliness.

The soldier of the Lord needs this kind of courage and valor. Paul said,

...take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand, stand therefore (Eph. 6:13-14).

God has always wanted His people to be strong. When Joshua became the leader of Israel, God charged him over and over in Joshua 1 to be strong. In verse 6, “Be **strong** and of a good courage” and in verse 7, “Only be thou **strong** and very courageous” and again in verse 9,

Have I not commanded thee? **Be strong** and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Remember this is the man that together, with Caleb, stood against the ten spies and all Israel, and said, “by God’s help we can do it.”

Forty years later God was still urging him to be strong. How desperately we need this kind of strength today “to do according to all the law,” commanded us to...

...turn not from it to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest (Joshua 1:7).

The Lord’s servant is to be one with moral courage and strength. To be this kind of person he must add the virtue of strength and courage.

“Add Knowledge”

We are to grow in knowledge. Notice how important knowledge is to God’s man. In Hosea 4:6 God said,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Solomon wrote,

Buy the truth, and sell it not: also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding (Prov. 23:23).

How do we arrive at this knowledge? The answer is very simple. Study. Paul wrote to Timothy,

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15).

Paul said, it is by reading the scriptures,

...by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (Eph. 3:3-4).

Christianity is a taught religion. We are commanded by Christ, to go and teach, to baptize and to teach them to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). Peter himself said,

...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you (I Peter 3:15).

For this to be possible we must have *faith*, be *strong*, and growing in *knowledge*.

Add Temperance (Self-Control)

While the Bible says, “every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things” (I Cor. 9:25), it is implying as some teach that we can be temperate in things that are sinful. It is never right to engage in sinful practices even a little bit.

A better translation of this passage is the ASV which says, “and in your knowledge self-control.” Out of our increased knowledge we develop self-control. How important is this great quality?

Solomon said,

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

The Christian is to be able to govern or discipline himself. Paul said,

I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached

to others, I myself should be rejected (I Cor. 9:27, ASV).

And James said, “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). The truth of the matter is that he that knows to do good and doesn’t do it, and he knows what evil is, and goes ahead and does it anyway, has a serious problem. Any person who goes against what he knows is right, is guilty of sin. He needs to work on discipline and self-control. The Christian must add this quality to his life. We must be able to avoid those things we know to be sinful and to do those things that are right. We must have self-control.

“Add Patience”

Patience is defined as “the capacity to endure hardship, difficulty, or inconvenience without complaint; patience emphasizes calmness, self-control, and the willingness or ability to tolerate decay; long-suffering, forbearance.” Biblical patience is not just a stoic toughness but an endurance that grows out of great faith in God. Too many want to get patience some quick and easy way. They are impatient about patience, like the person who prayed, “Lord, give me patience—right now!” But that’s not the way it works.

James said,

...we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job (James 5:11).

Life isn’t always easy. Paul said, “we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Rom. 5:3). There is always good that comes out of even the Christian’s most difficult problems for God makes all things work out for His good (Rom. 8:28). One of the

great blessings that comes out of difficulties for the Christian is patience.

“Add Godliness”

Godliness is defined as “a deep reverence and piety toward God; adoring, loving and magnifying Him in one’s heart. We are told to “exercise ourselves unto Godliness” and that “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (I Tim. 4:7-8). We are not to be like those Paul described as, “having a *form of godliness*, but denying the power thereof: from such” he said, “turn away” (II Tim. 3:5).

“Add Brotherly Kindness”

“And to Godliness brotherly kindness.” Here the word, in the original, is the one from which we get Philadelphia. It is defined as “brotherly love” or literally “the love of the brethren.” Out of Godliness grows a love for our brethren. John tells us we simply cannot love God and hate our brethren (I John 4:20). We are commanded to love the brethren. Peter said,

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king (I Peter 2:17).

It is assumed that we would naturally love the family of God. Paul urges us to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

Why then should we love the brethren?

(1) Not because they are always lovable. They aren’t.

(2) Not because they always love us. They don’t and they won’t.

(3) Because God commanded it.

(4) Because they are the handiwork of God and

made in His image.

(5) Because it is a badge of discipleship. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

(6) To follow the example of our Lord (I Peter 2:21). How we need to grow in this virtue, also. Paul said, “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1).

“Add Charity” (Love)

Out of brotherly kindness should grow love. Love for all men. We love Him because He first loved us. The love of God constrains us. It teaches us to love. Jesus said,

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

We too must love. We must not love the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. We should love as Jesus loved; love the lost and love the souls of men. Our Lord even commands us to love our enemies and those that ill treat us.

Paul says, without this love we are nothing. Regardless of great ability or profound wisdom and understanding or greatness of sacrifices on our part they profit us nothing if we have not love. It is the greatest thing in the world. He said,

...now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love (I Cor. 13:13).

This is agape love, divine love. It is the kind of love to which we must aspire.

So here is a list that begins with faith and ends with love. It is a program of growth and development

and we should be busily engaged in those things that make for growth. In the closing verse of this great epistle Peter said,

...but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen (II Peter. 3:18).

Summary

So what is the end of all this—the results? The results in our lives, in the church of our Lord, and its influence upon the world are many, and far reaching, indeed. I will mention three.

(1) A Fruitful Life. The apostle said,

If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:8).

On many occasions, Jesus emphasized the importance of bearing fruit. He told a parable about a barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9) and later cursed such a tree (Matt. 21). If the Bible teaches anything it teaches that we must bear fruit to be well pleasing to God.

(2) You Will Never Fall. Peter said, “If ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (II Peter 1:10). The danger of falling is seen in (1) commands not to fail, (2) warnings against falling, and (3) examples of those who did fall. Paul warned, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12). It is a comforting assurance that the apostle said “if we do these things we shall never fall.”

(3) A Golden Stairway To Heaven. Notice the statement,

So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:11).

We can have an entrance, yes, but more than just an entrance, “an abundant entrance.” Jesus said,

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:2-3).

The Lord went to prepare for us and we need to be preparing, also. The steps Peter describes in this passage are steps that lead to heaven.

How important are these Christian virtues? Look at them again: Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, and Love. Peter said,

He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins (II Peter 1:9).

They make the difference between fruitfulness and barrenness, standing and falling, blindness and sight, between saved and lost, between heaven and eternal punishment. May God help us to add the virtues and receive the blessings.

Chapter 17

Strength To Overcome Problems Of Our Lives

Curtis A. Cates



Curtis Cates has been preaching the gospel for several years. He holds various degrees from universities. Presently he is the director of the Memphis School of Preaching. He is the author of various books dealing with pertinent brotherhood matters. He has taught most every book of the Bible in various levels of teaching. Curtis and Annette have worked side by side in faithful service to the Lord.

Thanks be to God for the great East Hill church in Pulaski for their stalwart and evangelistic stand for the truth of God, for their encouragement of faithful brethren, and for the **Truth In Love** Lectures directed by Paul Sain, overseen by the good elders Hugh Cooper, Louie Fuqua, and Eldridge Woodard. And, thanks to Paul and LaDon for their tireless work on the book. My, what a great and timely theme for the Sixth Annual Lectures, “Strength For Daily Christian Living!”

