

Twenty-Fifth Annual

TRUTH IN LOVE
LECTURESHIP

Theme:

**Laying Up
Treasure
In Heaven**

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FOREWORD

The evidence is conclusive and concise – faith in Jehovah God, His Son (our Saviour and Lord) and the Holy Spirit (who has provided the instruction book from God) is sensible, logical and necessary to ultimately enjoy the Heavenly Home prepared for the obedient and faithful servants of God. Arguments of man fail in their attempts to refute and destroy these powerful truths. Acknowledging what the Godhead has done for us should prompt our erupting in glorious gladness and jubilation.

Heaven – A Real Home That Awaits God’s Faithful

It is obviously impossible for our human minds to grasp the beauty of that heavenly existence. Paul writes (1 Cor. 15; 1 Thes. 4) of what will occur at the end of time on earth. Of the various occurrences mentioned, we note “*we shall all be changed*” (1 Cor. 15:51). Prior to this fact Paul stated that “*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*” (v. 50). Thus the change will be from our fleshly existence to a spiritual existence. John says “*we shall be like him*” (1 John 3:2). God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and we shall be changed from physical beings to spirit beings, like our Father in heaven (1 John 3:1-2). Thus our “*mansion*” (John 14:1-3) will not be a large, beautiful home of brick, mortar and stone. It will not be constructed of breath-taking fine woodwork, gold, marble, etc. Yet, let us NEVER be led to believe it will not be unimaginably breath-taking, beauty beyond what our

minds can conceive, without the toils, pains and strains of life on earth. Yes, heaven is a real home awaiting God's faithful servants.

Pause And Consider What The Scriptures Declare About Heaven

The mansion that our Lord has prepared for those who die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13) is described as:

- An eternal home, not made with hands (2 Cor. 5:1).
- New heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13).
- City of the living God (Heb. 12:22).
- Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7).
- Rest for the weary (Heb. 4:9-11).
- Place of no pain, death, sorrow (Rev. 21:4).
- No need of sun, no night there (Rev. 21:23-25).
- Place where righteousness exists (2 Peter 3:13).
- Place of reunion (2 Tim. 4:8; Gen. 35:29).
- An eternal home (2 Cor. 5:1).
- Life everlasting (1 Tim. 1:16).
- We will ever be with the Lord (1 Thes. 4:17).

The inspired Scriptures provide a description that should make us hunger for, long for, and thus diligently pursue our final home.

God Has Specified That ONLY Ones Who Obey Him Will Be In Heaven

Jesus stated it in clear and concise terms...

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).

God loved us SO and sent His Son (John 3:16), even while man was yet in sin (Rom. 5:8-9). Before leaving earth, Jesus stated the following regarding instruction that would be provided for all mankind.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26).

Further in John 15:26, Jesus stated,

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

So we can accurately conclude that we have God's will today and it is able to make us wise unto salvation (James 1:21-27) if we will be "*doers*" of the Word. Paul told Timothy the Scriptures give us "*instruction in righteousness*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible is the road map to eternal glory. The Word of God must be our lamp and light (Psm. 119:105). For the sake of the illustration, let us suppose we were traveling to a place a few hundred miles from our home and it was a place we had not previously visited. Sensibly we would secure a map (or more likely use our GPS). Would we be so foolish as to read (or hear) the specific instructions that would lead us to our destination and then ignore the directions? It would be hard to imagine

anyone acting in that way. Yet, as we read and understand what our Heavenly Father desires and has commanded of us – dare we ignore that instructions? Would we ever be so foolish as to place the “*things*” of the world before spiritual matters? Would we ever be guilty of giving more emphasis to sports and recreation than to our diligent pursuit of our final home with God? Would we be so unwise as to allow the temptations of life, sexual immorality, pride and arrogance, responsibilities at work, or anything else to take precedence over “*laying up treasures in heaven*” (Matt. 6:19)?

Heed Our Lord’s Warning

Please, for the sake of your soul, hear the saving words of Jesus Christ. The powerful sermon on the mount found in Matthew 5-6-7 (and similar thoughts in Luke’s account of the gospel) provide valuable guidance for our seeking and one day realizing HEAVEN as our final place of existence.

God Has Done His Part. Regarding the salvation of our souls, God loved us SO much that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). He did this even though we were yet in our sins (Rom. 5:8-9).

Christ Has Done His Part. Jesus Christ was a crucial part in the eternal plan of God (Eph. 3:10-11). Our Lord left the beauty and glory of heaven to come to earth for the purpose specified in Luke 19:10. He came to “*seek and save the lost.*” It is impossible for our minds to understand the depth of the love of Christ to willingly endure the ridicule, mocking, physical torture of being scourged and finally being nailed to the wooden cross. Then to hang there for six hours – oh, what love!

The Holy Spirit Has Done His Part. Jesus asked God to send the Comforter (the Spirit) to give us all truth (John 14:26; 15:26) which He did. We have the truth that can make us free (John 8:32).

Man Is Invited. Jesus beautifully invites ALL to come to Him for rest, peace, forgiveness – salvation (Matt. 11:28-30). Paul told Timothy that God desires ALL to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

Man Must Do His Part. It is so simple. The supposed elite of the world may find it insulting because it is so beautifully simple. In God's plan – once God, Christ and the Holy Spirit have done Their part and man is invited – it is up to man to respond submissively and completely IF he is going to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Another way of saying the same thing – we must **lay up treasures in heaven.** Similar admonitions are “*set your affections on things above*” (Col. 3), “*press toward the mark of the prize*” (Phil. 3), “*present your bodies a living sacrifice*” (Rom. 12), “*go on toward perfection*” (Heb. 6), “*endure to the end*” (Matt. 10) and “*be faithful unto death*” (Rev. 2).

One day, in the glory land, every toil and burden of life will be as nothing – and a mere glimpse of our Almighty Father and our Wonderful Saviour in glory will be worth everything!

~ Paul Sain

FOREWORD

DEDICATION

Several have heard the story of a preacher that impacted and changed my life when I was a mere twenty-three years old. The year was 1969. The place was Freed-Hardeman College. The building was Bader gymnasium. It was a Tuesday evening. The crowd was packed elbow to elbow. It was the first time LaDon and I had the privilege of attending the annual lectureship. Little did we realize what was about to occur.

The speaker was introduced: **Andrew Connally**. The topic was *"Overcoming Mediocrity."* Though I had been attempting to preach for a while previous to that moment, brother Connally's words challenged me to greater determination to be a servant of Christ than ever before.

The three points of the lesson were: (1) Courage To Care, (2) Willingness To Work, and (3) Dare To Dream. By recording I have listened to that powerful speaker dozens of times – and again and again have been motivated to do more and more for the glorious Lord and Saviour.

Though this dear brother departed from this life in 1992, like Abel of old (Heb. 11:4), brother Andrew



DEDICATION

Connally lives on today - speaks to many today.

Thanks to brother Andrew's brother, Charles, I have accumulated almost one hundred sermons (audio) and almost fifty sermons (video). He is still teaching the saving Gospel of Christ today.

In the last few weeks a new DVD set of sermons, entitled "*Voices From The Past*" has been released by the Gospel Broadcasting Network and Sain Video Productions which includes video lessons on DVD by Perry Cotham, Winfred Clark, Guy N. Woods, Franklin Camp, Wendell Winkler, Thomas B. Warren, Joe Gilmore, Bobby Duncan, Hugo McCord, V. P. Black, Johnny Ramsey, William Woodson, J. Noel Merideth and yes Andrew Connally. These wonderful, powerful and faithful brethren continue to teach the Gospel of Christ today.

While it is never our desire to exalt man too highly - it is our desire to enable faithful brethren of the past to teach, again and again, even long after they have departed from this earthly existence.

As long as I live, I will treasure the various opportunities of hearing, being associated with our esteemed brother *Andrew Connally*. As the apostle Paul encouraged long ago, "*Be ye followers of me, as I follow Christ*" (1 Cor. 11:1). Without doubt, that would be the sentiments of brother Andrew.

To God be the glory for all we are privileged to do as servants of the Master

~ Paul Sain

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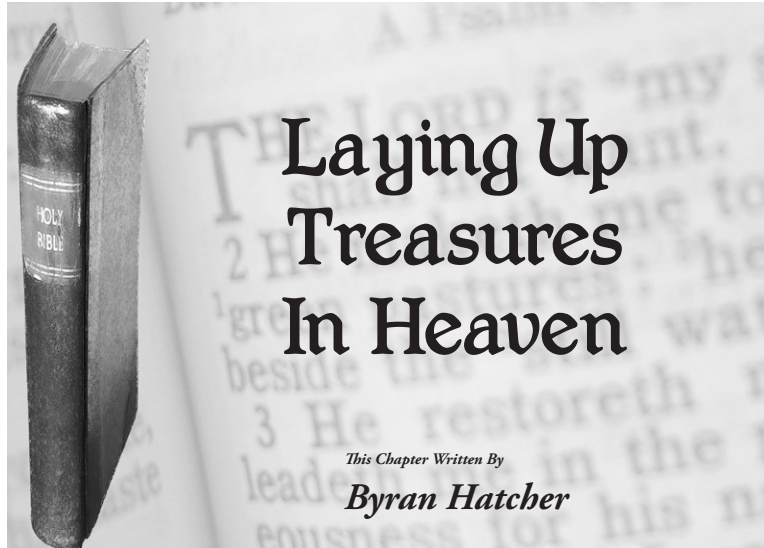
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**Laying Up
Treasures
In Heaven**



What an honor it is to be a part of the wonderful legacy that is the “*Truth in Love*” annual lectureship. Our prayer is that the God of Heaven, our eternal Father, bless the East Hill elders, deacons, her faithful members, and her diligent servants as they spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. This preacher is humbled to be asked to take part in such a noble event brother Sain began several years ago, as he glances up at his row of gold-lettered, burgundy-covered volumes produced by this program. A treasure indeed!

In the 1964 Disney film, “*Mary Poppins*,” there is a scene in which the father takes his son to the bank and encourages him to save his money. That scene has left an indelible impression, no doubt, upon many children and doubtless many adults. If one desires to have something later in life, then it must be planned for early in life. How fascinating that even the world

knows about the concept of saving and investing for a time later in life.

This is not only true in the area of finance and planning for future events such as weddings, children, college, retirement, etc., but this is a very Biblical and spiritual concept as well. The Master Teacher employs the physical, natural phenomena of saving to point out the greater truth of spiritual saving.

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 (Matt. 6:19-20).

Couched within the expected attitudes and actions of His followers that has been called the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), Jesus plants this idea of spiritual wealth, a savings plan unmatched in the mortal realm. He follows this idea with its true origin in verse 21, *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* This was a departure from what the people usually witnessed in the religious leaders of their day. They saw those leaders disheveled from *“fasting,”* witnessed their wild antics during prayers and proclamations, and heard their boasts of great amounts given to the Lord and benevolent activity. Rarely, if ever, was the common person exhorted to do good things out of love for God.

Those leaders were using a spiritual credit card. It was the *“play now, pay later”* mentality. The Lord said:

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward (Matt. 6:5).

Those leaders received the instant gratification they desired, but they chose to be admired by the wrong institution. Their savings institution (their fellow man) could not adequately compensate them for their efforts.

God's way is wiser. It is the "*save some now, enjoy more later*" plan. When this savings plan is followed, the savings institution has every ability to compensate the investor because the institution is the God of Heaven and Earth, the Creator of all things.

What did Jesus mean when He commanded that His followers lay up treasure in Heaven?

Lay Up

In years gone by, people did a lot of canning of fruits and vegetables. Summer evenings would be spent on the front porch "*snapping beans*," or shelling purple-hull peas. The vegetables would then be pressure cooked, or some other method of preparation, and put in jars and sealed. Some stored their canned vegetables in a cellar; some used their basements or a secondary pantry. When the need arose, those vegetables were available to eat.

This is the very idea behind the Lord's admonition to "*lay up*." It is to store something for future use. The ant is the prototype of saving for tomorrow.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways,
and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer,
or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and
gathereth her food in the harvest (Prov. 6:6-8).

The ant, by instinct, stores up food for the time when food will no longer be available.

The implication here is hard work. There is no theft or dishonest gain in laying up. There are no loopholes, no cheating the system. Working, by means of faithful obedience, is required by God. This has ALWAYS been the case (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17) This work is the desire to reach out and grasp the grace extended by Jesus Christ.

For Yourself

Jesus often spoke to the masses. He would speak from mountainsides to lakeshores in order to be heard by the greatest number possible. While in the flesh, Jesus was limited to being in one place at one time. His addressing the masses was made necessary because of the brevity of His physical, earthly ministry. Every moment, then, was of the utmost importance to the Lord. He was wise in spending His time. It is remarkable then some of the most powerful and significant events of His earthly sojourn occurred in the presence of only a few.

Matthew records a time when Jesus brought Peter, James, and John apart from all others and was transfigured before them. God the Father declared His love for the Son and Jesus' authority (Matt. 17:1-5). In a very intimate setting, Jesus applauded Mary for

her priorities while upbraiding Martha for misplacing hers (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus, never desiring to acquire earthly power and prestige, met with an influential man of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, in the quiet hours of the night to discuss baptism as admission into the Kingdom (John 3:1-21).

Christianity is first developed on an individual level, and then the saved one is added to the collective (Acts 2:47). Yet even though the Christian is part of the church (the called out ones), there always remains individual responsibility. James wrote,

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

James 1:19-27 is a study in the Holy Spirit addressing the church universal while maintaining an individual emphasis. In verse 22 James makes it clear that all Christians are to be doers of the word and not hearers only, but then, by way of an illustration beginning in verse 23, he brings the message from an “*all of you*” group reference to a “*you sitting right there*” individual message with “*like unto a man.*”

On the day of judgment all of humanity will be present. Those that are in Paradise will be there, those that are in Torment will be there, and those that are still living will join them (1 Thes. 4:16-17). But consider how we will be judged.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things

done in his body, according to that he hath done,
whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

This should press upon the devout the importance of working for the Lord on an individual level. It will not matter, in the end, what the congregation of the Lord's people did or did not do. There will not be one person in the Heavenly Realm that failed to obey the Lord in all things. The impenitent sluggard in the Kingdom will never see the rainbow glow of a pearl or one glistening corner of a gold paver in that Great City.

Treasure

What young person, having read the novel "*Treasure Island*" by Robert Louis Stevenson, or watched an adaptation of the book in a movie, has not dreamt of finding a treasure map where "X" marks the spot. The treasure is the impetus of setting out on an adventure that includes weariness, pain, and risking life and limb. No one risks his life for a cheap plastic toy made in China. No one spends his life over such. Treasure is, according to Merriam-Webster dictionary, "*a. wealth (as money, jewels, or precious metals) stored up or hoarded [buried treasure] b. wealth of any kind or in any form : riches.*" Treasure, then, is a great amount of valuable material stored up in a certain place.

The God of Heaven and Earth is not concerned with physical treasure. "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal*" (Matt. 6:19). This treasure is temporary and fragile at best. Bank

accounts, real estate, investments, production and sales capabilities, etc. are of no consequence to God. He is, however, keenly interested in the spiritual realm.

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but
for that meat which endureth unto everlasting
life, which the Son of man shall give unto you:
for him hath God the Father sealed (John 6:27).

A decision must be made concerning this treasure. The individual must ask, "*What is more valuable to me, the things of this world or the things in the world to come?*" This question is answered every day by one's decisions. When one decides to forsake the assembly of God's people in order to make money or enjoy a hobby, then one has stored up treasure on earth. All money earned and the things that money buys will be corrupted and vanish one day. But when one decides to give to the Lord that which has been earned, or help those that are helpless, a storehouse that is beyond the reach of humanity, death, and corruption will be generously endowed.