Only the most naive person would attempt to deny that man experiences countless problems in life. If a person lives on this earth, he will have problems. No one is exempt. Job stated, “Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). The great patriarch Jacob stated to Pharaoh in Egypt,

The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have

been the days of the years of my life (Gen. 47:9).

Even our blessed Lord experienced many problems and sorrows. He underwent temptations (Matt. 4:1-11), deprivation (8:19-20), criticism (9:10-13), rejection (11:20-24; John 6:66-71), false accusation (12:22-30), persecution, betrayal, mocking, crucifixion (20:17-20; chapters 26-28), et. al. He was the greatest sufferer this world has ever known, yet He endured it for the salvation of the world (Heb. 2:7-9; Isa. 53:1-12; Heb. 5:7-9; 12:1-2). Inasmuch as Christ was tempted and suffered as we, yet without sin, He is our perfect example of overcoming suffering (I Peter 2:21-25). He is therefore fitted to serve as our advocate and the one through whom we can approach the august throne of God (I John 2:1-2; Heb. 4:14-16).

Trials, problems, temptations, troubles come in many and varied forms. James wrote,

Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations ('trials', ASV margin)/ knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience ('steadfastness,' ASV margin). And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

The word “manifold” means “variegated,” or “many colored,” this indicating that each of us experience many diverse types of problems in life. Note that Peter makes the same observation:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that

perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:6-7).

Now, observe what else Peter says, and it is very enlightening and comforting. Peter speaks in I Peter 4:10 of the “manifold **grace** of God.” Now, note the connection—for every different **color of trial** one experiences, there is that very **color of grace** to cover it, to enable us to handle it. That, dear reader, is the marvel of God’s care and providence and provision for His people. No, there is no problem but what God is there to help us deal with it. For example, as grievous as were Job’s troubles, he persisted in righteousness and prevailed, with God’s help.

Trouble Cometh

Problems originate from numerous sources and have various causes. Sometimes they are caused by man’s inhumanity to man, other times they result from man’s abuse of himself, still other times they originate from inadvertently or purposefully violating the laws of nature, and even other causes which time does not allow to be discussed. However, all can be traced back to sin and to man’s being put out of the Garden of Eden. Where does man find strength to overcome problems of our lives? Let us examine the life of one human being who powerfully triumphed over the tragedies of his life—the great patriarch Job.

Listen to Paul.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

Job’s troubles were horrendous.

For my sighting cometh before I eat, And my groanings are poured out like water. For the thing which I fear cometh upon me, And that which I am afraid of cometh unto me. I am not at ease, neither am I quiet, neither have I rest; But trouble cometh (Job 3:24-26).

No doubt Job was the greatest sufferer ever, next to Jesus—and the greatest man of faith. James says of this great believer,

Behold we call them blessed that endureth; ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful (James 5:11).

Question: What problems did Job experience, and how did he muster the strength to surmount them?

Destroyed Without Cause

Job was the type person described by the Hebrews writer thus “...of whom the world was not worthy” (Heb. 11:38). It was upon this righteous man that Satan did ruthlessly, maliciously, and viciously unleash his diabolical, unrelenting vengeance. Truly, if ever a mortal was tried in the fire, it was Job (Job 23:10). Of course, all of us are tried in the fires of suffering, to a lesser or greater extent. How was this righteous, complete, and upright man destroyed?

Job thought God was destroying him; actually it was Satan. God permitted Satan to kill his sheep with lightning, to take his oxen, asses, and camels away, to kill Job’s ten children, to inflict Job with intense, grievous pain, and to tempt Job through his wife to curse God and commit suicide (Job 1,2). This was but the beginning.

His high social standing was gone (Job 29,30); he was spurned and scorned by his family members (brothers and sisters), by what few servants were still living, and by his former acquaintances (Job 19:13-19; 30:1-14); his physical torture got more and more intense (Job 7:5; 2:8; 3:24-25; 16:16; 19:20; 30:17; 7:19; 30:30; 7:14-15), inasmuch as Satan was inflicting him with as much pain as possible (short of killing him); his “friends” Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were vindictively, hatefully, ruthlessly, and falsely accusing Job (they were “forgers of lies” [13:4], averring that all suffering is punishment for sin, Job is suffering, therefore Job is a sinner [4:7-9] and averring that Job had trusted in his wealth, abandoned God, grievously sinned, and robbed the orphan and widow [8:15; 20:18-19, et. al.]); and he thought that God had abandoned him and was even trying to kill him. God, he thought, had taken back (Job 1:21), had hedged him in and would not let him die (3:23), and was constantly harassing him (6:4; 7:11-12; 9:17; 13:15; 16:12; 19:9; 24:1; 21:7-13, et. al.). How under such suffering does one survive?

Come Forth As Gold

It seemed to Job that everyone had abandoned him, even God. No longer did Jehovah converse with this patriarch, as in the past (Heb. 1:1). He was suffering grievous pain and great emotional torment **alone**, he thought. How could he possibly endure such trial? What a tremendous help it is to us if we can find out what enabled Job to persevere through what most people would consider far more than a man can bear!

In the first place, Job received strength from long having been a faithful servant of the Lord.

The implication is that he had served God from his youth, likely over fifty years. He had been widely honored for his godly life; it certainly showed in the godly lives of his children. Such respect and such righteousness in one's children do not come from a brief honoring of God or from a recent conversion. Job had long cultivated his relationship with God, and now he would depend upon it and be upheld by it as never before. It is reminiscent of Abraham's great faith as he was tested in offering up his only begotten son Isaac. Trusting in and obeying God in lesser trials equip us for stability and strength in the greater ones. When the unfathomable problems come (as they will), one cannot magically just reach up and pull “faith” and strength out of the air; that kind of confidence and trust is to be built over a lifetime of meaningful relationship, with God (Rom. 10:17).

In the second place, Job received strength from long having been a faithful steward of his mind. The pure of heart are blessed of God (Matt. 5:8), and to control one's thinking is to be in control of one's life. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Christ said,

But the things which proceed out the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries... (Matt. 15:18-20).

In his heart, Job feared God and hated evil (1:1); thus, he turned away from evil and lived a godly, righteous life. He refused to practice astrology (to kiss his hand toward the sun, moon, and stars; Job. 31:27-28), which would have been tantamount to denying God, and he refused to break his covenant with God by lusting after

a virgin (31:1) or by lusting upon a married woman and by being guilty of adultery, which was (and still is, contrary to the **heresy** being advocated by some preachers, professors, and others) “a heinous crime” (31:9-12).

Job trusted in God, not in his wealth. He affirmed that he deserved to be punished severely, even destroyed.

If I have made gold my hope, and said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence. If I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, And because my hand had gotten much (31:24-25).