In Heaven

Citizens of the United States of America enjoy the greatest degree of comfort and security by any people in human history. Certainly God has blessed America and clothed her with prosperity unimaginable. This unprecedented level of luxury has come at a severe price. The people do not thank God for His provision and sustaining of life. There is little regard for things sacred and holy. Every perversion and abomination is now open and celebrated to the extent that if one

were to mention the untowardness of such activities they become a societal pariah, an “*extremist*,” a bigot. American society is so saturated by homosexuality, the right to choose, adultery, fornication of every kind, drunkenness, gluttony, entitlement (laziness), and vulgar entertainment, it is getting difficult to find those that are seeking God, much less rely upon Him.

The hope of man will not be found at the bottom of the ocean, or the bottom of a bottle. It will not be found in money or the things money can buy. The hope of man will not be found in some scientific breakthrough or any other human achievement. The only hope for man is Jesus the Christ (John 1:4-5). Jesus is not on the earth. He is in Heaven awaiting the time when the Father sends Him back to judge all men (Acts 2:33; Rom. 8:34; 1 Peter 3:22).

The Apostle Paul knew where his treasure was going. He exhorted Timothy,

For the which cause I also suffer these things:
nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom
I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able
to keep that which I have committed unto him
against that day (2 Tim. 1:12).

Paul believed in God and His promises to him. He was convinced that his life’s work in the Lord was not going to be in vain. He wrote the same thing to the church in Corinth.

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 (1 Cor. 15:58).

Their work in the Lord, their treasure, was going to a bank eternal where there is no concern of interest rate, global stability, identity thieves, or computer hackers.

The Currency

Man understands the concept of currency. It is an exchange of something of value for something else of equal value. Early in history people bartered with goods produced from farming. The more varied items became the more necessary it was that a single item represent value. Some early currencies used by the ancients were shells, salt, horns, trade beads, and bracelets. Then money, specifically coins, came into prominence. Early coins were made from clay, wood, and precious metals. Those coins had markings to denote their worth or function. Some had animals others farm symbols. As Empires began to rise, coins were stamped with the likeness of the king. This practice prompted Jesus to say,

Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's (Luke 20:24-25).

Jesus' teaching is clear, hard currency belongs to this world and its masters, but there is another currency that belongs to The Master.

The currency in the spiritual realm is deeds done from the heart. Paul gave this definition while dealing with a misunderstanding of spiritual gifts.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become

as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Good deeds are wonderful, but if not accompanied by the heart, they are meaningless currency. Those things might as well not have been done. Much like the person that shows up to worship God on occasion thinking they just have to “*punch the clock*.” They might as well have stayed at home for all the good it is going to do them.

Good deeds are not just actions but also the thoughts of man. Holding to false doctrine is just as condemning as theft, while preaching truth is just as good as visiting the sick. Paul exhorted Timothy,

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust (1 Tim. 1:8-11).

The two items of comparison in this passage are

false ways and sound doctrine. Just as righteous living stores up treasures in Heaven, riotous living stores up treasures in Hell. Right thinking stores up treasures in Heaven, and false thinking stores up treasures in Hell. God has never discerned between thinking and doing! That is a man-made art, and device of the devil. “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Prov. 23:7). Right thinking always leads to right actions; wrong thinking always leads to wrong actions.

The source of right thinking and action, the “*stamping of currency*” is faith. The child of God believes in the promises given and lives to satisfy the conditions of those promises. Grace is the teacher of what the currency consists.

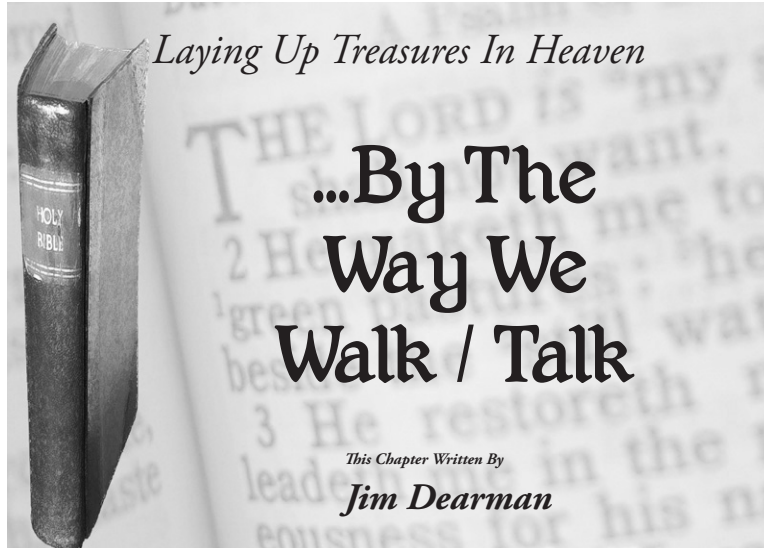
For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

Faith is man acting upon that teaching, hence the necessity of thinking right. In order to have the right faith, one must have a right understanding of God’s will. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*” (Rom. 10:17).

Conclusion

In the Disney film of “*Mary Poppins*” the father encouraged the son to “*save his tuppins.*” The Lord encourages (commands) that His followers save spiritual tuppins. This is accomplished every time a disciple studies His word, rightly divides the Word

of Truth, and then carries out that Word in order to lay hold of the grace extended by God (John 3:16). There is no saving by proxy. Each will appear before the Lord on what they have or have not saved (see the parable of the ten virgins, Matt. 25:1-13). One might ask, has enough been saved? That, friend, is the wrong question. Spiritual currency has nothing to do whatever with quantity; it has everything to do with the end result. The question then ought to be, Is God glorified because of my deed? *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 5:16).



There is a well-known expression: “*Don’t just talk the talk. Walk the walk!*” While the origin of that phrase is unknown to this writer, there is no doubt that it is in perfect harmony with Scripture and may have had its origin in Biblical teaching. It is also true to Scripture to affirm that our words and our walk here are part of the treasure we are laying up in the hereafter. There is another expression in harmony with Scripture: “*You can’t take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.*” The only treasures that will endure the ultimate and certain end of man’s existence on earth are the spiritual ones about which Jesus spoke. He said,

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, KJV).

In Matthew 13, there are seven parables about the kingdom—the church. One of them likens the kingdom of heaven to a treasure hidden in a field. The parable’s point is that, once one finds the most precious treasure, he must sacrifice all to possess it; he must then progress in the kingdom by adding priceless and permanent spiritual gems to his heavenly treasure chest. The deposits are recorded in an account that awaits him in the judgment. Jesus described this process in the Sermon on the Mount in the passage already cited. It is the purpose of this lesson to describe how one may lay up treasures in heaven by his talk and by his walk—or by his words and works. While the Bible emphasizes the importance of our words, the Scriptures stress that the talk without the walk has never pleased God.

***“Talk”* Passages**

The first of the so-called *“talk”* passages we consider is found in Deuteronomy 6:6-8. There Moses admonishes,

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.

This is a powerful passage which teaches that God's Word should permeate every home. Parents are to take advantage of every teaching opportunity to instill the love of God in their children's precious and pliable hearts. It is not sports or social talk, but spiritual talk that is to dominate and direct the discussions in our families, and the father is responsible for guiding the process.

We find a crucial "*talk*" passage in Ecclesiastes 5:2, where the preacher warns,

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

This admonition reminds us of the importance of weighing every word before uttering it, because God hears. An incident in Numbers 12 illustrates this point. When Miriam and Aaron spoke against their brother, Moses, God's appointed leader, the verse states, "... *and the Lord heard it.*" Those words should sober the thinking of every individual. The Lord hears our words. He not only hears, but He will judge us, in part, by those words. The next "*talk*" passage makes this very clear.

A most penetrating and powerful "*talk*" passage is recorded in Matthew 12:36-37, where Jesus warned,

But I say unto thee, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

In this text, Jesus says our words are noted in our heavenly account, and they will play a critical role in the judgment process. The context in which Jesus issued this sobering statement was a confrontation with the Pharisees, in which they accused Jesus of healing by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons (Matt. 12:24). The Lord countered their blasphemous charge with a condemnation that exposed their hypocrisy and left us with a lesson on the need for consistency that we must not ignore.

Jesus said, *“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things”* (Matt. 12:35). What do our words reveal about our hearts? Jesus said, *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”* (Matt. 12:34). Depending upon the nature of the heart, one deposits either treasure or trash in his heavenly account. Our deposits will either commend or condemn us in the hereafter.

“Walk” Passages

Matthew 7:21-23 is a transitional text to introduce the second part of this study in which we examine several *“walk”* passages. Jesus said,

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. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

A succinct summary of the Lord's teaching here would be: "*Practice what you preach! Don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk!*"

While many texts throughout the New Testament reinforce this principle, the epistle to the Ephesians contains seven "*walk*" passages that well illustrate the importance of walking in this world so as to lay up treasures in the next.

The first of the seven walk passages is Ephesians 2:1-2, where Paul reminds his readers:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

This is a reminder of the wonderful transformation that has occurred in the life of every Christian. Before being made alive in Christ, every soul is among the "*walking dead*." Then, the obedient believer becomes alive spiritually and is admonished to walk in harmony with his new life in Christ, a walk Paul specifies in the remaining six "*walk*" passages.

In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul writes,

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

This is one of the most powerful statements in the New

Testament about the essentiality of works in God's plan of salvation. It is amazing that so many "*work*" so hard to eliminate "*work*" from the Scriptures, when, in fact, the New Testament affirms that Christianity is a life of works from beginning to end.

Paul's phrase "*created in Christ Jesus*" is an obvious reference to one's conversion, or the beginning of the Christian walk. Paul then reveals the purpose of that spiritual creation—it is to perform good works which God has prepared and prescribed in His Word. Those good works which glorify God are to continue throughout one's lifelong walk, and they follow the faithful into the grave. John's inspired words confirm this truth:

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them (Rev. 14:13).

Thus, according to Scripture, the Christian life is a continual walk of works from beginning to end.

Our next "*walk*" passage is a reminder of how the walk with the Lord begins. Paul writes, "*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*" (Eph. 4:1). We are called by the gospel to begin the walk with the Lord. Paul, in another of his epistles, made this clear when he wrote,

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved to the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and

belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thes. 2:13-14).

We live in a time when there is a clamor for the charismatic, and testifying trumps the truth revealed in the New Testament. Tragic, indeed, is the failure to realize the all-sufficiency of the written Word and its power to direct every step of our walk with the Lord. While many contend for the Word plus the direct operation of the Spirit, the Lord's people must continue to contend for the Word—period.

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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The next “*walk*” passage in Ephesians 4:17 is a prohibition that goes to the very heart of the greatest problem facing God's people today—worldliness. In Ephesians 4:17, Paul warns, “*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.*” This text, and many others, make clear that crucifying the world is essential to the Christian's successful walk with the Lord. The observation that there is too much of the world in the church and not enough of the church in the world is especially true in our time. It can be observed in every aspect of the lives of many professed followers of Christ, from doctrine to dress.

This mingling with the world occurs despite multiple warnings against such throughout the New Testament. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount,

Jesus paints a very clear contrast between the attitudes and actions of His disciples and those of the world. He states,

No one 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).

He follows that statement with an admonition about anxiety which concluded with these words:

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink?, or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. 6:31-34).

Throughout His earthly walk, Jesus warned His disciples not to walk according to the world around them, but to deny self and to devote themselves fully to the Savior. In Luke 9:23, *“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”* A few chapters later, Luke records these words about commitment from the Lord:

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26).

Then, in verse 33, Jesus summarizes, “*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*”

Near the end of His walk on earth, in what is truly the Lord’s prayer in John 17, Jesus expressed His concern for His apostles. Verses 6-19 record the portion of the prayer specifically dedicated to the apostles whom Jesus would soon leave to return to His Father. In John 17:6, Jesus reveals the relationship to the world that all Christians should maintain. He prayed,

I have manifested thy name unto the men which
thou gavest me out of the world: thine they
were, and thou gavest them me; and they have
kept thy word.

The phrase, “*thou gavest me out of the world*” describes the complete break the follower of Christ must make with worldly concerns. Then, in verse 15, Jesus makes this petition to the Father: “*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*” This expresses what must be the prayer of all believers for all time: “*Do not take us out of the world, but take the world out of us!*”

The next “*walking*” passage in Ephesians expresses the essentiality of manifesting love in all that we do. Love is the characteristic that must motivate and permeate every life. Yet, many fail to develop the Biblical love that should motivate them to keep the commandments of God. In fact, many define love as a quality that excuses rather than rebukes sin. However, the Bible is clear in its teaching on the kind of love

which pleases God and in which the Christian is to walk. The verse under consideration here gives insight into this love. It is a sacrificial love shown in the love of the Savior—a love that will pay the ultimate price for Him who paid all for us.

Jesus described this love in John 13:34-35:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

This passage does not teach that love itself is new, but the newness is seen in the degree to which the disciple is called upon to exhibit love. Jesus said it is *“as I have loved you.”* We learn from Scripture the degree to which Christ loved all mankind; and, in turn, we should be motivated to love from hearts filled with gratitude. John summarized it beautifully in 1 John 4:19: *“We love Him because He first loved us.”*

Peter also calls attention to the suffering Savior and the need to follow His example in 1 Peter 2:21: *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps.”* It is love that should motivate the Christian to suffer and to die, if necessary, for the cause of Christ. Paul poignantly portrayed the suffering Savior in his admonition to the Philippian brethren:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 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. 2:5-8).

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, the same writer gives the supreme summary of the love the Christian should manifest:

For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

It is not fear or duty that supremely motivates the Christian to undying service in the kingdom of God; it is love.

As we continue to “walk” through the Ephesian epistle, we come to Ephesians 5:8, where Paul reminds his readers: “*For you were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.*” What a contrast there is between darkness and light! This is the figure the inspired apostle Paul chooses to describe the transformation that occurs in the life of the obedient believer. The new creature in Christ is here depicted as “*light in the Lord,*” a phrase that reminds us the only place where light is found is in Christ. Unless one is in the Lord, he is in the only other kingdom on earth, the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness. He is without hope, as Paul’s Ephesian brethren had once been.

When Jesus walked among men He described Himself as the light of the world. He adds this promise: “*He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have*

the light of life.” Christians are to reflect the light of the world in their daily walk. Jesus also declares:

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:14-16).

The only light this world has, and all it needs, is the gospel light. The Word of God is the all-sufficient lamp to guide our footsteps on the path from earth to heaven. Christians are to reflect the light of the gospel so that others may see the light, come to the light, and thereafter walk in the light. The Lord’s words in Matthew 5:16 remind us that influence is both powerful and personal. The Christian must take very seriously this power and use it productively to lead others into the light.

The final “*walking*” passage in Ephesians reminds the reader of the need for watchfulness as he walks. “*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Eph. 5:15-16). To walk circumspectly is to maintain one’s awareness of the dangers confronting the Christian on every side. The devil is a formidable foe who is determined to distract, and to ultimately destroy, every soul. Peter warns, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8).

Paul expresses deep concern for his Corinthian converts when he writes,

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

Paul's words remind us that Satan's assaults are not always frontal attacks. In fact, Paul goes on to describe what could be termed Satan's greatest weapon as he addresses the false teachers who were threatening the church at Corinth:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

False religion produces in its adherents a false peace. This pseudo security is a tremendous barrier to truth, and Satan knows this very well and uses it most effectively.

In Ephesians 5:15, Paul warns the Christian to watch out for the wiles of the devil; and, in the following verse, he tells the disciple to "*Watch your watch!*"—that is, one is to redeem the time. Literally, to buy up the opportunity is the idea—to recognize the fleeting nature of our time here on earth and to look for and take advantage of every opportunity to do good. Even the longest life here is but a drop in a bucket compared to the eternity that lies beyond. This thought brings us back to the importance of laying up treasures in the only realm where they will endure—the heavenly realm.

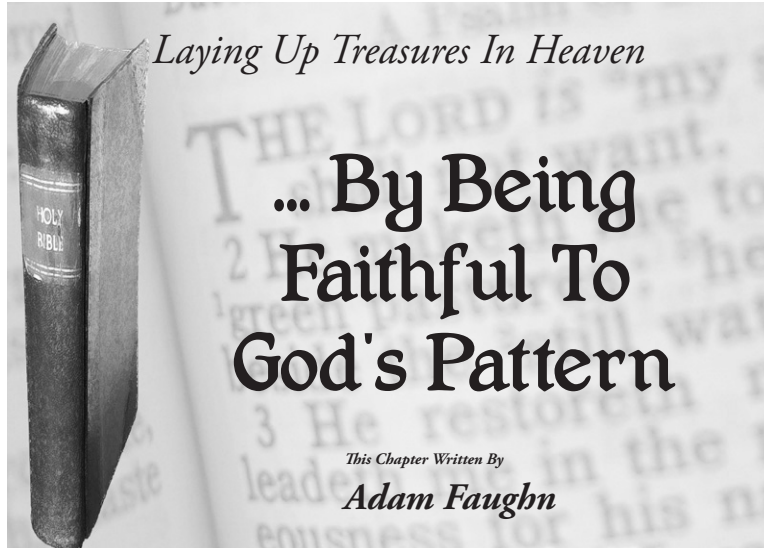
Conclusion

In 1 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul assured his son in the gospel,

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Paul does not deny the value of physical exercise but limits it to the here and now.

Walking a considerable distance seven days each week will certainly benefit the body. However, walking seven days each week with the seven passages we have examined in Ephesians will benefit the soul for eternity.



The “*tutor*,” the Old Testament, brings us to something better, which is the way of Christ (Gal. 3:24). Though we are not under that Old Law (cf. Heb. 10:9), Paul taught us that there is still much to gain from it.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4, KJV).

Those words, and much practical experience, show us the great value of studying the Old Testament.

It is in the Old Testament, then, that we come across a very important principle, one that has been used as the springboard for countless sermons throughout the years. The prophet Jeremiah told the people of his day,

Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good

way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein (Jer. 6:16).

With that great admonition in view, though, the Lord said the people of Jeremiah's day were saying, "*We will not walk in it.*" What a sad commentary on the people! They had a direct message through the Lord's prophet. Through His grace, God directed them to the instruction of ways that were old, settled, and proven. Yet, the people would not listen, nor walk in those ways. They chose, rather, to go their own way.

Is it any different for us today? We may live in a very different era in terms of technological advancement, and we may have all the information of the world at our fingertips, but people are still people. As Solomon reminded us, "*There is no new thing under the sun*" (Eccl. 1:9-10). We may have new gadgets, but we do not have different inclinations than the ancient people of Jeremiah's day.

The assignment before us is to see how we can lay up treasures in heaven by remaining faithful to God's pattern, or the old paths. If we were to consider this assignment, we might think of it this way: how can we properly look forward without looking back and learning from the past?

Yet, just as those in Jeremiah's day refused to walk in the ancient paths, we are surrounded by people who refuse to look back to ancient times for the ways to direct their steps. Never mind that the ways of God—ancient though they may be—are settled and proven. We want our own way, no matter how shaky or unwise.

Knowing that, though, should cause us to remember that people have always been this way.

How, then, can we choose to be different? How can we choose to hold to the ancient paths as a way to lay up our treasure in heaven?

In reality, it boils down to a single word: faith. While that may seem like an overly simplified answer, and one that is to be expected, in reality it is the only answer. The Hebrews writer gives us the great inspired description of faith: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (11:1). However, in the verses that follow, the writer skillfully reminds his readers of many faithful people who did remarkable things through their faith.

But why would they do that? In one instance in the chapter, we are given an answer:

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: where God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:13-16).

The writer does not say that these faithful people remained true to God because everything in their life was easy. Instead, they remained faithful because they

trusted that something greater was to be their reward. And, as verse 1 of the chapter had already reminded the readers, that trust (faith) is built upon “*substance*” and “*evidence*.” There is evidence for it.

The faithful men and women listed in Hebrews 11 were regularly tempted, and part of their temptation would have been to simply go with the flow of the world; to take the easy path of following cultural trends, which are seemingly always against the ways of God.

Noah, as one example listed in this chapter, lived in a time when it was said that “*the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gen. 6:5). It is a grand understatement to say that Noah faced anti-God pressure. How could he walk faithfully when seemingly everyone around him was evil? He trusted in the ways and promises of God.

Paul, in his time, had to face much of the same pressures as those we face today. As he came to Athens, he prepared himself to speak to a very knowledgeable group. While they were religiously in error, that did not take away from their intelligence. They simply had not been presented the full truth of Christ yet.

But the Bible gives us an interesting description of these people that sounds a great deal like what we face in our world today. “*For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new things*” (Acts 17:21). This is not to say they failed to be devoted to their deities, whose statues virtually lined the streets (v.

23). Instead, they wanted to have their religion, while always mixing something new, modern, and fresh in it.

Wisely, Paul stated that the people were “*too superstitious*” (v. 22), but he would not allow their error to stand; thus, he preached to them about the one true God.

But it is the mindset of the people that causes us to look at our world today and notice some similarities. We are living in times when many of our brothers and sisters want to have religion both ways. They want parts of the “*old time religion,*” but not too much. After all, it does not jive with culture, so we need to mix it with new ways, even if that means avoiding or changing certain teachings of Scripture. In at least some ways, is that not the mindset we see in these people in ancient Athens?

There is a sense in which each congregation of the Lord’s church needs to move with the times. Do any of us really want to go back to the days before electricity, air conditioning, or even parking lots? A congregation is wise that uses modern tools of technology to invite the local community and teach the world. Websites, podcasts, and other marvels of modern technology have opened avenues for God’s people that we never could have dreamed of in generations gone by. These, and similar areas, are good changes and should be embraced as ways to use the modern world’s ways to teach the old paths.

But therein lies the distinction. All of these things are ways to promote reaching the lost while still teaching them the same message that was taught in the

First Century. The methods may change, but we dare not change the message.

Sadly, many do. They believe that the church has the right to change anything—including the message—in order to remain relevant with the culture, or “*on the right side of history*.” Twists of context and tinges at the heart are used to “*prove*” that the new ways are what God would have us do in 21st Century America (and elsewhere). For the most part, I do not doubt the sincerity of those who are doing these things. I think they legitimately want to reach the lost, but in their headlong rush to do so, they have turned God’s unalterable manual into a cut-and-paste document.

“*The younger generation does not connect with old hymns*,” they say. To a point, they may be right. Many of our hymns do contain language that is out-dated and at times may be downright confusing. Should we add some new songs, provided they teach a Scriptural message? Surely. After all, even “*Amazing Grace*” was a new song at some point! But does that, then, give us license to also add instruments, choirs, praise teams, or other musical innovations? Of course not. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are still in the New Testament and are still binding on us as we worship Jehovah. We should remember the old paths, while looking forward.

“*Women are just as talented as men*,” we are told. I do not doubt that for a moment! I know plenty of women who outshine me in nearly every area of life. I am thankful for women who have helped me and guided me through many areas of life, including my spiritual walk. Should we have ways for women to serve

the Lord in His Kingdom? Absolutely. But, does that give us license to allow women to preach publicly or serve as elders? No. The New Testament is clear about the talent of women, but also that God has chosen in His sovereign will to put men as the spiritual leaders of both the home and the congregation. We cannot get past that and remain true to the old paths.

There are many other areas that could be discussed (the plan of salvation, participation in the Lord's Supper, etc.), but these will suffice. We know the struggles. What are the solutions?

First, we must remain true to Scripture. Jesus stated that His words, not our modern culture, is what will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). We are reminded to never go beyond the teaching of Scripture that has been written for us, or else we "*may be puffed up*" (1 Cor. 4:6). For a congregation to be what God would have it to be, we can never move away from the authority of the Bible and its centrality in all that we do.

Second, we must always examine what we do in light of Scripture. We sometimes get upset when we read of a congregation moving away from the old paths after a long, involved "*study*" by the elders or the preacher. We assume they have entered that study with preconceived notions that they are going to change, and are simply looking for a way to justify it. However, there is something to be said for always examining what we do in light of Scripture, instead of just doing it "*because we've always done it.*" They may be the old paths, but we must make sure that, over time, we do

not slowly drift from that path. Constant evaluation is needed, but always in light of Scripture, not our own ideas, wants, or preconceived notions.

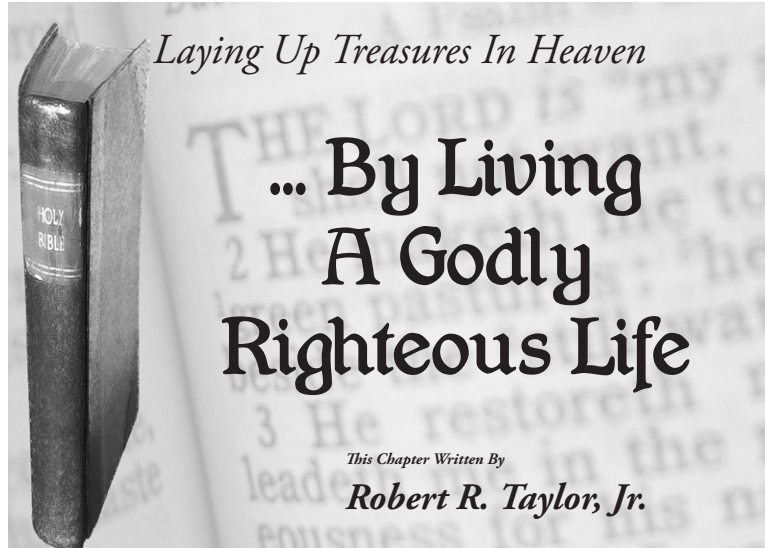
Third, we must look for ways to be relevant without compromising Scripture. If the Bible has not spoken to a matter, or has clearly left it in the realm of expediency, the congregation is wise that chooses the way of relevance. While the message must never be compromised or changed, the ways in which it is presented need to be fresh and relevant. Remember, even tools like flannelgraphs were new and innovative at one time, but they still taught children the simple messages of Scripture. Today, we do the same with projector screens and iPads, but we are still teaching the same message, which we are never at liberty to alter.

Fourth, we must follow the Bible in both practice and attitude. If we are not careful, we can become too proud of holding to the old paths, and we can fail to remember to be compassionate and loving toward those who have left those paths. While we should never compromise truth, and we should boldly expose error, those who are say “*we will not walk in them*” still have souls in need of a Savior. If we get the letter of the law right, but the attitude wrong, we will never win them back. Remember that Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that “*justice, mercy, and faith*” were the “*weightier matters of the law*” (Matt. 23:23).

What Christians are commanded to do by the Lord Himself is to “*make disciples*” (Matt. 28:18-20).

A major component of that is teaching, but teaching “*all*” that the Lord gave us to share. Simply put, the message must not be changed, but it also cannot be taken away from. May we always stand for all that the Lord has given us to teach and help people see that the ways of God, while “*ancient words*” are also “*ever true.*”

...BY BEING FAITHFUL TO GOD'S PATTERN



It continues to be a deep delight and high honor annually to appear on this good, great and grand lectureship and to pen a chapter for the always valuable volume. Without any annual exception Paul continues to put together in masterful fashion an exceptionally fine and profitable lectureship. My thanks to him, the elders and this precious congregation of God's noble saints for the current invitation to participate. Mid-May is almost always a beautiful time of the year in picturesque Pulaski, Tennessee.

The opening four books of the New Testament supply sufficiency of evidence to prove Jesus is Messiah, the only begotten Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Acts tells us what to do to be saved. The twenty-one epistles from Romans through Jude detail in delight the exciting HOW to live the Christian life. Revelation, with its 22 chapters and 404 verses, exhorts us to overcome here that we may come over

and live with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, obedient angels, all babies and little children who died prior to reaching accountability and the redeemed of all three dispensations.

In this lesson I will trace for all of the three intense imperatives of living righteously and godly in heart, in language and in deed or life. Paul sums it up majestically and magnificently by writing:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world... (Titus 2:11-12).

To live soberly is to live right with self. To live righteously is to live right with others. To live godly is to live right before God. Here we have inward living, outward living and upward living. My assignment touches two of these three—righteousness and godliness.

Living Righteously And Godly In Heart

Heart, here, does not refer to the blood pump in the chest region of our body but to the inner man, the mind. Four entities compose the Bible heart. There is the **intellect**. With the intellect we think, reason, come to conclusions, etc. Isaiah stated in 1:18, “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord...*”. There is **will power**. With that we determine on a certain course to peruse. The penitent prodigal in that Pearl of the Parables employed his will power when he determined to return to the family and home he earlier

had abandoned. He said to himself, *“I will arise and go to my father...”* (Luke 15:18). There is **emotion**. With the heart we love, trust and seek to honor our Heavenly Maker. Then there is the **conscience**. We can have a hardened conscience, one seared over by long indulgence in sin or we may have a pure conscience, a sensitive conscience, a good conscience, etc. The conscience, unless hardened by sin, approves when we do what is right and probes us with pain or discomfort when we do the wrong. Paul addresses this concept of the conscience in Romans 2:15.

You and I are not what we think we are; we are what we think! The thoughts and intents of the heart are discussed in both testaments.

Moses taught Israel to *“love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”* (Deut. 6:5). Jesus taught the same in Matthew 22:37-38. The brilliant penman of Psalm 119:10-11 wrote,

With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wonder from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

In a duet of declarations wise Solomon wrote: *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life...For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he ...”* (Prov. 4:23; 23:7). People under patriarchy and Mosaic mandates could not live righteously and godly unless their hearts were righteous and godly. This was the difference between Noah and his peers and between Moses, Samuel and Jeremiah and Ahab and Ahaz.

The former were righteous and godly; the latter were unrighteous and ungodly.

Much emphasis is given in the New Testament relative to man's heart. In one of the bright and beautiful beatitudes, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God*" (Matt. 5:8). Language and life flow forth from the heart. In Matthew 12:34-35 Jesus said to His enemies:

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

Jesus taught in Matthew 15:18-20 that evil originates in the heart and defiles the man. In Matthew 9:4 Jesus asked of His enemies, "*Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*" (Matt. 9:4).

In a very comprehensive passage Paul wrote:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).

Earlier in this precious Philippian missive Paul implored his beloved Macedonian brethren, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 2:5). Christ's mind was the mind of humility, the mind of obedience, the mind of reverence, the mind of respect and the mind of selflessness.

The mind is the mainspring of both language and life. Therefore, it is imperative that we fill it with the pure, the good, the upright, sobriety, righteousness, godliness, kindness, helpfulness and humility.

Living Righteously And Godly In Language

The Bible is a WORD revelation; it is not filled with fallible feelings, uncertain urges or unreliable hunches. There are about 773,000 words in this Holy Book. In regard to his own word inspiration, David declared in 2 Samuel 23:2, *“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his WORD was in my tongue.”* Paul penned a similar sentiment about his own inspiration by noting in 1 Corinthians 2:13,

Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

The ASV has, *“...combining spiritual things with spiritual words.”* It is true that **words** here is in italics but the scholarly translators deemed necessary to add the term **words**. They are right in so doing.