However, he had **not** placed his faith in riches. Job realized what Christ stated so clearly in Luke 12:15,

Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Realizing that genuine life and happiness are not measured in terms of houses, land, and bank accounts, Job suffered patiently; his hope in and dedication to the Lord did not rest upon fleeting riches, or good wealth, or worldly recognition, or pleasing everyone. Satan’s accusations were false. Job cursed God neither when his great financial wealth was taken from him and he went from being a multi-millionaire, the richest man in the East, to being a pauper in one fell swoop nor when he lost his health and was afflicted with a horrible, terminal disease.

In the third place, Job received strength from having long been a faithful steward of his riches. He would not face God with his worldly possessions

having rusted and that rust be a testimony to his selfish folly and greed (James 5:1-6). He had not “nourished” his heart for the slaughter! His treasures were in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20).

How had he used his riches? He fed the poor, supported the widow, and nourished the orphan. No needy person could be found who had not warmed from clothes made of wool from his sheep, nor could any traveler be found whom he did not lodge (31:16-21, 31-32). This would help him, for he trusted the Ruler of the universe.

In the fourth place, Job received strength from having long been a person of high ethics and generosity in counsel and in dealing with his fellow man, even with his own servants. Knowing that no person can love God and at the same time hate his fellow man and mistreat him, Job maintained spotless integrity. He absolutely refused to deal in carrying falsehood, rumor and deceit (31:5). He would not be a party to a gossip mill; such a lying, wicked mischievous sower of discord, who murders people’s good names, are guilty of virtually all of the seven sins listed by Solomon, through inspiration, as hated by God (Prov. 6:16-19).

Though Job could have, as a respected judge in the gate, taken advantage of the poor, the widows, the orphans, he rather “delivered the poor,” the fatherless, the widow from the teeth of the greedy and ruthless who would have devoured them (29:12-17). When he did not know the details of a case, he searched it out. And, when those who hated Job had problems, he did not rejoice; certainly he did not wish evil to befall even those who had bitter hatred for him (31:29-30).

What was his attitude toward even his own servants when they begged to differ with him? Though at that time he could have had them killed, with no questions asked by society, he heard them out patiently. Why?

What then shall I do when God riseth up? And when he visiteth (in the day of judgment), what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb? (31:14-15).

Job believed in the sanctity of *all* human life (cf. 3:11). When we, reader, are tempted to rail on other human beings (perhaps even brethren), we had best remember that God shall call us into account; and then, how shall we answer Him?

Though Job was ruthlessly and falsely accused by his three friends, even lied about, he refused to get on their level. Though he defended himself, he showed his great attitude of heart thus:

I also could speak as ye do; If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could join words together against you, and shake my head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, And the solace of my lips would assuage your grief (16:4-5).

He had a far better heart than they.

In the fifth place, Job received strength from having a strong faith in the resurrection of the last day, as well as in the final judgment. Though his body in the grave would not be alive and thus not be longer tormented with the pain he was now experiencing (3:13; 10:21-22; 17:13-14), his spirit would still be very much alive (Eccl. 12:7, et. al.). His ten

children were with God. (Note: God doubled Job’s children when he was restored. Children are not animals. He had twenty–ten already with God in paradise and ten more born to him and his wife [his “first” wife]. To double Job’s 7,000 sheep, on the other hand, God gave him 14,000.

Through the eye of faith, Job saw the time when,

...thou wouldest call, and I would answer thee:
Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of
the hands (14:15),

the time of the general resurrection when he would be called forth from the grave (John 5:28-29; I Thess. 4:13-18; et. al.). That would be the time when he would stand face to face with God, not as an enemy but as a friend (Space does not permit a full discussion herein of “The Messiah in the book of Job,” which topic the writer has discussed on various lectureships and available on tape), as is revealed in Job 19:27.

Job not only realized he would face God in judgment (31:14; et. al), he warned his friends that God would call them into account at the judgment.

If ye say, How we will persecute him (Job)!
And that the root of the matter is found in
me; Be ye afraid of the sword: For wrath
bringeth the punishments of the sword,
That ye may know there is a judgment (19:28-
29).

(The facts of the general resurrection at the last day, the final, universal judgment, and the mediatorial work of Christ did not evolve in the thinking of man; these critical, fundamentals of the faith are seen in the first recorded, inspired book of the Bible, the book of Job).

Job lived his life in contemplation of these great verities.

In the sixth place, Job received strength from an unanswering, undaunted, dogged determination to maintain his integrity before God. Only one thing mattered; his consolation was, “That I have not denied the words of the Holy One” (6:10). Thinking mistakenly that God was for some reason trying to kill him, Job said,

He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him...Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost (Job 13:16,19)

Never did Job claim sinless perfection, but he did claim never to have committed the grievous sin to warrant the great trials which he was enduring. On a number of occasions he asked for forgiveness (7:20-21), but he refused to acknowledge sins of which his friends had (without basis) accused him and of which he was not guilty. Such would have been a lie.

Job was a growing, developing character. He thought God was persecuting him; and, what hurt him perhaps worst of all was being no longer able to communicate with his dear heavenly Father. The reader will recall that God would often speak directly to the patriarchs, as He did in chapters 38-42. Why so long, in such desperate circumstances was Job unable to talk to God? That pained him deeply! Job in his dire straits questioned the justice of his own suffering, while those who openly cursed God and mistreated their fellow man were not called into account (21:7-16; 24:2-25). He may have felt he would like to try running the universe. No matter what, on the other hand, he would not turn from

God.

After many struggles in his own mind and after answering the accusations of his “friends” to the best of his feeble ability under his adverse circumstances, Job began to realize that for some reason he was undergoing a test, not punishment or chastisement.

But he knoweth the way that I take; When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held fast to his steps; His way have I kept, and turned not aside. I have gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food (23:10-12).

Note how Job mediated on every word from God’s truth, how he deviated neither to the right nor to the left of His commandments, and how he trusted in his ultimate vindication and deliverance! Has there ever been a mere mortal with greater faith?

God knew Job’s faith, else He would not have allowed him to be so tried! The friends accused God falsely as not trusting even His righteous angels. BUT, the very fact that He asked Satan about His “servant Job” (the greatest appellation possible) showed implicit trust in Job. The honor of both God and Job was at stake; Job would not fail. Dear reader, are you and I true to God’s trust, come what may? It is true; Job spoke rashly out of great pain and sorrow and out of ignorance, but he never cursed God, as Satan charged would happen.

In the seventh place, Job received strength from placing his trust in God, not in man. It goes without saying that we can find tremendous encouragement and help from our friends. **However,**

sometimes our friends and even family members will turn their backs on us. Job was very much like Christ in this respect. “All my familiar friends abhor me, And they whom I loved are turned against me” (19:19; compare Psm. 41:9). Our Lord came to His own (the Jews), but they rejected Him (John 1:11); even His disciples turned back and followed Him no more (John 6:66). But, even more discouraging, one of His trusted twelve apostles betrayed Him to be killed—Judas (John 13:18, 26-30; 18:2-5; Luke 22:47,48). Paul was at times abandoned by his friends and brethren, yet the Lord was with him. Yes, it is very disappointing when friends let us down, but God **never** does!