One of the greatest blessings the Creator conferred upon man was language or words with which to communicate with Him and others as well. We can use wholesome words or words filled and even overflowing with evil and iniquity. In the excellencies of Eden Adam and Eve fell by listening to and obeying lying words from Satan through serpentine agency. As per a statement from Jesus in John 8:44 Satan is the father of liars. It is his persistent character so to do.

The historically important Ten Commandments were composed of words and could be broken with cursing and swearing. Number Three was, “*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*” (Exod. 20:16). All ten are linked with words as well as with attitudes and action.

The Ideal Citizen of Zion in Psalm 15 will not backbite with his tongue (15:3). In that precious and majestic Psalm 19, David entreated the Lord that his words and heart meditations might “*be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer*” (19:14).

In Matthew 12:36-37 Jesus says:

That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

But back to Solomon the Sage, who stated, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue...*” (Prov. 18:21). The worthy woman in Proverbs “*openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness*” (Prov. 31:26).

Blasphemy, which is speaking against, of the Holy Spirit is tongue linked. Mark wrote in Mark 3:30, “*Because they SAID, He hath an unclean spirit.*” They hated God’s Immaculate Son in heart and it spued out in the language of venom.

Gracious words proceeded out of Christ’s mouth while in a synagogue appearance in Nazareth in Luke 4:22. Yet, very soon His auditors changed their minds and sought to kill Him, not liking what He said (Luke 4:28-29).

Peter and the eleven knew that He had the Words of eternal life (John 6:68). Officers sent to apprehend Him returned minus Him. When asked them why they responded, “*Never man spake like this man*” (John 7:46).

There were seven sayings of Jesus on Calvary. Some speak of these sayings as the “*seven Words.*” Matthew and Mark record one. Luke records three. John records four.

Mighty and majestic were the worthy, wonderful Words composing the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47 and John 20:22-23.

With words filled with power and pathos gospel proclaimers took the mighty and marvelous message of redemption to the four corners of the earth in the first century as we learn from Romans 10:18 and Colossians 1:23.

These foregoing passages should provide eloquent examples for all of us to avoid sinful words and fill our mouths with wholesome words, righteous words and godly words.

To his Ephesian readers Paul wrote,

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Eph. 4:29).

Two verses later he commanded that “*evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice*” (Eph. 4:31). Kindness, tenderhearted attitudes and actions and a forgiving spirit are required of saints in Ephesians

4:32. These all are linked with language.

In a precious Colossian passage Paul inculcated, “*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man*” (Col. 4:6).

Words can be used to comfort those in sorrow (1 Thes. 4:18). To those in sadness or sorrow a visit with a sympathetic sentiment expressed can be so helpful, so much needed.

The heaven-sent message of redemption should be clothed in “*sound-speech*” as per Titus 2:8.

James 3 is filled with carefully stated language about the tongue in unholy expressions and tongues using language adorning the religion that is pure and undefiled.

Living righteously and godly is wrapped up wonderfully well in language befitting the good news of salvation.

Righteous And Godly In Life

Righteousness is right-doing. Preceding it are right thoughts and proper intents. Godliness means patterning our lives after God and Jesus Christ. Jesus has left us exemplary steps to follow (1 Peter 2:21).

In Matthew 22:37-38 Jesus gave the two greatest commandments of the law. They are: (1) Love God supremely. (2) Love neighbor as self. Number three is set forth in John 13:34-35 that we love our brethren as Christ has loved us. All three of these pave a sure path toward living righteously and godly in this present world.

We begin to walk the route of righteousness and put on the garments of godliness when we obey the gospel by hearing, faith, repentance, confession of the Christ and immersion in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Heb. 11:6; Acts 17:30; Acts 8:37; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21 and Matt. 28:19). Then we are added to the body of the saved, the church, with comrades of conviction, our esteemed companions and fellow-helpers.

Persistent practice of the Golden Rule helps insure a life of right doing to others. Righteous and godly lives flow forth from possessing the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 and the ardent addition of the seven Christian graces to foundational faith (2 Peter 1:5-11).

Righteous and godly lives will reflect as we practice the four imperative W's. They are: (1) Work; (2) Worship; (3) Watchfulness and (4) patient Waiting for the Lord's return. We work God's plan for our lives (1 Cor. 15:58). We worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). We watch and are vigilant as Peter taught in 1 Peter 5:8 and as Paul encouraged the Ephesian elders to do in Acts 20:31. We wait as Christ taught His people in Luke 12:36.

Living righteously and godly means that we build and maintain Christian homes. It means faithfulness to marital vows. It means rearing children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). It means to set proper examples before them and impart diligently necessary truth.

Living righteously and godly means to be faithful and honest in the workplace. It means we do not curse as some, far too many do, on the job. It means to do a day's labor for a day's wages. It means that we do not consume alcoholic beverages to be sociable at company gatherings. It means no shady stories will fall from our lips even when others do at breaktime or at the water cooler. It means we NEVER take home a tool or anything belonging to the company and of which we have no right of ownership.

Living righteously and godly means we seek to win others to the saving Christ. We can invite neighbors and acquaintances to our services and set up Bible studies if they are willing. By living far above worldly standards we may create a desire on their part to inquire into what makes us different, spiritual and optimistic.

Living righteously and godly is a wonderfully fine way to prepare for death and the beyond. In one of his better moments Balaam requested, *"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his"* (Num. 23:10). Sadly, he did not live up to this and died as one opposing God and God's people (Num. 31:8).

Powerful Examples For Our Imitation

Enoch was righteous and godly and God translated him at age 365; Elijah was like-minded and he too was translated (Gen. 5; 2 Kings 2). Patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all died in the faith as per Hebrews 11. This meant they lived righteous and godly

lives. Jesus assures us in Matthew 8:11 that this trio will be in heaven. In the parallel passage, which is a bit more comprehensive, He said all the prophets would be there (Luke 13:28). Obviously, He is speaking of righteous prophets and not false ones. Righteous kings and righteous priests surely will be in heaven at last. The song of Moses will be sung there as we learn from Revelation 15:3.

John the Baptist, faithful prophets, righteous evangelists and those of pure minds will hear the approving Lord say, “*Come.*”

Those Not Heaven Bound

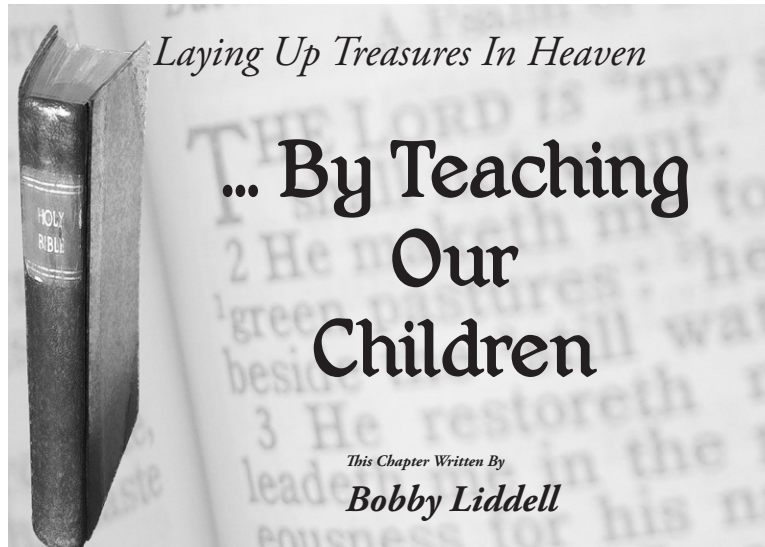
Atheists, agnostics and infidels are not piloting their souls toward heaven. Dying in immorality means this crowd will not hear Him say, “*Come.*” Apostates and lukewarm church members are not walking the way in heaven at last. Those who know not God and never obey the gospel are not heaven bound according to a Pauline statement in 2 Thessalonians 1:6ff. Comprehensive passages such as Revelation 21:8; Revelation 22:15; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5; Revelation 20:14-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 and Matthew 25:31-46 all describe in detail why this motley crowd will populate hell and not heaven. Revelation 21:27 adds further proof.

Conclusion

For an absolute certainty the righteous and godly in heart, language and life walk the narrow way leading to the Palace of the Universe. All the wicked and

disobedient are precluded from the land of fadeless day. Hence, there is great wisdom in listening to Paul as he warns about ungodliness and worldly lusts and urges us to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age (Titus 2:11-12).

In judgment and on into eternity we can rejoice forever more that we made the right choice to think righteously, speak correctly and live in godly fashion.



In this presentation, we shall work to show the importance of placing proper value and priority on teaching/training our children concerning that which is of eternal importance. Jesus, in the “*Sermon on the Mount*,” presented the choice each man must make, and will make, whether to serve God, or someone or something else. None can serve two “*gods*” at the same time (Matt. 6:24). As Jesus plainly taught, that which one treasures will determine his choice between the heavenly and the earthly, and whether he will be eternally blessed, or eternally condemned.

Man chooses what he treasures, and his treasure will have the foremost place in his heart, soul, and mind. What are treasures? That which one treasures is that which he loves, which he holds in highest regard, and puts in first place in his life because of the value he places upon it, whether in accordance with God-placed values, or in spite of them. Many

think of material wealth only, as the point of this passage. Truly, such treasure could be possessions of money, wealth, and financial gain of whatever sort; however, included in this context are the other earthly things one might treasure, in a wrong way, such as popularity, power, position, and pleasure. Surely, it is entirely correct that we should treasure our children, as blessings from God, and as precious souls, to which we must give proper direction. Thereby, we can help them to be prepared for eternity, joyfully laying up treasure in heaven!

From Matthew 6, let us turn our attention to an Old Testament passage from the book of Judges, and carefully consider the Context, the Challenge, and the Consequences of the question found in Judges 13:12 (KJV): *“How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?”* The NKJV has: *“What will be the boy’s rule of life, and his work?”* This inquiry concerns how parents (and those who have the wonderful opportunity of teaching children) should guide the child in accordance with the will of God. These parents were determined to do all they could to bend the twig, from which the tree would grow, in the right way. Therefore, they asked what course to follow in teaching and training their child for the work that God had set before him.

The Context Of The Question

The book of Judges has been called a *“book of failure.”* Judges’ reveals a dark time in Israel’s history, when God’s people faced gloom and despair, as they

reaped what they had sown, in turning from God and His ways. The saddest part is this: it was their own fault, and they could have done so much better. Those very people, their families, their innocent children, whom they should have loved the most, suffered as a result. The last verse of the book states the reason for their plight (Judg. 21:25).

Repeatedly, the book exposes the cycle of their folly, beginning with their apostasy, followed by God's allowing their enemies to oppress them, bringing about their repentance, and, after they cried out for help from the Father, God's sending of a deliverer. Again, and for the last time in the book, God's Word declares that the people did evil; thus, God allowed the Philistines to oppress them for forty years (Judg. 13:1). This was the seventh major oppression during the times of the judges. In response to their pleas, God sent His angel to Manoah's wife (Judg. 13:3, 18). The angel promised Manoah's barren wife she would bear a son, who would be a Nazarite from the womb, and who would deliver Israel from the Philistines.

The angel instructed the wife of Manoah concerning her conduct while bearing the child, in preparation for the child's future work in delivering Israel (Judg. 13:3-5). What a great blessing, bestowed by our loving, merciful God upon Mr. and Mrs. Manoah! No doubt, to be told by the angel of the Lord that Manoah's wife would conceive and bear a son, little Samson, was the best news they possibly could receive. Is there any wonder God revealed the

blessings children bring as, “*an heritage of the Lord,*” and as “*arrows in the hand of a mighty man*” (Psm. 127)? With what great wealth God has entrusted all those who have children!

The Challenge Of The Question

When Manoah learned of the promise, he asked that the angel would come again.

O my Lord, let the man of God which thou
didst send come again unto us, and teach us
what we shall do unto the child that shall be
born (Judg. 13:8).

When the angel appeared, Manoah asked, “*How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?*” (Judg. 13:12). Samson’s father realized what some parents today seem not to know—training children is primarily and ultimately the responsibility of parents (and, again, what tremendous opportunities Bible class teachers have to help in this effort).

The church, school, and others may help, and should, but they do not bear ultimate responsibility, as do parents. There must be instruction to order the child, so Manoah said, “*Teach us,*” and his question began with “*HOW.*” Parents need instruction—from someone who knows, and who knows better than God? Some have laughingly declared that they wished children came with an instruction manual, but this statement indicates two problems. First, it shows the almost universal ignorance of the fact that there is an instruction manual for rearing children—the Bible. Second, it also reveals the underlying problem

that most people do not read instruction manuals anyway—except as a last resort. If we want to know the “*how*,” we have to acquaint ourselves with the perfect prescription for parenting, the “*how to*” book for rearing children, the inspired Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3).

Before the child was born, the parents were making plans to be good parents, and to help their child to be a good child. Real “*planned parenthood*” requires proper priorities. Mr. and Mrs. Manoah were concerned about how to rear the child, as God would have them to do. They were not seeking advice on making Samson a successful businessman, grooming him for political office, preparing him for the best college, or insuring he would “*make a good living*.” They sought the Lord’s direction on training the child to be a faithful servant, productive in the work of the Lord. How the world and the church need parents (and Bible class teachers) with such correct priorities today!

There must be interest and intent to order the child; thus, Manoah asked, “*How shall WE order the child?*” He did not ask how somebody else should train the child, what the grandparents should do, or what government should do. He and his wife wanted to do their best in fulfilling their duty parenting the child, out of hearts filled with gratitude to the God Who blessed them. Some parents are so busy climbing the corporate ladder, chasing elusive pleasure, pushing their children to be worldly over-achievers (like themselves), and pursuing the fulfillment of worldly

lusts, they do not even ask the question Manoah asked. Neither do they care to hear the answer, especially if the answer is from God. Then, one day, comes the awful reality that the time has passed, and it is too late, to teach/train the child.

Manoah asked, “*How shall we ORDER the child?*” God had set apart Samson from the womb, to be a Nazarite (cf. Num. 6). Three distinct aspects of the Nazarite were mentioned in the angel’s instructions to Samson’s mother:

...drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing...and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb (Judg. 13:4-5).

The example of Manoah and his wife shows that godly parents will seek direction and help from God, will have ordered lives themselves, and will properly direct their children in ordered lives as well.

The Consequences Of The Question

Without doubt, these were parents God could trust to rear Samson in the right way. Though parents must do their part faithfully, the truth is that children still have free will. A child may grow up and, to his loss, and to the parents’ broken hearts, refuse his father’s instruction (Prov. 1:8; 4:1; 13:1, et al.). No doubt, Manoah and his wife would have made different choices, from those made by their grown son; however, he had reached the point in life where he was responsible for his own decisions (cf. Judg. 14:1-4).

The question is: “*How shall we order the CHILD?*” Parents must fulfill their role as the parents, and not ask, “*How shall the child order us?*” Hopefully, when the child has left home, he will conduct himself as he ought, and will be grateful for the proper training he received (at home, and in Bible class). Sadly, this is not always the case (Luke 15). Remember: in spite of loving instruction, discipline, warning, and exhortation, grown (accountable) children are responsible for their own sins (Ezek. 18:20).