Conclusion

As affirmed by James and Peter, being long-suffering in our trials can have its eternal blessings and rewards, making us “perfect and entire, lacking in nothing” and resulting in “praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Job sat at the feet of God and thus received the best education possible. Job had been too buried in his own self-interest, but God helped him to see things as God saw them. Though Job never learned throughout the book why he was suffering, yet he realized that God was with him and still loved him. That was enough! He did not have to understand why he had been destroyed.

Job was better off after his destruction. When he forgave his penitent “friends,” God doubled his possessions, and his wife and kinspeople and acquaintances returned to him and brought him presents. Ten more children were born to him and his wife, and he lived another 140 years. His attitude in

suffering? It was to be pure in thought, doctrine, and life and **never** under any circumstances, turn his back upon the **only one** who could help him through the grief and pain—Jehovah God!

Chapter 18

Strength To Overcome Worldliness / Materialism

Perry B. Cotham

Perry has powerfully preached the gospel for over sixty-two years, on every inhabited continent, in over sixty nations. He has been involved in full-time evangelistic work since 1972. He continues his work in gospel meetings and lectureships. He has excellent books and material he has written. Perry and Teresa are loved and highly respected by those who know them. They live in Grand Prairie, Texas.



Within the past few years our nation has lived through a period of great material prosperity. This is true to a large extent in many other countries of the world. Our world is full of gadgets and tools designed to make us happier, to make life better. We have things: television, car radios, cellular phones, air conditioning, ceiling fans, stereos, cars, cable TV, telephones, answering machines—and many other things we could mention. So many of these things have come to us within the last 50 to 75 years. We have technology and noise. But, have all of these helped us spiritually? Have we, as a nation, been drawn closer to God? The answer is obvious. We have not! Many, with all the gadgets and toys and jobs, are not happy or satisfied. But we have come to love the world and the things of the world. However, we must learn that things of this world are not what is really important. As Ann Landers once remarked: “The best things in life aren’t things.”

God Has Warned

The Lord has always warned his people of the danger of being worldly-minded, loving the things of this world so much as to forget him and their obedience to His will. Moses, for example, said to the children of Israel:

And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deut. 6:10-12).

But as we read the history of the Hebrews we know that many times they did forget God and went into idolatry. The prophets, Hosea and Amos, plead with Israel, the northern kingdom, to come back to God lest they go into captivity (see the books of Hosea and Amos). But they would not, so the nation went into Assyrian Captivity. Likewise, Jeremiah pled with the southern kingdom, Judah, to go back and walk in the old paths (Jer. 6:16), but they, too, refused. They went into Babylonian captivity.

The Lord, through His word, warns us today of the danger of being too attracted to the things of this world—to making money and buying things, and not being faithful in obedience to Him. Paul had this in mind when he wrote of some Christians:

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the *enemies of the cross of Christ*: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, *who mind earthly things*.) (Phil. 3:17-19).

Here we see the nature of the worldly, materialistic spirit. The child of God is not ruined by living in the world, but by the world living in him. Such worldly-minded followers of Christ as Paul here describes are the greatest enemies of the cause of Christ. Their end is “destruction”—unless they repent (I John 1:9; Luke 15:17-24),—that is, exclusion from the eternal home of the righteous. Their way seems pleasant, but hell is at the end of it. They find their gratification in their animal, sensual passions. They pride themselves on the very sins of which they should be ashamed. They think on earthly matters. Peter describes the end of those members of the church who become worldly:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (II Peter 2:20-22).

Set Bad Example

“A worldly and fashionable professor of religion is a very bad example to follow” (Barnes). But this fact does not make Christianity any less true or valuable than the fact that counterfeit money makes all money bad. Admittedly, if there is anything that makes us weep it is the hypocrites in the church—the materialistic, worldly-minded, sensual-living members, who glory in the things of which they should be repenting. But they mind earthly things. However, our thoughts should be on the church, the Bible, the spread of the gospel, and of heaven (Col. 3:1-2).

Good Seed In Crowded Soil

In explaining the parable of the soils, Jesus said the seed of the kingdom, the word of God, “which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with *cares* and *riches* and *pleasures* of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). Matthew expresses the Lord’s language in these words:

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the *care* of this world, and the *deceitfulness of riches*, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful (Matt. 13:22).

Mark records it in a slightly different language:

And the *cares* of this world, and the *deceitfulness of riches*, and the *lusts of other things* entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful (Mark 4:19).

So the Christian’s life is often ruined by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, lusts of other

things, and pleasures of this life. Making money, having more things, enjoying pleasures, and forgetting God is a serious problem with the Christian today in an affluent society. Many cannot put first things first (Matt. 6:33). Having all of these things is not wrong in themselves, provided they do not rob us of our obedience to God. Our possessions should not possess us. People need to get their priorities straight. Will they choose God or mammon (Matt. 6:24)? Both cannot be first in one's heart and life. But for some in this busy "rat race" it is a "work more," "get more," "spend more" attitude of life. God is forgotten, church attendance is neglected, children are lost to the church, and the person dies leaving "all of these things." He will go to the judgment as an unfaithful child of God.

Overcoming Worldliness And Materialism

But, how can the Christian, in this present-day materialistic society overcome this attitude of worldliness and materialism? That is the problem. The word of God will help us. Let us follow the teaching of Scripture. Although we live in and are strongly influenced by our society which encourages us to be always working to make more money and to buy more things and it is so easy to get caught up in fame, power, and money. God's word can direct us as faithful children of God.

The apostle Paul wrote to the young gospel preacher Timothy these words:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful

lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate (be generous and ready to share-NASB); Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (I Tim. 6:6-19).

This Scripture sets forth the principles which will enable the Christian to overcome worldliness and materialism in his life. Paul begins first by saying that a Christian should be content with what he has (cf. Phil.

4:6-7, 11-13; I Peter 5:7). He had learned the secret of contentment with life. Contentment depends not so much on outward conditions, but on the mind. Connected with godliness, contentment is great gain.

A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked (Psm. 37:16).

Earthly wealth is only for this life—from birth to death. We brought nothing with us when we came into this world, and it is certain that we will carry nothing out. Regardless of how much we have, when we die we must leave it all behind (Eccl. 5:15). We can't take it with us (I Tim. 6:7). Jesus taught His disciples that they should not worry and be full of anxiety for the material things of this life (Matt. 6:24-34). Worry is a sin.

Then Paul stated that the eagerness for riches brings many temptations to sin; that the desire excites many hurtful lusts that bring ruin and shame and finally eternal damnation. The *love* of money—not the money itself—is the source of all kinds of evil; men are drawn into all kinds of sin by the love of money. Thus the Bible calls covetousness a sin (I Cor. 6:10; Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5).

Some members of the church have been so deceived by this desire for more material wealth that they have departed from the faith and have brought upon themselves and their families many sorrows and afflictions (cf. Joshua 7:20-25; II Tim. 4:10). Who has not seen this happen time and again with Christians? No wonder the Lord warned,

...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance

of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).