There is importance in ordering the child. Note the mother’s responsibility to keep herself pure according to the vow (Judg. 13:3-5). Mothers should keep tobacco, drugs, alcohol, and “*such like*” out of their bodies, not only while pregnant, but also at all times. Mothers must keep themselves pure spiritually, if they would do their part to bring into the world a precious baby, nourish him to manhood, and help him to live now and eternally. Otherwise, they may hamper his living for God, or even lead that precious, little child, with whom they have been so blessed, and whom they love so much, to spiritual death.

Conclusion

Dare any think God, Who created man and woman equipped for marriage and childbirth, has left no instruction for the proper conduct of the home and for the rearing of children within it? Though Samson, no doubt, disappointed his parents and God more than once, he was a judge and deliverer of

his people, and was remembered in what we call the “*Hall of Fame of the Faithful*” (Heb. 11:32). He owed much to his mother and father who sought God’s instruction to train him in the right way.

There are some “*treasures*” that hold the danger of making one poorer for having them, because they take God’s place, and crowd out what is really valuable. They are earth-bound and earth binding, for their earthly possession is the love of the possessor’s life. They appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and not to the higher, nobler, and purer affections. These are treasures that do not last. At best, they are but temporary, and our days of having them are soon over. At worst, in our brief sojourn, they have us, until we depart this life and leave them all behind.

Heavenly treasures are not chosen under the direction of the outward man, but are the choice of the inward man, whose faithful continuance leads him to that heavenly home. That which is of real value is neither temporary nor transient, but timeless. That which is of real value is that which is of lasting value. Men may lose possessions, physical health, power, popularity, position, and that which brings pleasure, but the treasures that are heavenly will continue. When the faithful servant of God leaves this earth, he leaves behind, as does the servant of mammon, all earthly things, but, unlike mammon’s servant, he goes to Heaven where he has laid up his riches.

Where Are Our Thoughts? Jesus warned: “*Take no thought*” for the things of this world (Matt.

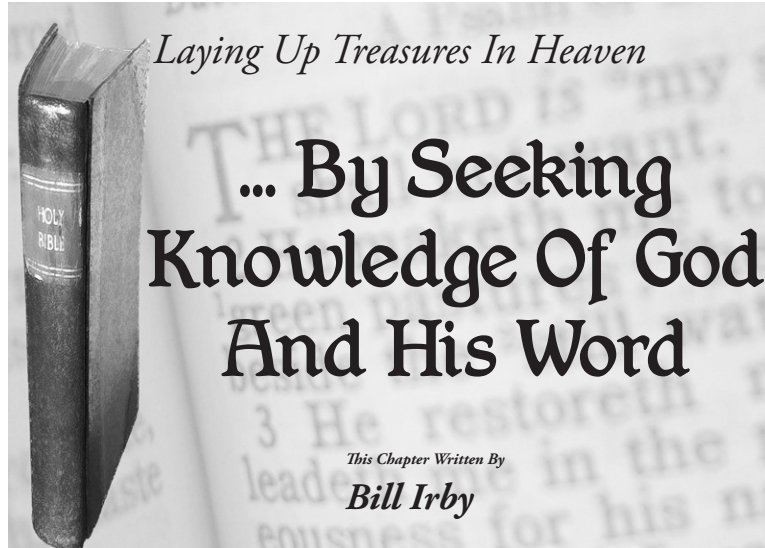
6:25ff). The literal meaning of “*take no thought*” is “*be not anxious;*” that is, do not commit the folly of worrying about the earthly, material, temporal things of this world for, “*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*” (v. 27). Worry is unproductive, burdensome, and, more often than not, in vain. Worry announces one’s lack of faith in God and his fear that God will not provide as He has promised. Worry robs one of peace, prevents happiness, presents an improper influence, and hinders his service to God.

Where Is Our Trust? In whom, or what, do we trust? If our trust is in things, Jesus said we are like the Gentiles (literally, “*nations,*” and, by implication, “*heathen,*” who do not believe in God, “*For after all these things do the Gentiles seek*” [v. 32]), but the same God Who has given us our needs has promised to supply our needs.

Where Is Our Treasure? There will be our thoughts, our trust, and our hearts. “*Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*” (Matt. 6:25). The servant of God is concerned about that which makes life precious, gives us purpose, and offers possibilities of godly service, while the servant of mammon is concerned about things that fill the belly and clothe the body. God’s servant sees the value of making a life while mammon’s servant can see only the need to make a living. The lesson is this: there are some things men must not treasure, and there are some things men must treasure. If we treasure the heavenly above the earthly, our reward

shall be abundant, heavenly, and eternal.

Oh, how we treasure our children, and those entrusted to us (as Bible class teachers). We can, by proper teaching/training, enrich their lives abundantly, and help them to gain the riches of Heaven itself. What greater service could one render? What a great challenge and responsibility! What a blessing!



When we use the expression “*lay up*” these days we might be speaking of the golf shot used to avoid a hazard farther on, or perhaps of a person who is confined to home due to illness. There is another meaning of the term as is the case in Matthew 6:20: “*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven....*” Here the words have the older meaning of “*to stock up for future use.*”

Jesus goes on to say that “*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Matt. 6:21). The Lord’s statements here are in the context of the battle against materialism (Matt. 6:24). One way you and I can store up treasure in heaven is by seeking greater and deeper knowledge of the Word of God. There is no better tool in our daily fight against materialism than knowing the truth of God’s Word (John 8:32).

How might the Word of God help us lay up treasure in heaven? We first need to see materialism for

what it is. It is not just wanting more of the “*things*” of this world (1 John 2:15-17). It is immensely more dangerous than that: it is a way of thinking about life that excludes the idea of God. It is commonly taught these days that the only acceptable explanation for the universe, the world and life, including human life, is what might be called naturalism. This is the system which, it is said, begins with the big bang and by evolution just happened to result in the complex reality of which human beings are the pinnacle today. Materialism leaves no room for God. He is not necessary if we are the result of a series of happy accidents.

God’s Word helps us on this subject when we remember that the great Book states the clear truth that God made it all (Gen. 1:1). We know that the naturalists say they have proof that it all just happened. But they do not and they cannot. I say they cannot because material proof according to scientific method requires experimentation to verify a hypothesis (to say nothing of a thesis). The debilitating fact here is that it is impossible to experiment in the past. Material proof of naturalistic theories of origins is therefore impossible.

The question of origins of reality and life are therefore matters of the mind, and on that basis we have a rational path to follow if we pay attention to the Word of God. For example consider this from the apostle Paul:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal

power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

The natural world is full of examples of complex systems that cannot be demonstrated as having come into existence no matter how much time is allowed for the process to take place.

To cite a well-known example there is the matter of the eye. It is a very complex instrument that functions only if it is altogether present. According to my eye doctor, a human eye that is but ninety-five percent complete will not work. If the eye came into being over a long period of time there would of necessity have been a long period of blindness all of a sudden replaced by sight. That would have been quite a shock. Such a circumstance is unimaginable. This line of reasoning holds when applied to the visual systems of other animals, birds and water life. If sight developed over time to its present state, when did a creature begin to see and what in the world did it do before that point in time? The answer is obvious. Sight is the result of design and the Designer is God. This is one application of the principle of Romans 1:20.

Not only does God's Word defeat materialism as a founding principle, it destroys materialism as a way of life. Our world is in danger of moral, ethical and cultural disintegration. It is simply falling apart. We are back in the days of Isaiah when evil was called good and good called evil (Isa. 5:20). If we oppose abortion we are called evil when abortion is the evil. When we identify sexual immorality as sin we are called sinners, when it is the immorality that is sinful. When we stand

for the truth of God's Word we are called ignorant when ignorance of the Word of God is the very thing darkening our world (Psm. 119:105).

Consider Colossians 3:1-14 as a portion of God's Word that destroys materialism as a way to live one's life. One line, verse two, is stunning in its profundity: "*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Col. 3:2, NKJV). In these few words Paul neatly describes all of reality. There is the material, which is earthly and there is the spiritual, which is with and from God. Even while we are here in this life we come to know that the most important elements of existence are not physical. As Paul wrote in Colossians 3:14: "*But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.*" This love is not physical but it is worth more than any amount of mere things.

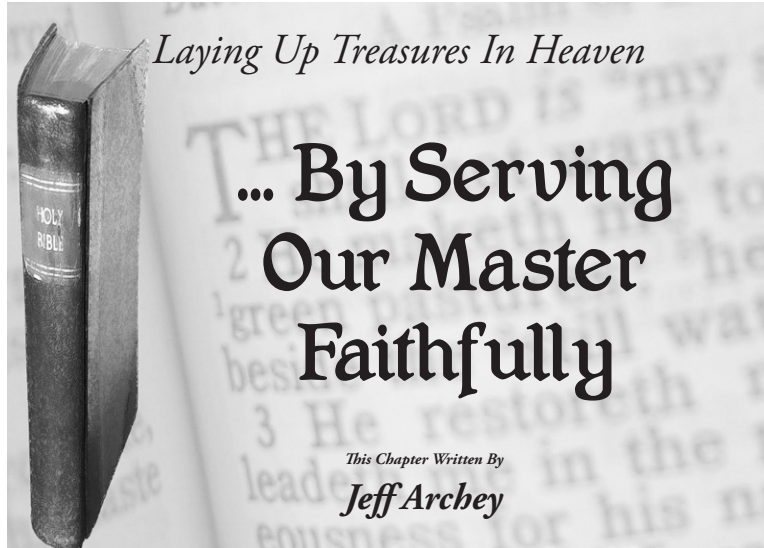
Paul goes into detail in his destruction of materialism as a way of life in Colossians 3:5-14. The old selfish man is to be "*put off*" and replaced by a new man. The difference between a man given to immorality and anger and one given to humility and love is palpable and clear: it is the difference between a materialistic man and a spiritual man.

This is an example of the value of the treasure of God's Word. We would pay any amount, borrow any amount, and promise any amount to a doctor who could guarantee the removal of a fatal cancer from our bodies. Yet here God's Word provides a blessing infinitely more significant than an extension of physical life. Here the promise is the best life here and eternal life with God.

So we see that storing up knowledge of God's Word defeats materialism as the explanation for creation and destroys materialism as a way of life. Storing up knowledge of God's Word also serves as a defense against sin in the life of a Christian. Another passage from Paul comes to mind here: Ephesians 6:10-17. We are to put on the whole armor, fitted from head to toe with the truth that protects us and equipped with weapons defensive (the shield and helmet) and offensive (the sword of the spirit). "*Stocking up*" on the Word of God prepares us for battle with the forces of evil and sin in the world (1 John 2:15-17).

This "*stocking up*" on truth is an absolute necessity. It is not just a matter of memorization, though that is a wonderful thing. It is more a matter of taking the principles of the truth revealed in the Bible and making them not just a part of our lives but the very center of our beings. God has made us capable of great spiritual transformation if we will do it. Once we run out of our lives the bad we must replace it with the good (Matt. 12:43-45). Then we must continue the process of storing up the truth that makes and keeps us free (John 8:32; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Thank God for the Bible.

...BY SEEKING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND HIS WORD



Our theme of “*Laying Up Treasures In Heaven*” reminds each Christian where his spiritual “*investments*” should be directed as we continue “...*in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42). It is a blessing to be a part of the East Hill lectures.

The phrase “*Laying up treasures...*” is a simple phrase expressing consistent focus and the action involved. In the physical sense, if I “*lay back*” some funds or “*save for a rainy day,*” my focus is, (1) To be active (work) in earning it; (2) a plan to save it; (3) to put it in the best fund(s) possible and (4) to have it available when the time comes to withdraw.

In the spiritual sense, if I am to lay up treasures in heaven, (1) I must be active in my faith (James 2:14ff); (2) I continually walk with a life in obedience to God (1 John 1:7-10); (3) Knowing without a doubt I am putting my treasures in the best place possible and

(4) always thankful it is there for withdrawing when my time here ends.

It is important to pursue the best in physical investments, but more so the spiritual. I can lay up treasures in heaven by knowing and obeying the right Master. In making the right choice of which Master to follow, God's word is clear:

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).

As we follow our Master, we lay up treasures in heaven. As we serve Him faithfully unto the end of our lives or when our Lord returns, let us see our spiritual "*investments*" along the way that keep us pressing onward.

Refresh Our Serving

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).

How thankful to no longer be a "*slave*" of sin. The original language defines "*servant*" as "*bondservant*" meaning the servant has no personal desires, aims or goals—only that of His Master.

The slave of sin follows the will of Satan. There are several words and phrases that describe Satan. "*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices*" (2 Cor. 2:11), it is of interest to

look at these descriptions and attributes. Tragically, as bondservant of Satan, one follows without thought of the end result.

As a liar (John 8:44), Satan will use the best lies and make everything look good and right. “*Your own opinion*” or “*no absolute truth*” are but a couple of phrases that allow individuals to create their own pattern of an “*abundant*” life. However, only Christ can grant an abundant life (John 10:10).

As the tempter (Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:2; cf. also James 1:13-15), Satan will use physical needs or desires to tempt. If he tempted Christ, he will have no problem tempting us. He will use our needs and desires of the world to tempt us.

As the thief of truth (Luke 8:12), Satan will snatch the good and honest word from hearts and keep one focused on the lies and falsehoods at hand. The very truth that will allow one to escape his grip is not allowed to ponder or consider a change in life. This “*master*” handles his slaves quite well.

As the oppressor (Acts 10:38), the suffering from sin (Gen. 3:15ff) have many thinking of no hope and all despair. This “*master*” allows his slaves to think they have to “*straighten everything on their own*” before coming to Christ and allows them to continue in a path of suffering, pain and grief.

As the deceiver (Rev. 12:9; 20:10), Satan uses all of this mentioned at his disposal to move his servants (slaves) in the way he wants them to go.

But, again, thanks be to God for that “*form of doctrine*” that was delivered. When obeyed, it made us

free! We accepted delivery with greater excitement than the wait of delivery for an item we have ordered through the mail. Our obedience accepted the opportunity to a better way of life.

A servant of God receives blessings that are far greater than anything Satan could offer. A. T. Robertson expressed of this text,

You have simply changed masters, no longer slaves of sin (set free from that tyrant), but ye are slaves of righteousness.

Oh, the joy of that change! Yet, now as servants of God, the restraint that Satan had is replaced with refreshing granted to us by our Father through Christ.

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor (John 12:26).

When I was young, I recall being taught a valuable lesson: “*The biggest smallest word in the English language is ‘if.’*” “If” is a word that immediately brings forth a stipulation. “*If any man serve me...*” are the words spoken by our Lord and throughout John 12, Jesus teaches what we do as we serve Him. Consider the refreshing needed for the servant of God.

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal (John 12:25).

There is refreshing in hating self. Yes, it sounds strange, but notice, “...*hateth his life in this world...*” (emphasis mine, JA). Now, worldly things are secondary.

To be a true disciple one must hate all others for Jesus' sake. This is not psychological hatred but a total commitment that gives absolute priority to Jesus (TDNT abridged, 598-599).

This commitment is commanded by Christ, "*Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*" (Matt. 16:24). We also see the commitment reflected in the life of Paul,

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).

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die (John 12:32-33).

How we are refreshed continually through the preaching of the cross of Christ! We are still drawn to that cross that redeemed us (Eph. 1:7) and the message never grows old! The preaching of the cross is "*power*" to those that are saved (1 Cor. 1:18) and that are called (1 Cor. 1:24; 2 Thes. 2:14).

- The preaching of the cross **keeps us looking unto Jesus** (Heb. 12:2) refreshing our souls, renewing our faith and refocusing on our goal.

- The preaching of the cross **keeps our focus on the task at hand** (1 Cor. 2:2) refreshing us daily as we press onward.