One’s life consists in what he *is*, and not in what he *has*. Man needs but little here below, nor needs that little very long. Trying to get rich has its dangers. By “get rich quick” schemes, some have lost everything they had. Money can get away from us (Prov. 23:5).

Two Obligations

There are two obligations that naturally attach to the making and use of money: (1) Money should be honestly made; and (2) money should be rightly used. Those who try to obtain wealth dishonestly (like gambling) are doing wrong and sooner or later one will pay for his dishonesty.¹ Gehazi coveted Naaman’s silver and raiment, but later he was stricken with leprosy (II Kings 5:20-27). Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver, but later he, with remorse, returned the price of his treachery, and went out and hanged himself (Matt. 26:14-16; 27:3-5). Stealing is wrong (Exod. 20:15; Rom. 13:9). Paul wrote to converts to Christ:

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (Eph. 4:28).

However, it is not enough to obtain money honestly, there is the obligation to use it properly. The three rich men of whom Jesus spoke (recorded in Luke, chapters 12, 16, and 18), so far as we know from the Scriptures obtained their wealth by no fraudulent means. They made their mistake, not in the manner in which they obtained their wealth, but in the way they used it. The rich young ruler (Luke 18) is not charged with

dishonesty. He may have inherited it; he may have married it; he may have received it as a gift; or he may have earned it.

The rich farmer (Luke 12) and the rich man of Luke 16 are above reproach so far as the manner of obtaining their wealth is concerned. But having obtained wealth properly there remains the solemn duty to use it as God would have it used. This seems to be our greater danger. In the parable of the rich farmer he would pull down his barns and build greater ones, and there bestow all of his fruits and goods and say to his soul that it had much goods laid up for many years. In his plans, neither society nor God was considered for his wealth. He was selfish.

There are three factors which contribute to our making of money, regardless of the amount: (1) The person gets the money by honest labor and contributes his part (Gen. 3:19; II Thess. 3:10); (2) society contributes its part (a man with no contact with the outside world would not produce any wealth in the usual sense of the term); (3) God contributes His part. Moses told the children of Israel to “remember the Lord thy God for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Duet. 8:18). God sends the sunshine and the rain (Matt. 5:45); he “made the world and all things therein,” and “giveth to all life and breath, and all things,” (Acts 17:24-25), “every good and every perfect gift” (James 1:17; cf. Psm. 24:1).

Since all these three factors contribute to the making of our wealth, they should be considered in the proper distribution of them. The three men under consideration failed at this point.

The rich farmer, in his plan, did not think of either society or God. It was “my fruits,” “my barns,” and “my

goods” (Luke 12:17-18); his attitude was it is all mine. Likewise, the rich man “clothed in purple and fine linen,” faring “sumptuously every day,” was not interested in God nor his fellow-man in the use of his wealth. It as nothing to him if Lazarus, “full of sores” and “licked” by the “dogs,” died of hunger and exposure at his “gate” (Luke 1:19-22; cf. Prov. 21:13; 29:7). The rich young Ruler kept—at least for a brief time—his wealth. The cry of the needed was unheard and the command of the Lord was not obeyed. “He went away sorrowful.” (cf. Luke 18:18-24; Matt. 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22).

These made their fatal mistake in the use of their money. This should be a lesson of learning to us. No one has a lease on life. It is not a question of how long our goods will last, but how long are we going to last to enjoy them? Then, too, who will get and use our wealth after we leave it? And how will they use it? He who gives while he lives also knows where it goes. This is why Paul, by inspiration, told Timothy to “charge them that are rich in this world...to “do good” with their money and to be “rich in good works,” thereby “laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (I Tim. 6:17-19). This is a very serious matter. What are we doing—what are YOU doing—to help spread the gospel and save souls in all parts of the world? This is the greatest work of the church. How are we using our money that the Lord has given into our hands?

When one includes the work of the Lord in the distribution of his wealth, such as buying Bibles, providing good, sound, gospel literature, sending faithful men to preach the word, or in helping the poor, he shows he is interested about the eternal destiny of souls. (One

is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he can never lose).² Or, when he makes disposition of his estate for his wealth to be used in this way after his death, he likewise shows his love for the Lord's work.

So, often we have seen members of the church work hard, save and manage, accumulate wealth, grow old and die. Then the heirs have an estate sale, and people flock to get some things that the children have not already taken. The children take their portions of the money and may spend it in worldly pleasure. Is that all that matters in life to us? Is that worth our years of hard toil and saving? Is that the way the Lord wants us as his children to use our money? How sad it is for one to have great riches and not give to the Lord's work liberally and cheerfully, and then die and lose his soul in hell forever as did the rich man. Covetousness is a sin (Eph. 5:3-5). Judgment day is coming.

The Example Of Lot

Evidently, Lot is an Old Testament example of a man who seemingly put material interests ahead of the spiritual. He saw the well-watered valley of the Jordan and moved away, with his family and flocks, from good faithful Abraham. and toward Sodom; "he pitched his tent *toward* Sodom" (Gen. 13:12). Soon Lot moved farther down *into* the city of Sodom, a very wicked city, and Sodom began to move into Lot's family.

Although, Peter speaks of him as a "righteous man," and "just," being "vexed" by the immoral lives of those in the city, he, for some reason, continued to stay (II Peter 2:6-8). When he did finally leave, all of his material possessions were burned up, his wife, following behind, turned and looked back and turned to a pillar of salt

(Gen. 19:26; Luke 17:32), and later his two unmarried daughters committed incest with him after making him drunk. Prior to the time of his leaving, the angels of God had to force Lot to leave the city, for “he lingered” (Gen. 19:16). He barely got out in time before the Lord “rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire” (Gen. 19:15-24).

Did Lot think of material prosperity and fail to realize what an immoral and wicked society could do to his family? Many today do this. The average Christian today in America has been overwhelmed by a deluge of material possessions. In their frenzied rush to possess more things, wealth, and leisure time, their spiritual lives have been seriously weakened. Often the desire for more material things has led to financial over-extinction, the wife and mother abdicates the home and the care of her children for a second income to supplement the earnings of the husband. We realize that there are situations where families could not exist without both parents in the work force, however, this presents other serious problems. Children, especially in formative year of their lives, cannot escape completely the terrible results of the absence of mother from the home (Titus 2:4-5; I Tim. 5:14). Figures indicate that nearly fifty-percent of the women now work outside the home. This is fraught with eternal consequences. Too, mothers and wives working outside the home often leads to a break-up of the home, a divorce and a remarriage. Worldliness and materialism go hand-in-hand, and the fruit borne is bitter fruit.

Conclusion

It has been said that an affluent society never

produced a spiritual giant. When members of the church reevaluate their attitudes and lifestyles for spiritual values, then we will go a long way in overcoming worldliness and materialism in our lives. This will strengthen our homes, the church, and society at large. If we can say with Paul, "For to me to live is Christ," then we can also say, "And to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Finally, the words of the apostle John should always be remembered:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.
(I John 2:15-17)

But are the members of the church not worldly when they can sit glued to a large screen television for two hours on Saturday night and watch a filthy, obscene movie with excessive violence, bad language, and explicit nudity, but cannot get up and go to Bible study and worship for two hours on the Lord's day?

Let us heed the admonition of the apostle Paul:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).

If Christians will follow the teaching of the Scriptures this will help them to overcome worldliness and materialism in their lives.

Endnotes

1 Dualing is murder by mutual consent, but it is still murder. Gambling is stealing by mutual consent, but it is still stealing.

2 Jesus declared in the **Sermon on the Mount**:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

Chapter 19

Strength To Press Toward The Prize

Garland Elkins

Garland has been preaching the gospel for half a century; known and highly respected throughout the brotherhood. For many years he worked with the Getwell church in Memphis and directed the *Spiritual Sword* lectureship. Presently he works with the Memphis School of Preaching. He is the author of "*The Saviour's Way*" and numerous tracts and fine articles. Garland and Corinne have three girls.



The country toward which we travel ought to be recognized by our life. It should be evident that we are citizens of the heavenly kingdom by the very way we move about our common affairs. As Christians there should be an attitude and joy which proclaims to all people that we are enjoying the privileges of the Lord, His church, and our eager and fond anticipation of the city of God. As was said of faithful Abraham, it is likewise true of us,

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10).

The faithful of the Old Testament looked for heaven. We read in Hebrews 11:13-16,

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers

and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:13-16).

Our entire relationship with the world must be “worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27); and as that gospel is an evangel of light and life and power and peace, and souls must reveal themselves as joyful followers of Christ (Phil. 4:4). How frequently the Lord’s disciples are miserable advertisements of His grace. As sad as it is, sometimes unclean lives proclaim the powers of the kingdom of purity and light, and the defiled garment puts the Savior to shame. The messenger is not worthy of the message, and therefore the message itself is treated with derision and contempt. In such cases our citizenship is not “worthy of the gospel of Christ.” One of the greatest compliments ever paid to any man was written by inspiration by the hand of Paul, and it showed what a tremendous Christian he was. Paul wrote,

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample (Phil. 3:17).

He then wrote,

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you (Phil. 4:9).

When the message and the messenger strive in concert, in unison, it is as though two warriors were strenuously

engaged upon a common task, and the one cheers an invigorates the other!

Paul Wanted To Be Identified With Christ

This is knowledge of an advanced and matured kind. Paul is not satisfied with matriculation, he must take his degree with honors. He will not settle down among the rudiments content with bare outlines of spiritual attainment, he must pass from stage to stage, deeper and deeper into the love and fellowship of Christ. The problem with many Christians is that, having become Christians, they do not possess a passionate desire to grow an mature as Christians (II Peter 3:18). Unfortunately many grow old in years, but they are still wearing the mental and spiritual garments of childhood.

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (I Peter 2:1-2).

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

It is possible for God's children to be pitiable specimens of "arrested growth." Paul wrote "That I may know him" (Phil. 3:10-11).

Paul also wanted to know “...the power of his resurrection.” Many people can recite the evidences for his resurrection, but they are strangers to its power. They know the facts of history, but they have not obeyed the gospel of Christ (II Thess. 1:7-9). Only those who do the will of God truly know the facts of history, but they have not obeyed the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; II Thess. 1:7-9). Only those who do the will of God truly know Christ in saving obedience.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven (Matt. 7:21).

His motivation was found in the resurrection of the Lord (Rom. 1:4).

He further wrote, “And the fellowship of his sufferings.” That is a phase of the Apostle’s ambition which may well make us wonder. We can understand the intensity of his desire to experience the power of his Savior’s resurrection; but is it not strange that he should be equally eager to become intimate with his Master’s pangs as well as with His triumph? Ah, but the share in the triumph is impossible without some share in the pang. No one can expect to “enter into the joy of the Lord” without being willing to “suffer” in the Lord. When James and John requested “that they might set one, on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom” the Lord replied, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?” We must share the cup if we would share the throne. Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians and said,

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of

Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church (Col. 1:24).

Paul also wrote, "becoming conformed unto his death." To become one with Christ, by the abiding attitude of faith, and by surrender to His will is to become identified with all that He is, and therefore with all that He did, and therefore all that He shall do in the future. Therefore with Paul we can say,

...being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead (Phil. 3:10-11).

This One Thing

Paul spoke very humbly and very quietly about himself. He made no pretensions, no fatal conceit. He wrote,

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12).

Though Paul was an eminent Christian, and an apostle, he was painfully aware of his own weakness. Personal improvement is impossible to the person who does not seek his mistakes and mourn over them, and turn to the Lord in obedience (Heb. 5:8-9).

Paul's singleness of purpose is seen when he wrote, "This one thing I do." He did not say, "These three things, or these two things I do," but "this one thing I do." The rays of the sun, when diffused are relatively impotent; but if they were focused, would burn the world. Steam, when diffused is powerless; but concentrated it moves the locomotive. Likewise there is great power in the concentration of purpose. Jeremiah wrote for God,

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart (Jer. 29:13).

Jesus said,

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (Matt. 22:37).

Paul wrote, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). A divided life is weak. Jesus said,

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

James wrote, “A double minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said of the thorny ground:

And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:14).

Forgetting The Things That Are Behind

The runner cannot win the race by looking over his shoulder at the steps that he has already trod. If the things behind us cannot make us better, they should be remembered no more. Consider the things Paul forgot.

(1) **A noble ancestry** (Phil. 3:5). Paul’s ancestors worshipped the true God, while the Gentiles worshipped idols. At the time Paul renounced the religion of his fathers they were worshipping in error (Rom. 10:1-4).

(2) His former religion, the Jews’ religion was a

respected religion (Phil. 3:3-6). His religion had become intertwined with the traditions of men, with the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. 15:9, 13-15; Mark 7:6-9).

(3) **His successes** (Phil. 3:7). He had in the past enjoyed many personal accomplishments of a moral, intellectual, and political nature. However, he did not allow it to create vanity in his soul.

(4) **His injuries**. He suffered much; stripes, imprisonment, false charges, etc. (I Cor. 4:9-13; II Cor. 11:23-28). He harbored no malice. He allowed none of these things to discourage him.

(5) **His past sins**. He had persecuted Christ and His church (Acts 26:9-19). He considered himself to have been "Chief of sinners" (I Tim. 1:13,15).

The Spirit Of Progress

Paul wrote,

...reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14).

So far from dwelling upon past attainments and triumphs, he strains every nerve and muscle to cover new ground, and to conquer further heights on the language two ideas are prominent:

(1) **Intensity**. "I press on." This is the figure of a runner-body thrown forward, hands extended, and eyes fixed on the goal.

(2) **Direction**. "Toward the goal." Movement in the wrong direction is not progress. I once saw a player run in the wrong direction, and actually score a goal in the opponent's goal. This cost his team the game! Our aim

is Christ (Phil. 2:20; Phil. 1:23). We must be Christlike in character, Christlike in service, and ultimately ours, as Christians, shall be the crown of victory, the heavenly reward (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Chapter 20

Heaven—Our Reason For Living

David P. Brown



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I must die. By sacred declaration I know that “...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). So, not only must I die, but it is the common lot of mankind. As the Psalmist penned, “What man is he that liveth, and shall not seek death” (Psm. 89:48)? The only way anyone can escape physical death is to be alive in the flesh at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (I Thess. 4:17-18). However, in either event, men shall undergo a great transformation. Jesus said,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).