- The preaching of the cross **refreshes us in the beauty of God's grace** (Rom. 3:24-26).

- The preaching of the cross **refreshes us as servants of God** (Phil. 2:6-8) following our Master, Jesus Christ.

As we are saved by the preaching of the cross, it continues to save us (1 Cor. 15:1-4). What refreshing as a servant!

Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them (John 12:35-36).

As servants and more so His children, we follow our Master. He is our Light each and every day and He gives us direction.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7-10).

As servants, we are refreshed walking in fellowship with other Christians—fellow servants. I love reading the letters of Paul, but especially the end of his letters.

Several fellow servants are mentioned only once in Scripture, yet refreshed the apostle Paul. What a wonderful relationship. The reading of this lectureship book probably brings to mind those that refreshed you at this lectureship; not only speakers, but brethren and friends and the fellowship you enjoyed with them.

As servants, we are refreshed with the continual cleansing blood of Christ. As the blood was over the doors of faithful Israel (Exod. 12), may the Father look upon us as His servants and “*see the blood*” of our Savior.

Let us be refreshed as His servants by taking advantage of all before us. Our Father provides the refreshing from above and through His word (James 1:17).

Remember Our Master

“...*Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth...*” (Matt. 22:16). While this comment was expressed as a flattering point by the Pharisees and Herodians to tempt our Lord, yet, how true it is in our lives as His servants. He is THE true Master (cf. John 14:6).

Let Us Remember His Authority

The word “*Master*” is used in other places as “*one who exercises power.*” Quite simply, who has greater power than the Christ, our Master? As Christ preached the gospel in “*nature’s amphitheater,*” the conclusion was “...*the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority...*” (Matt. 7:28-29).

As Jesus walked on this earth, His authority was embraced by the multitudes. Think of the words of the little children's hymn, "*Peter, James and John in a rowboat*" and how they "*Fished all night; caught no fishes.*" Jesus told them, in other words, to try again.

And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net (Luke 5:5).

Note that simply because the Lord said do it, Simon did it and the result was a great multitude of fish. Such authority and respect of said authority!

Consider a hurting Father, "*And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit*" (Mark 9:17). No question this man had done much for His Son from a child; now, he brings him to the Christ because Christ is the only one with true authority to address his need.

How our Master expressed His authority in His life. Let us always remember his authority and embrace the truth that grants freedom to man (John 8:32).

Let Us Remember His Teaching

"*Master*" is also defined as "*a teacher*" (from didasko, "*to teach*") as a title of address. It is interesting that a certain scribe, a commentator of the law if you will, acknowledged Christ as a "*teacher*" (Matt. 8:19). This makes sense for the scribe would be looking for something to write about, would he not? And, before he penned, the scribe would have to learn from a teacher.

The people in New Testament time recognized

Christ as Master or teacher of the apostles (Matt. 17:24). The washing of the disciples feet (John 13:13-14) expressed Jesus as “*Master*” or in this text, teacher. It was a moment that Jesus asked His apostles did they know what He had done. In other words, had they learned from this moment? Another example was as the storm came upon the sea. Jesus was called “*Master,*” in this sense as a teacher, and was asked, “...*carest thou not that we perish*” (Mark 4:38)? That’s impressive because it tells us Christ was unlike any other teacher. They realized that only He had the answer they needed.

Continually through the gospel accounts, Jesus was readily recognized as the “*Master Teacher.*” While we do not wish to make this phrase redundant, may we see its emphasis. Do we look to our Master as our teacher? Let us learn about the Master all that we can so our lives can be better and we can tell others.

Let Us Remember His 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” (1 Peter 2:21). When the servants take the authority of our Master and continually follow His all-authoritative teaching, what better example for our lives could we put into action than that of our Lord and Master?

Remember Our Master’s Example Of Serving

“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). Let us not concern ourselves

with how we are served but how we serve. Could this be a challenge for us? From time to time, good brethren wrestle with changing congregation seeking a place to *“meet their needs.”* While realizing there are valid concerns in some instances, what if we were to focus on serving more than *“meeting our needs”* or being served? I realize this is ground we must carefully tread for sometimes it is a valid need depending on circumstances. But, we should *“count the cost”* (Luke 14:28) and see if our serving could address the issue. I recall a conversation several years ago with a good brother who considered a change of congregations for his family. At the time, young children were not plentiful in number, so it was a challenge before him for his young children. However, this was his *“home congregation”* and I’ll never forget his explanation to me. He said, *“Jeff, if we leave and then others visit with children, they will see no children and not want to stay. But, if we keep things going, we have a better chance to grow.”* He was right. Little by little, an addition here and an addition there and the work pressed onward. Again, we realize that circumstances vary, but I believe this brother’s wisdom is worthy of consideration. The exhortation of Peter can be applied,

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen
(1 Peter 4:11).

May we serve with our God given ability and to God be the glory!

Remember Our Master's Example Of Evangelism

A simple recollection of the following gives a beautiful pattern of evangelism for us to remember and use:

The angelic announcement of His birth gave hope to the world—an opportunity for salvation! *“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21).

As our Master walked on this earth touching the lives of so many, His beautiful words remind us of His purpose: *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10).

When He died on Calvary and after His resurrection, He charged His apostles,

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

From the authority of our Master, we, too, carry forth His example of evangelism (cf. Acts 8:4). In doing so we prepare ourselves through study (2 Tim. 2:15) so that we may give an answer to those that ask (1 Peter 3:15). We also reach out to other fellow servants that may be *“overtaken”* by sin (Gal. 6:1) so that we may *“cover a multitude of sins”* (James 5:20) that our Savior and Master died to remove.

As a servant of the Master, we follow His will and

walk His way remembering His authority and teaching and in turn, make a difference in this world. May we continually lay up my treasures and help others to do the same.

Renew Our Faithfulness

As servants of the Master, consider the compassions and mercies of God,

They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him (Lam. 3:22-23).

New every morning! I love the thought of “*newness*.” The new car and its “*smell*” will fade. The “*new paint smell*” will fade. New clothing today is out of style tomorrow. New iPhones, iPads and computers are “*out dated*” when the next new thing comes along. What is materially new does not remain new. As Peter through inspiration said, “*The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away...*” (1 Peter 1:24). However, the child of God remains new! The servant of the Master remains new through faithful living:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is

created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:23-24).

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:2).

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).

Is it not much easier to renew our faith as servants when we follow our Master?

Several years ago, B. J. Clarke (who I am honored to be with on this lectureship), penned an excellent article titled *“How to Remain Faithful.”* The four points within are worthy for our consideration and I cannot think of a more powerful, yet easy application that will help us renew our faithfulness every day.

Let God Say Something To You Every Day—Through His Word

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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

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 every day. Yet, most of these same individuals find time to let Hollywood say something to them every day

via the television or the big screen. We usually find time to let the Readers Digest...USA Today or the local daily newspaper say something to us every day. 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? (Clarke).

Say Something To God Every Day—Through Prayer

We will not faint along the way if we will call on our Father in prayer (Luke 18:1). As His children, let us plea fervently in prayer (1 Thes. 5:17).

Say Something For God Every Day—Through Example And Expression (Matt. 28:19-20).

It is said that we might be the only Bible a person will read. It is a humbling experience when people speak to you and they know who you are by some good deed that was done. A Christian salesman was criticized by a customer for the product received. The Christian listened attentively and addressed matters gracefully. An employee that witnessed the matter commented later how impressed he was regarding how this Christian handled the matter. No question the response of the Christian made an impact.

Think of the well-used illustration of the bus driver that gave too much change to the new preacher in town as the preacher mounted his bus. When the preacher returned the overage to the driver, the driver admitted it was a test to see how honest the new preacher was and that the driver would attend worship the next Lord's Day!

Never underestimate letting our lights shine (Matt. 5:16) and living righteous lives (Titus 2:11-12) that others see. We never know who is watching.

Do Something For God Every Day

How many good faithful souls became permanently discouraged by thinking their labors did no good? While it is true we may never see the results or for that matter, never think that our efforts achieved desired results, we know this: If we are the servants and do what the Master says, our faithfulness will grow. While we are serving and doing good deeds, we are accomplishing a great deal for we exercised ourselves unto godliness which is a *“faithful saying”* (1 Tim. 4:8-9).

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 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 (1 Cor. 15:57-58).

I love that motivation!

Let us always renew our faithfulness each day. Never forget that this is part of the judgment:

His lord said unto him, 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).

Run With Endurance

It was March 3, 1993 as Jim Valvano took the stage of the ESPN's Espy awards. It was during his

fight with cancer where he encouraged millions to never give up.

Children of God; servants faithfully following the Master! Listen! Let us never give up! Let us keep running! Let us keep going! Hebrew writer, please edify and exhort us:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. 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. 12:1-2).

Christ our Master endured what was before Him. Oh, would that we, His servants, keep on keeping on! The servant grows as a better servant the more he applies the Master in his life. The servant's faithfulness to the Master continually grows and his endurance gets stronger. We have the assurance of "...*he that endureth to the end shall be saved*" (Matt. 10:22).

Conclusion

As we lay up our treasures in heaven, fellow saints, let us refresh our service. Remember our Master. Renew our faithfulness. Run with endurance. Keep pressing onward. When our lives end and eternity begins may we hear the Master say, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant!*" Then, allow us by His grace to enter into the joys of our Lord and Master where

our treasures await. Let us serve our Master faithfully unto the end!

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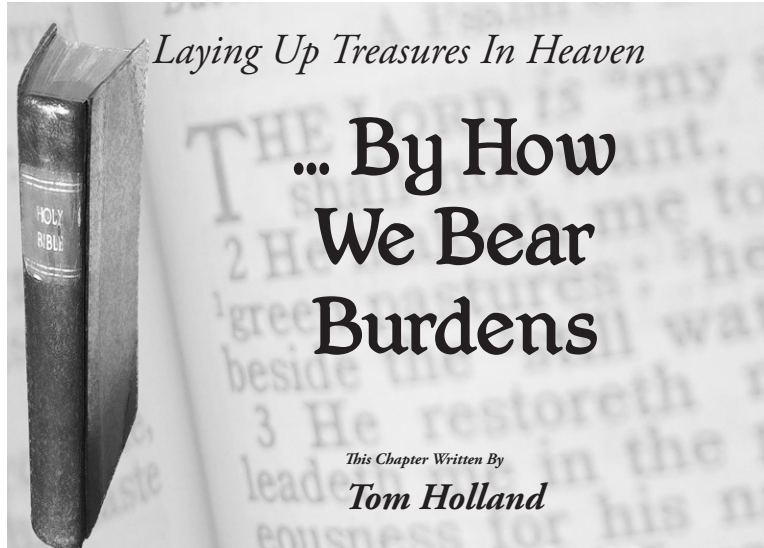
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... BY SERVING OUR MASTER FAITHFULLY



The God-breathed New Testament Scriptures furnish God's people with all the spiritual information that they need to serve God acceptably and to provide for our spiritual needs (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Because of the circumstances of life God's children often have difficulties in life, disappointments, heartaches, physical and emotional pain.

The Holy Spirit, through Paul's inspired pen, exhorted God's children to be involved in helping others in their time of need. In Galatians 6:2, the Apostle wrote: "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*" The word translated "*burdens*" means "*a weight...that makes a demand on one's (spiritual) resources*" (Vine).

This lesson will examine the following: one, the implication; two, the identification; and three, the inspired exhortation.

The Implication

Our brethren in the early days of the Lord's church had burdens to bear. God does not excuse us from the troubles of life that Satan brings upon us. Life on earth is "*few days and full of troubles*" (Job 14:1-2). The apostle Peter informed the brethren that the afflictions experienced in the brotherhood were the work of the devil (1 Peter 5:8-9).

One of the burdens the churches of Galatia had to bear was the result of troublemakers (Gal. 5:12; Acts 15:24). These false teachers were perverting the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9).

Often today congregations have to bear the burden of trouble from those who try to impose on the church denominational doctrines.

We may experience burdens because of wrong choices that we make, or, as Peter said, "*for what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?*" (1 Peter 2:20). Peter also admonished: "*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters*" (1 Peter 4:15).

Some may make wrong choices to the extent that they are overtaken in a fault or wrong (Gal. 6:1). The spiritual ones need to help them bear the burden of guilt, shame, and the loss of hope by restoring the brother or sister. Sometimes this effort of restoration may demand time, patience, and determination to bring that person back to his/her first love for the Lord Jesus.

Those who suffer because they are Christians and their life is a type of condemnation to the sinful world

(1 Peter 4:16), need brothers or sisters to encourage them to hold on to the Savior.

Those who are having to bear the burden of rejection need caring souls to urge them not to give up by reminding them that some of God's great servants had "*crosses to bear*." People need to know that prayers are being offered to God for them.

The Identification

The burden may be spiritual in nature, the burdens may involve physical suffering, or the problems/burdens may come from the death of a loved one and the burden of sorrow that the loss puts on a person's heart.

Burdens in the spiritual realm may come from the different areas of service and spiritual relationships. Elders in the church of Christ have an opportunity to render to the Lord important service. These men have the responsibility of feeding spiritual food and of watching for the souls of God's people (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

The Lord's model for elders is that of a shepherd and sheep. Elders have the responsibility of "*taking heed to themselves*" (Acts 20:28). They must live exemplary lives (1 Peter 5:3).

Furthermore, elders are charged to "*feed*" or "*tend*" the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2). The word Peter used translated "*feed*" means, "*to act as a shepherd*" and also "*to tend*" which would have a "*consistent rendering...as a shepherd not only feeds the flock, he also tends*" the flock (Vine).

In addition to the responsibility to tend the

flock, elders are to “*watch for wolves*” (Acts 20:28). Congregations in New Testament times were sometimes burdened by false teachers who sought to “*draw away disciples*” to become the followers of the false teachers (Acts 20:28). Church history has examples of those who tried to build a following for themselves, or for some doctrine that they promoted. This is true of recent church history when men were calling people out of denominationalism to become one in Christ. In the closing years of the 1800’s men disrupted the peace and fellowship of God’s people by promoting an organization called the “*Missionary Society*” to do the work of the church. In addition to the non-Biblical organization, men began to desire using instruments of music in worship. The plea to restore New Testament Christianity was torn apart. The instrumental music desire is becoming a burden to the Lord’s church in our own day.

Elders often have to bear the burden of disgruntled members. Some of whom may resent the authority of elders. Others may not see the non-denominational nature of the church of Christ and therefore they want to compromise with the denominational world.

Elders in the Lord’s church get too much criticism and very little commendation. In contrast, the Scriptures instruct: “*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine*” (1 Tim. 5:17).

Preachers have a special opportunity to serve the Lord as His “*heralds*.” When Paul told Timothy to “*Preach the word*” (2 Tim. 4:2), the word Paul used in

the original means to be a herald. Heralds in the first century were important servants to kings. The herald would announce the proclamations of the king. Or, they would go to the cities and villages and announce the coming of the king.

Furthermore, Paul charged Timothy to do the *“work of an evangelist.”* In the word *“evangelist”* one sees the word *“angel.”* Angel means *“messenger.”* The prefix means *“good.”* So the evangelist is a messenger of good, he has a gospel, *“glad tidings of good things”* (Rom. 10:15).

The message of the preacher makes the preacher’s word very important. To serve as a *“herald”* for Christ means the preacher has an important position in the Lord’s work.

But preachers often have burdens to bear. Preachers are sometimes resented. The families of preachers are sometimes given a hard life. Their children may be ridiculed or intimidated. Some people may have the idea that a double standard exists for preacher’s children and the children of the members.