To Felix Paul declared: “...there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15). Moreover, each person must stand before God and give

account of his life in the flesh (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:12). Thus, all mankind are destined to enjoy eternal life or suffer the miseries of eternal death.

In this chapter we are interested in eternal life and, especially, the place where life eternal will be enjoyed. In discussing the permanent nature of the resurrected body Paul declared that “...we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (II Cor. 5:1). Peter wrote,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (I Peter 1:3-4).

Furthermore, Peter declared:

...we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (II Peter 3:13-14).

Those who are recorded in faith’s “Hall of Fame” “desire(d) a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” Therefore, of Abraham, the father of the faithful, it is written, “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:16, 10). May only the worthies who are recorded in holy writ enjoy such eternal bliss in that amazing and marvelous place? Paul answered our question when he wrote “a crown of

righteousness” awaits all who “love his appearing” (II Tim. 4:8). Hence, the promise of heaven is for all who are faithful to the Lord in this life (Rev. 2:10). Let us, therefore, search the scriptures regarding the final abode of the blessed—heaven.

Biblical Descriptions Of Heaven

Because heaven is so far beyond our finite minds to understand, God has chosen things of this life whereby we may have some understanding of that sinless place where God’s Will is flawlessly carried out and where there is no possibility of sin. Hence, various figures of speech are employed by the Holy Spirit to describe heaven. Let us, therefore, examine heaven as our God has revealed it to us.

Heaven Is A City

The ancients were very familiar with great walled cities. They symbolized activity, life, government, and protection. Hence, one of the figures of heaven is that of a great city, the New Jerusalem. Great and high are its walls. Twelve gates are set in the great walls of the city and an angel stands at each gate. These gates are made of pearl. Written on the twelve gates of pearl are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Open are heaven’s gates during the day and since there is no night there, the gates are never shut. The city walls are built upon twelve foundations. On these foundations are inscribed the names of the twelve apostles of Christ. Precious stones garnish the foundations. The first precious stone is jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; and the fourth, an emerald. Her streets are made of pure gold. The city has a river flowing from the throne

of God and the lamb; it is the pure water of life. On each side of the river of life grows the tree of life. Twelve kinds of fruit are born each month and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. It's light is the very glory of God. In figurative language John declares that this celestial and eternal city of the saved is large enough to hold all who will go there (Rev. 21). Thus, in hope we sing:

I am going to a city where the streets with
gold are laid,
Where the tree of life is blooming, and the
roses never fade.
Here they bloom but for a season, soon their
beauty is decayed;
I am going to a city where the roses never
fade.¹

Heaven Is A Country

From the Bible we earlier noted that the faithful patriarchs of the Old Testament looked for a country (Heb. 11:14-16). In this world Ur of the Chaldees was Abraham's home; but it was no abiding place. Hence, as have all the servants of God, Abraham sought a country that could not be destroyed. At best, life on earth is fleeting and uncertain. We, therefore, must treat our existence here as a pilgrimage. We are sojourners in a temporary land that is rushing toward a fiery end. Hence, with that realization in mind we sing such songs as the following one:

Beyond this land of parting, losing and leaving,
Far beyond the losses, darkening this, And far
beyond the taking and the bereaving, Lies the
summerland of bliss.

Beyond this land of toiling, sowing and reaping.

Far beyond the shadows darkening this, And
far beyond the sighing, moaning and weeping,
Lies the summerland of bliss.

Beyond this land of sinning, fainting, and
failing. Far beyond the doubtings darkening
this, And far beyond the griefs and dangers
befalling, Lies the summerland of bliss.

Beyond this land of waiting, seeking and
sighing. Far beyond the sorrows darkening
this, And far beyond the pain and sickness
and dying, Lies the summerland of bliss.

Land beyond so fair and bright! Land beyond
where is no night! Summerland—God is its
Light, O happy summerland of bliss!²

Heaven Is A Place Of Rest

The pilgrim is constantly moving (Heb. 11:13). He is a weary traveler who longs for a permanent place to rest (I Peter 2:11). By the burdens of life he is toilworn and weighed down (Gal. 6:9). Spiritually he seeks eternal comfort, peace, and security (I Cor. 15:58). Heaven is the only place that can permanently and flawlessly fulfill his needs.

In the Christian's home in glory, There
remains a land of rest;
There my Savior's gone before me To fulfill
my soul's request.
There is rest for the weary, There is rest for
the weary,
There is rest for the weary, There is rest for
you.³

Heaven - The Eternal Home Of The Faithful

I cannot think of home without thinking of a

residing place—a residence. In this life, when our earthly homes are as God would have them, there is no place of greater love, security, happiness, fellowship, and peace. If things are as they should be in a home, the nearest and dearest of earth reside therein. On this basis the word “home” strikes a soft spot in our hearts. Fond memories of days gone by are recalled and we are made happy with such reminiscing. Hence, to liken heaven to the good homes of this world strikes a harmonious cord with us.

Who are some of the persons that will make up the populace of heaven? Such great and good men and women as Abel, Enoch, Noah, “Mrs. Noah,” Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Deborah, Barak, Jephthah, David, Samuel, Elijah, and all the faithful prophets (Gen. 5:24; II Kings 2:11; Heb. 11). Along with the Old Testament worthies will be the faithful of which we read in the New Testament—the apostles, Luke, Mark, Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, James, Dorcas, Lois, and Eunice. We will also be with the cherubim, seraphim, and all the holy angels. Above all, we shall enjoy the personal association with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Just imagine such association in that perfect bliss that is heaven.

“The Former Things Are Passed Away”

In picturing heaven to his readers John made it clear that the things we now experience in the flesh will be gone forever when heaven is a reality. John wrote,

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

This means that the earth, the solar systems, and the whole universe will disappear (II Peter 3:10-12). Paul makes it clear that the physical body is temporary and meant only for the abode of the spirit of man in the age of physical things (II Cor. 5:1-4). He points out that the resurrected body will be one of permanence and designed for heaven (I Cor. 15:42-52). The finite and temporary will give place to the permanent and eternal.

Things that are peculiar to this life will be gone forever. One of the things that proves just how radical the change from life in this present world to eternal life in heaven will be is the cessation of marriage and the home. Jesus made it clear that there is no marriage relationship in heaven (Matt. 22:30). As the angels now are, as far as marriage is concerned, we will be when heaven is our home. When faithful husbands and wives get to heaven, they will not have the same relationship with one another that they had in this life. We may, therefore, conclude that all familial relationships will end with the cessation of this present world.

Furthermore, the appetites that are peculiar to and a necessary part of our functioning on earth will cease with the passing of this world. John wrote,

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (I John 2:16-17).