Preachers who give their full time to preaching may be made to feel that they are *“hired servants.”* They may bear the burden of those who do not like them. They may sense a lack of security in their work, or, as one preacher observed: *“A preacher is only one elders’ meeting away from being fired.”*

Those who have never had the experience have no idea as to the difficulty of preaching to an audience when you know that one or more people in the audience resents you.

The good people in the congregation who try to

encourage you are the ones who help the preacher bear the burdens of preaching.

Many people bear burdens of physical illness ranging all the way from terminal illnesses to the limitations imposed by aging. Preachers sometimes have family members who suffer serious illnesses, or their wives and/or children may have serious illnesses.

In addition to these challenges, there are in most congregations members who suffer serious illness and for the preacher who loves people, the pain of those who hurt becomes the real concern of preachers.

The dreaded diseases of dementia or alzheimers becomes the burdens that people sometimes have to bear. Only those who have had to care for a loved one with these diseases can fully appreciate the heaviness of the burden.

The burden some people have to bear comes from family problems. It may be a family where a Christian is married to a non-Christian, as the apostle Peter described in 1 Peter 3 and as Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 7:13-14. A husband in this marriage situation will need encouragement from brothers and sisters. They will probably be helped by someone showing them special attention before and after worship services.

It is not uncommon in our time for a spouse to leave their mate. Preachers have had this heartbreaking experience. Acceptance and encouragement from the brethren can be most helpful to those who experience this rejection.

The burden some parents have to bear comes

from rebellious children. Some parents have to come with the overwhelming sorrow of a child who commits suicide. Teenagers sometimes take their own life. Older married children sometimes commit suicide.

Then there are situations when parents have to cope with a child that becomes addicted to alcohol or drugs. Parents may spend much money trying to get their children out of trouble. The parents may spend money for a child in a treatment center for drug or alcohol rehabilitation.

Parents who have to cope with problem children need a lot of encouragement from their brothers and sisters. They do not need criticism or to be treated like second-rate citizens in the kingdom of God. They certainly need the prayers of God's people. They do not need their names called in public prayers, but in private and personal prayers they should be prayed for by names to the Father.

Sorrow is a burden that most people have to bear sometime in life. Sorrow may come from having to bury children, parents, spouses, friends, and those who are important in one's life.

Sorrow speaks a silent language all its own. Sorrow is a kind of emptiness in the heart that leaves a loneliness of spirit. Sorrow sometimes is a burden to the mind that comes with "*what if*" I had done this or that. This burden of mind could even bring guilt.

Death puts an individual in a grief cycle. The cycle of grief has been identified by psychologists. The cycle is completed when one in sorrow is ready to go on with one's life.

The Exhortation

Because of the reality of burdens, Paul's exhortation becomes vital to our Christian lives. He declared: "*Bear ye one another's burdens.*" Someone observed that "*joys shared are multiplied, sorrows (burdens) shared are divided.*"

There is a difference in a caretaker and a caregiver. The caretaker is usually paid to provide the needs of a handicapped person. The caregiver does not expect pay, they give because of love for the person in need. Bearing burdens comes from caregivers. The motivation for bearing the burdens of others is love.

People bearing burdens (heavy loads, Rogers) needs exhortation. The exhortation requires personal involvement; bearing burdens is not done by proxy. Personal involvement may be done by visitation. Jesus talked about visiting the sick (Matt. 25:36, 39). The apostle Paul said "*comfort the feeble-minded (fainthearted)*" (1 Thes. 5:14). Paul also said that we should comfort those in sorrow.

Visiting those in sorrow is a means of helping them bear their burden of sorrow. Sometimes people say, "*But I don't know what to say when I see people in sorrow.*" It is not so much what you say with words, but the fact that you cared enough to come to them.

Next is exhortation through impersonal contact: e-mail, telephone calls, sympathy or get well cards; a letter of encouragement.

If you plan to help a brother "*overtaken*" in a fault, pray to God for wisdom (James 1:5-6), then go to the brother or sister and tell them of your interest in their

spiritual welfare and that you will do what you can to help them.

If we take seriously the command “*bear one another’s burdens*” we will never be lukewarm or indifferent in the Lord’s work because there will always be people with burdens.

One of my written guidelines for my life is this: “*One person’s misfortune is my opportunity.*” God’s word says: “*But to do good and communicate forget not: for with such sacrifice God is well pleased*” (Heb. 13:16).

In bearing burdens of another we “*fulfill the law of Christ*” (Gal. 6:2). The law of love for our neighbor (Gal. 5:13-14), and the law of brotherly love (Heb. 13:1).

Sometimes bearing another’s burden may require a financial expenditure to help pay for food, medicine, a utility bill, a doctor visit, or rent. However, spending money to help bear someone’s burden is actually an investment. The Scripture says, “*He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteous remaineth for ever*” (2 Cor. 9:9; Psm. 112:9).

Ideally, a congregation is a called out group of people, the body of Christ, who love one another with a pure heart fervently; who try to encourage one another in serving the Lord, who stimulate one another to “*love and good works*” as they come together in worship (Heb. 10:24). The ideal is expressed in hymn which says, “*we share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing tears.*”

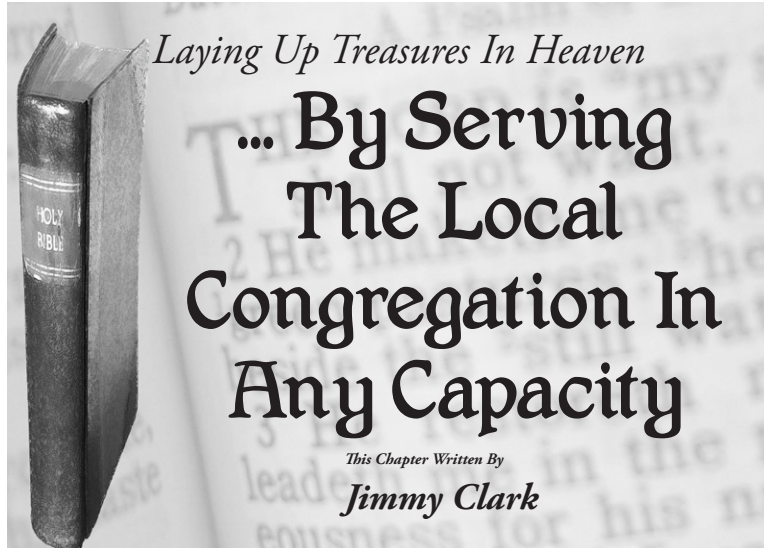
Some of the closing words of Galatians seems an appropriate way to close the exhortation to “*bear*

burdens.” The inspired writer said, “*And let us not be weary in well doing*” (Gal. 6:9). Evidently the Lord Jesus knew the possibility of becoming weary in well doing. Please observe the preposition: “*in*” well doing, not “*of*” well doing.

What will keep us bearing burdens? The reaping day will come and what a blessing to know that the Lord used us to save a soul from death (James 5:19-20). What a joy to hear our Lord say to us “*well done, good and faithful servant.*”

In the words of the poet:

*“So let us then be up and doing;
with a heart for any fate;
still achieving, still pursuing;
learn to labor and to wait.”*



Laying up treasures in heaven is one of the most rewarding activities of life that anyone can do. Jesus preached in Galilee,

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).

Paul wrote to Timothy,

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, 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; Laying up in store for

themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

While acquiring eternal salvation is through the grace of God (Acts 15:11; Eph 2:8-9), such does not mean that man has nothing to do with his laying hold of eternal life. There is a responsibility that mankind is to fulfill in obeying the gospel (2 Thes. 1:8-9; Heb. 5:9) and serving the Lord with a willing heart (Psm. 110:3; Col. 3:23). All of man's service does not come close to the value of the reward of eternal life. Such is why salvation is still called a gift (Rom. 6:23) and a reward at the same time (Matt. 5:12).

This particular lesson will focus upon the service rendered by members of the local churches to their own congregations. There is first to be the reminder that the service is to be given willingly and not of necessity. There is also the reflection of specific services that can and need to be done by members of the local congregation. Finally, there are the riches that come from such service in the kingdom of God on the local level.

Willing Service

Willingness is a key component of a child of God's service. There are a host of scriptures dedicated to willingness so as not to miss that point. It is the heart that God seeks that a blessing be given.

God Himself is a willing God. It is written of God in the Bible,

For the Lord will not cast off forever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion

according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men (Lam. 3:31-33).

Paul wrote of God,

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

Peter wrote,

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus Himself is the personification of willingness, where He stated on that great night, *“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done”* (Luke 22:42). Jesus fulfilled the scripture that said, *“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God”* (Heb. 10:7).

When looking into the great qualities of God’s people under the Law of Moses, willingness abounded. Moses recorded of the Lord’s words concerning the offering to be given of the people for the construction of the tabernacle and its items,

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering (Exod. 25:2).

When Moses delivered the message to the people concerning this willing offering (Exod. 35:4-19), the text states,

And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the Lord (Exod. 35:21-22).

Again, Moses wrote of this event,

The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses (Exod. 35:29).

Moses wrote further of the offerings unto the Lord,

If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord (Lev. 1:3).

Again,

Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings,

which they will offer unto the Lord for a burnt offering; Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beefs, of the sheep, or of the goats (Lev. 22:18-19).

Moses wrote toward the end of that section, *“And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord, offer it at your own will”* (Lev. 22:29).

The history of the nation of Israel is one of those willing and obedient and those unwilling and disobedient. It has already been cited yet needs to be stated again for emphasis of the prophesy concerning the Messiah and His people,

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Psm. 110:1-4).

Isaiah appealed to his people,

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it (Isa. 1:18-20).

David said to Solomon,

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever (1 Chron. 28:9).

David appealed to the people who would serve under Solomon to be willing (1 Chron. 29:5). People were willing to serve under the leadership of Josiah (2 Chron. 35:8). Willingness was a characteristic of great service even under the Law of Moses.

The New Testament is filled with the same emphasis on willingness in service. Jesus said of those who were struggling with His doctrine, *“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself”* (John 7:17). Paul wrote of the Macedonians and the collection that was being gathered to take to Jerusalem, *“For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;”* (2 Cor. 8:3). Paul would further spur the Corinthians in this good work,

Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not (2 Cor. 8:11-12).

Paul stated of his own purpose of life in preaching the gospel,

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea,

woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me (1 Cor. 9:16-17).

Peter wrote of the need for elders to do their work “*willingly*” (1 Peter 5:2). The New Testament comes to a close with the invitation of the highest calling,

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Willingness in obedience and in service afterwards is the hallmark of great spirituality. No service, large or small, is great without it.

Ways To Serve

There are several passages that indicate that God made His children to serve (Matt. 4:10; 1 Peter 4:11). Paul wrote to the Roman brethren,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

Again, Paul wrote, “*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*” (Rom. 12:11). Service is a true sign of greatness. Jesus stated,

Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto,

but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:26-28).

The Lord gives to each a stewardship according to our abilities (Matt. 25:15). The question that often arises is “*What can I do to serve?*”

One may begin with sharing with others what you have of a spiritual nature. While it is often the case that people are willing to share in some way their material things with those that are in need, which is a great thing and commended of God (1 Tim. 6:17-19; Heb. 13:16), it is the spiritual things that mankind needs the most. The gospel went unto all the world in the first century (Col. 1:23) because more than the apostles and prophets were out preaching. Luke records of the early church, “*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word*” (Acts 8:4). When all of God’s people are missionaries, the main mission of the Lord is fulfilled in each generation. Every person who is outside of Christ needs the same thing that the Christian has (Acts 26:28-29). One must always remember the old proverb, “*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise*” (Prov. 11:30).

Another way to serve is to continue to water what has been planted. While fundamental teaching in places where the gospel has not gone is vital, continued teaching where the gospel has gone is equally vital. The bulk of the New Testament is written to converts to keep them faithful in the Lord. Teaching privately as well as teaching in more formal settings will always be needed. Paul wrote to Timothy,

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

Jesus was greatly involved in teaching His own disciples as well as the unconverted. Such teaching can obviously be given orally, but the written material as tracts, pamphlets, invitations to public events where the word of God will be discussed, etc. are great ways to serve. Personal invitations are simple yet very great ways to serve.

Another way to serve is to live out the life of a child of God before the world. Jesus did not say in vain,

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid (Matt. 5:13-14).

Every person can let his light shine before men (Matt. 5:16). Peter wrote to the brethren,

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:12).

Another way to serve is to support the efforts of the local congregation whenever it has outreach and special services. Such support can be in attendance, cleanup, directing visitors to various places in the

building, answering questions that may and do arise, pointing individuals to people who may be able to give further assistance, etc. Everyone at one time was a first time visitor at a local congregation. Whatever one remembers was needed for oneself in the past is still needed by those visitors who attend where members regularly work. A smile, a greeting or a handshake with eye contact is not quickly forgotten.

Another way for each to serve in the local congregation is in the area of benevolence. Middle class Americans are fully capable of sharing in efforts that assist in bereavement, in hospital stays, in natural disasters, etc. Those who will enter into heaven will serve like Jesus said.

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me (Matt. 25:35-36).

These serve without accounting the work of helping others as though they were personally helping the Lord though such is the case. Service is a way of life, not a checklist of things to gain approval of God.

Wealth Gained in Service

Paul said to the elders at Ephesus concerning the words of the Lord, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). While it is a blessing to receive, it is more blessed to give. There are some benefits to life that can only come through giving. Those benefits are primarily of a spiritual nature though some physical

blessings can come through helping others. While genuine Christians do not serve that they might be served in the future, there have been those who have reciprocated aid to those who have been assisted by members of the body of Christ. Listing gains that come in service help the Christian to see the optimistic side of the way of the Lord and not the negatives.

One gains in the satisfaction of doing good. Contentment and satisfaction seem to be fleeting things to the world. Solomon wrote, "*Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied*" (Prov. 27:20). However, Jesus said, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*" (Matt. 5:6). Right living and doing good bring their own satisfaction. One does not have any regrets in this course of life. Guilt comes with its opposite. All the talk of building good self-esteem today only comes through righteousness.

One gains by receiving the joy that comes through service. While some service can be difficult in its undertaking, one can know the joy of being active in that which is truly productive and helpful. There is a great joy in reaching out to others with things that have eternal consequences for good. The Lord recognizes even the smallest of kindnesses. Jesus said,

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (Matt. 10:42).

One gains by seeing the appreciation of others for selfless service. Strong relationships are built through

sharing selfless service. Paul wrote of the response by the Jews toward the kindness of the Gentile brethren in the giving to their necessities,

For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; (2 Cor. 9:12-13).

Great barriers can be taken away with such selfless service. Each member of the local congregation can contribute in some way to such works. Their recipients appreciate individual prayers for such good works.

One gains through giving by developing a life more and more like the Lord. A life of service is a life like the Lord. Peter wrote of servants who suffer for doing good, *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:”* (1 Peter 2:21). Such is the life of a true disciple of the Master. He mirrors his own life to be like his Lord.