In this life we may control or not control our fleshly desires by following the Word of God. Of course, Satan appeals to these desires and tries to get us to gratify them in ways that God's will does not authorize; such

is the nature of temptation (James 1:12-16). With the end of things physical the appetites of the flesh cease and with them the avenue of temptation to sin. Imagine the person who dissipates his life by gratifying his fleshly desires contrary to the will of heaven. Then, upon his death, he immediately has those fleshly desires removed. The fornicator is in hell, but he no longer has a sexual appetite and so it goes with every desire of the flesh that men attempt to gratify by means not authorized by the Word of God. No doubt this will make hell even more horrible. However, in heaven the Christian who kept his fleshly passions under the control of the word of God will have no such regrets.

In the spiritual realm certain things will come to an end when this present age ceases. Satan will be placed in hell (Matt. 25:41). Hence, he will never be able to cause anyone to sin again. With the cessation of this age will come the end of man's opportunity to be saved. Hence, Christ will cease to be the mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5). There will be no more forgiveness of sins with the end of the present age. Death having been destroyed, Christ will deliver the kingdom (church) up to God and put down all rule and all authority (I Cor. 15:24-28). With the cessation of the possibility of sin and death the Hadean world will be destroyed (Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Rev. 20:14).

The glorified church in heaven will no longer be under the Great Commission to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). The Plan of Salvation will be of no use in heaven (II Cor. 6:2). The need for repentance will have vanished with the cessation of this life (Acts 17:30). Moreover, the reason and the need for prayer as we are taught to pray here on earth will be

no more (Luke 11:1-4). The same is true for the Lord's Supper, certain psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, giving of our means, preaching, and Bible study. Furthermore, the need for and practice of corrective discipline on wayward members of the church will no longer exist with the end of this present world. Many other things that are absolutely needful for serving God in the flesh on earth will cease with the end of the world.

One of the greatest blessings of heaven will be the absence of wicked people therein. There will be **no** fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, strife, jealousies, wrath, factions, divisions, envying, murder, drunkenness, reveling, fearfulness, unbelievers, abominable persons, liars, and such like (Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8). There will be **no** hospitals, nursing homes, funeral homes, practice of any kind of medicine, police, armies, wars, famine, pestilence, nor anything else that is sinful or the result of sin. "Won't It Be Wonderful There!!"

Will Heaven Be Worth It All?

In Second Corinthians 11:23-33 Paul lists all of the sacrifices he gladly made for the cause of Christ; it is a list of sacrifice, pain, privation, persecution, and suffering. Did Paul think that heaven is worth all of his ordeals? He answers,

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed (Rom. 8:18).

Moreover he wrote, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). Later in the same letter he wrote:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes doubtless, and I

count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and, do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead (Phil. 3:7-11).

No matter how extreme the sacrifice he must make for the cause of Christ, Paul knew that the glories of heaven would outweigh the greatest of sacrifices made in service to Christ on earth. Paul fully understood that by “...patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:7). Hence, he would admonish and exhort:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).

Of the patriarchs the inspired writer penned:

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:16).

In this life we are to

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15).

Because Christians are approved of God here, God will

not be ashamed of them in eternity. Hence, there will be no shame in heaven.

No sadness will exist in heaven.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

Heaven will be a place of rest and refreshment (Rev. 14:13). Full and eternal access to the tree of life will be the common lot of the redeemed of the ages (Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). We will be at home forever and ever.

There's no disappointment in heaven,
No weariness, sorrow or pain;
No hearts that are bleeding and broken,
No song with a minor refrain.
The clouds of our earthly horizon
Will never appear in the sky,
For all will be sunshine and gladness,
With never a sob or a sigh.

We'll never pay rent for our mansion.
The taxes will never come due;
Our garments will never grow threadbare,
But always be fadeless and new;
We'll never be hungry or thirsty,
Nor languish in poverty there,
For all the rich bounties of heaven
His sanctified children will share.

There'll never be crepe on the doorknob,
No graves on the hillsides of glory,
For there we shall never more die.
The old will be young there forever,
Transformed in a moment of time;
Immortal we'll stand in His likeness,

The stars and the sun to outshine.
I'm bound for that beautiful city
My Lord has prepared for His own:
Where all the redeemed of all the ages
Sing 'Glory' around the white throne;
Sometimes I grow homesick for heaven,
And the glories I there shall behold:
What a joy that will be when my Savior I see,
In that beautiful city of gold.⁴

This Earth Is Perfect

Perfect may be defined as “flawless” or “complete.” When we say the earth is perfect, we mean it is complete for what God intended to accomplish with it. God meant that on earth men are to prove their faithfulness or lack of it to Him. In the flesh, therefore, men are on probation before God. Satan has access to us through the appetite of the flesh. God, on the other hand, appeals to us through reason and revelation. We must choose to let Him have His way with us in our obedience to the truth of the gospel; or choose to do things our way to the exclusion of God's will for our lives.

God never said we would be without problems, but He gave us the solution to our problems in the words of the Bible (II Tim. 3:16-17; James 1:25; II Peter 1:1-12). This is the pathway of faithfulness (Rom. 10:17; II Cor. 5:7). It is the “strait” gate and the “narrow” way. It is the only way that leads to eternal life (Matt. 7:13-14). We develop our spirits in the likeness of Christ by continuing to subject ourselves to His will. Thus, our characters become more godly as we continue to submit to God's will. This is the process of Christian growth and development. To use the words of the apostle John, it is “...walk(ing) in the light, as he is in the light...” or

as Luke recorded of the early church in Jerusalem, it is “continu(ing) stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...” (I John 1:7; Acts 2:42). Impossible it is to become flawless in this life, but based upon our faithfulness here God shall make up the difference when this world is only a memory (Rev. 2:10).

We, therefore, are saved by hope (Rom. 8:24). We look beyond this life to our celestial and eternal home. We eagerly anticipate what we have the right to receive. Thereby, we are encouraged to remain stedfast to our Lord as we look beyond the material things to our eternal reward in heaven.

Conclusion

If your reason for living is not heaven, you have the wrong reason for living. This world has nothing of permanency to offer. God will wipe away all the tears of those in heaven. Heaven, nor anything in heaven will decay. Death will be unknown in heaven; thus, there will be no sorrow there. No pain will exist in heaven. No sin will exist in heaven. The only ambitions among the glorified saints will be those that are in perfect harmony with God. In heaven we will find an eternal place of perfect peace and rest. There will be nothing in heaven that is not flawlessly beautiful; and none of its beauty will ever fade. In living faithful to Him here we have the blessed assurance that when we come to the end of life’s journey Jesus will be with us when we cross the cold water’s of death (Psm. 23). Of all accountable people only faithful children of God will know and experience all these eternal blessings. What is your reason for living?

Endnotes

1 Ellis J. Crum, ed., **Sacred Selections For The Church**, (Kendallville, IN: 1960), p. 389.

2 Ibid., p. 287.

3 Ibid., p. 433.

4 As quoted in John Stacy, **Sermons on Heaven and Hell**, (Winona, MS: 1977), p. 15-16.