One gains by knowing that one’s labor is not in vain. While temporary good works are being satisfied in each person doing his/her part, the eternal value is priceless. When Paul wrote of the certainty of the resurrection of Christ and the ultimate resurrection that would come upon all the dead at the Lord’s return, he exhorted with these words,

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the

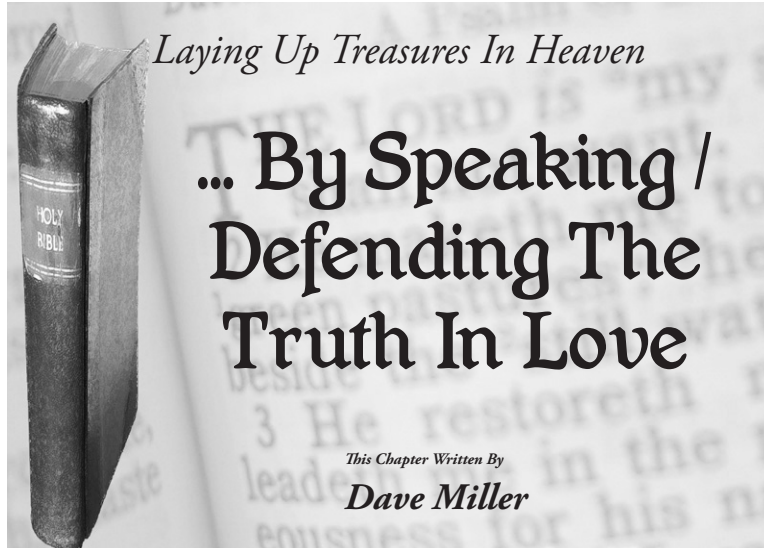
Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is
not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

It is extremely significant that there is no wasted effort,
time, resources or the like in the work of the Lord.
Decay and destruction do not come to great spiritual
works. It is as Peter wrote,

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you
abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:11).

May it so be that each person appreciates the value
of serving the local in any capacity that the local
congregation abound in their good more and more.

... BY SERVING THE LOCAL CONGREGATIONS IN ANY CAPACITY



The passages in our Bibles that enjoin upon God's people the necessity of speaking out and defending God's Word are legion. You are well aware of them—

- *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”* (1 Peter 3:15).
- *“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear”* (Phil. 1:14).
- *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine”* (2 Tim. 4:2).
- *“...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3).
- *“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments”* (Ezra 7:10).

And, of course, many others. Perhaps more now than at any other time in American history, we Christians are in desperate need of speaking and defending the truth.

Defending The Truth In A Politically Correct Climate

Our spiritual predecessors in this country believed in standing up for God's truth and defending it in public debate. That era is long gone. It is not "*politically correct*" to challenge people about their beliefs and practices. For the past 50 years, we have been bullied and intimidated into thinking that "*I'm Okay, You're Okay.*" We've been browbeaten with the "*live and let live*" mentality which suggests that everyone has the right to believe and do whatever they choose. To speak out and urge others to alter their behavior would make one guilty of being "*judgmental,*" "*mean-spirited,*" "*rude,*" "*intolerant,*" "*homophobic,*" and now, "*Islamophobic.*" Over 40 years ago in **The Spiritual Sword**, Thomas Warren penned an article titled, "*Do Men have the Right to be Wrong?*" (Warren, 1973). From God's perspective, the answer is "*NO!*"

Satan has been extremely effective in creating a social climate in which defending the truth has largely been neutralized. We are so fearful of offending anyone, or being sued, that when we do confront the world around us, we take the edge off of the Gospel and dilute it. We emphasize how God loves everybody, and that He is a God of grace. But we shy away from being adamant, or threatening, or talking much about

hell and eternal punishment. In fact, more and more people within churches of Christ have been “*rethinking*” the doctrine of a sustaining hell (Fudge, 1982; Hailey, 2003; Smith, 2003). Who would have ever anticipated that?

Indeed, we are living in a culture that is “*dumbed down*” and spiritually anemic. Unlike most of American history when Bible was taught in public schools and most people went to church, we are at a point where the majority of Americans have not had “*their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*” (Heb. 5:14). Like the bulk of Roman civilization when Paul wrote the Ephesians, they live their daily lives:

...in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:17-19).

So not only are most Americans no longer receptive to God’s Word, they are not mentally equipped, conditioned, and prepared even to grasp and receive it. Presenting the truth to them is somewhat like ramming a sirloin steak into the mouth of an infant. May I kindly suggest that when a culture or a country becomes that resistant to God’s Word, the only hope of recovering at least some of them is to speak and defend the truth with great clarity and plainness.

Churches of Christ in this country grew the fastest and had the greatest impact when preachers and rank

and file members were **plain spoken**. Even though our culture considers it rude and impolite to speak too directly to a person's incorrect views, we must awaken. Satan has orchestrated a social scenario that could not be better for advancing his agenda. The time is well past due that we face fully the need to be more direct, more plain spoken, and, yes, even blunt!

Past Defenders Of The Truth

Perhaps the best way to study what the Bible has to say about how to defend the truth in love is to examine how past approved defenders of the truth handled themselves. We could study great non-writing prophets like Elijah, Nathan, and Micaiah, or we could look at the writing prophets like Amos, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. We could consider the strategies of great military and political leaders like Moses, Joshua, and Caleb. And, of course, we have Paul, Peter, and Jude in the New Testament. We would do well to equip ourselves in these perilous times by simply going back to the great men and women depicted by God in His Word, and concentrating on inculcating their attributes and techniques in our own defense of the truth. Above all, our greatest effort should be expended on contemplating how Jesus, Himself, defended divine truth.

Consider these moments in Jesus' earthly life in which He spoke very forthrightly to various individuals:

- *"...You do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God"* (Matt. 22:29).
- *"If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now*

ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:41).

- *“Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also”* (John 8:19).
- *“...but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you”* (John 8:37).
- *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”* (John 8:44-45).
- *“...and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying”* (John 8:55).
- *“Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly”* (John 4:17-18).

We would not for a moment suggest that such direct, plain spoken jabs were typical of Jesus’ overall ministry on Earth, or that we should allow our own defense of the truth to be dominated by such directness. Nevertheless, we must recognize that we are living in the midst of a society comparable to the one that Ezekiel labeled stubborn, impudent, and hard-hearted (2:4; 3:7). Such a generation desperately needs the truth pressed upon them, might I even say, they need

to be “*hammered*” with the truth? In the time that remains, allow me to direct your attention to a great Bible character that exemplifies masterful defense of the truth (see Miller, 2004).

Phinehas

He was born while the Israelites were still in Egyptian bondage (Exod. 6:25). His great-uncle was Moses. His grandfather was Aaron. His father was one of Aaron’s four sons: Eleazer. He may well have seen the smoldering bodies of his two uncles, Nadab and Abihu. He may also have witnessed God’s direct confrontational approach on several other occasions—at Taberah where the fire of God burned among the people, and Kibroth Hattaavah where God struck the people with a very great plague (Num. 11:3,34). He perhaps would have seen Miriam struck with leprosy and quarantined outside the camp while the nation delayed its travels for an entire week (Num. 12:15). He would most certainly have observed the reluctance of the nation to enter the Promised Land upon hearing the discouraging report of ten of the spies, and the corresponding threat of God to wipe out the entire nation, only to temper that threat with banishment and condemnation to 40 years of aimless desert meandering (Num. 13-14). He would have witnessed the rebellion of Korah and the many who joined him, evoking from God another threat to wipe out the entire congregation (Num. 16:21). He would have seen the ground as it opened up and swallowed the rebels, and the fire coming down out of the atmosphere to burn

to death 250 leading men. And he would have seen the poisonous snakes that God sent among the people due to their incessant complaining and grumbling, causing “*many*” people to die (Num. 21:6).

At Peor

These incidents must have made a tremendous impression upon Phinehas. For it is in Numbers 25, while he was still quite a young man, that we have recorded for us the first of two incidents that provide excellent insight into what we can do to lay up treasures in heaven by defending the truth. This incident took place in the last year of the 40 year period of wandering, while Israel was encamped at Shittim on the Plains of Moab east of the Dead Sea. The Moabites were typical Palestinian peoples in their involvement in pagan religion—which inevitably included illicit sexual activity. We are informed that a sizeable number of Israelite men indulged in the Moabite pagan rituals, which included not only sacrificing to their gods, but sexual immorality with the Moabite women. God’s anger was aroused, and He ordered Moses to round up the ring-leaders of the participants, to execute them, and expose their bodies in broad daylight in order for the fierce anger of God to be diverted. Moses commanded Israel’s judges to proceed with the executions—which caused great weeping and mourning throughout the nation as they gathered together at the Tabernacle. God even caused a plague to spread through the population.

In the meantime, one Israelite man had the unmitigated gall to flaunt his sinful involvement with

a Midianite woman, named Cozbi, by bringing her right through the assembled congregation and into his tent. Apparently, no one made any effort to do anything about it. So when Phinehas saw them, he left the assembly, grabbed a spear, and followed the couple into the tent. With a single thrust of the spear, he drove it through the two—through the man and into the woman’s body. This singular act is pinpointed in Scripture as the defining moment on this occasion—serving as the means of atonement for the nation to divert God’s wrath—but not before 24,000 people died in the plague.

If you want to know what we are to do in speaking and defending the truth in love—just take note of Phinehas. Lest we miss the tremendous significance of this momentous event in human history, listen carefully to God’s own assessment of the action of Phinehas:

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy (vs. 11-13).

“*Zealous*” and “*jealous*” are essentially synonymous terms that refer to the ardent, watchful determination to guard and be exclusively loyal to God’s will. Phinehas was able to rise above any concerns or hesitations he might have had and see things from God’s perspective. He acted in harmony with the spirit of God’s own essence! Phinehas was more concerned about **God’s** honor among the Israelites, and how **God** was viewing circumstances within the group, than he was for his

own safety or standing with other people. The spirit of Phinehas' action epitomized the spirit that God has always wanted His people to demonstrate. It provides us with one crucial sample of what it means to engage in defense of the truth. Was Phinehas "*harsh*"? Yes. But here the words of Solomon:

Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die...A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise (Prov. 15:10,12).

And listen to the psalmist's insightful depiction of Phinehas' actions:

They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. **Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.** And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore (Psm. 106:28-31, emp. added).

At the Jordan

A second incident in the life of Phinehas—which gives further insight into what it means to defend the truth in love—occurred after the next generation of Israelites completed the conquest of the land of Canaan (Josh. 22). The nation was gathered together at Shiloh after the tribal land allotments had been assigned. Joshua commended the 2½ transjordanic tribes for their faithfulness in assisting the 9½ tribes with the conquest of Palestine proper. He then dismissed them to return to their tribal lands across the Jordan River.

On their homeward bound journey, when they reached the river, they paused before crossing to construct an imposing altar on the bank of the river. When news of that incident filtered back to the other tribes, the entire nation reassembled at Shiloh and made war preparations to go against the 2½ tribes. You see, to build an alternate worship site in addition to the central one stipulated by the law of Moses was unauthorized (Lev. 17:1-9; Deut. 12:5-6,11,13-14).

Before the assembly launched a military strike against their fellow Israelites, they decided to put together a delegation of 10 tribal chieftains, led by Phinehas, to verify the rumor. These emissaries arrived at Gilead and posed four questions to the 2½ tribes (v. 16-18):

1. How can you commit this trespass against God?
2. How can you turn away from following the Lord by building an altar to rebel against Him?
3. Was the sin of Peor not enough for us—though we are still uncleansed from that fiasco and suffered a great plague?
4. Must you turn away from following the Lord?

They also admonished their brothers with four logical appeals (v. 18-20):

1. If you rebel against the Lord today, He'll be angry with all of us tomorrow.
2. If these eastern lands are not suitable, come back to the other side of the river and we'll share our land with you.
3. To build an alternate worship site is rebellion against both the Lord and us.

4. When Achan rebelled against God's instructions, wrath came on the whole nation, and he was not the only one who died that day.

After listening to these admonitions from their brothers, the 2½ tribes reacted with strong confessions of the greatness of God and His awareness of what they had done. They declared that if, indeed, they were guilty of what their western brothers suspected, i.e., rebellion and transgression, then they were in complete agreement that they should not be spared and that they should be called to account by the Lord. But instead, appearances can be deceiving (John 7:24). The fact of the matter was that they were not guilty of the suspected transgression. Rather, they simply had been fearful that future generations of the western Israelites would reject the eastern tribal groups, thus facilitating their apostasy. So they had built a monument—strictly a memorial—that would serve, not as an alternate worship site, but as a witness between the two segments of the Israelites. The replica of the one true altar would serve as proof that the two groups were united as one nation under God.

When Phinehas and the other tribal leaders heard this explanation, they were quite satisfied. Listen to the statement Phinehas made on behalf of the 10 tribes:

This day we perceive that the Lord is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the Lord: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord (Josh. 22:31).

The delegation returned to the main body of Israelites and reported the outcome of the confrontation, which caused them to be glad and to praise God, and to cease their war preparations.

Characteristics For Defense Of The Truth

These two incidents in the life of Phinehas set before us several self-evident attributes and strategies that aid us in seeing what the righteous are to do in defending the truth in love, thereby laying up treasures for ourselves in heaven. Notice that we see in this great man **courage** and **valiant nobility**. We see in him the quality of being **decisive**. He was willing to take the **initiative**—even if no one else was ready or willing to act. Phinehas was extremely **convicted** and **principled**. Obviously, truth and right meant more to him than anything or anyone. Phinehas was also **knowledgeable**, being well-studied and sensitized to God’s will on matters. He did not have to sit, ponder, and delay. He was sufficiently certain of God’s will as to be able to act on it at a moment’s notice.

That does not mean that Phinehas was impulsive. He was not like some of our own brethren who are infected with the “*shoot first, ask questions later*” mentality—who act on hearsay, who write up other brethren in their papers without adequate proof, who fail to get all the facts and understand the whole story. Rather, Phinehas was **thoughtful, calculated,** and **careful**—not reckless or irrational. He was also investigative—not motivated or moved by rumor, hearsay, or gossip.

Conclusion

Upon the occasion of the death of his father, Phinehas became the third high priest of Israel. Phinehas buried his father on a hill of Mount Ephraim—land he had received as an allotment in the distribution of the land. During his life, he served as the leader of the Korhites, who guarded the entrance to the camp as well as the tabernacle. This one man serves as a superb example of what the righteous are to do in the defense of the truth. Listen to this statement recorded by the Chronicler about Phinehas: *“the Lord was with him”* (1 Chron. 9:20). And hear the psalmist’s observation in the midst of a disobedient nation (and tell me if this does not sound like America):

Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore (Psm. 106:24-31).

I submit to you that if we will love God, trust Him, know His truth, and maintain humble hearts and pure motives, He will be with us, too, in our efforts to defend His truth in love.

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Man is continually challenged to prioritize between the temporal and the eternal, between the lasting and the transient. Clothed in flesh and surrounded by the physical, it can be very easy for man to fixate on things that are very tangible—but also very temporal. Satan majors in such a strategy against man. God has created man for a higher existence, however. Creating man in His own Divine image, He endowed man with an immortal soul that transcends this physical life and universe. Through the saving work of Christ, God intends the faithful of humanity to enjoy fellowship with Him not only in this life, but even in eternity (John 14:1-6; 1 John 1:1-3).

One must remember that eternal salvation is God's greatest desire for man (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). God knows better than anyone else the priceless value of every single soul. He is the Father of spirits

(Heb. 12:9), who forms the spirit of man within him (Zech. 12:1). Each precious soul is “*stamped*” with the Divine image, so to speak, inasmuch as it is fitted for eternal existence. Thus, salvation is paramount. Surrounded by a physical world, man’s most pressing need is spiritual. Jesus Christ taught,

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
(Matt. 16:26).

Christians must understand this fact. In fact, the task ever before Christians is to bring their perspective more and more in line with God’s perspective. God’s children should learn and grow to value human souls as the Father does. Loving God involves loving what God Himself loves. God loves people (John 3:16)! He wants to see people saved! Therefore, Christians must be focused and engaged in the urgently important work of soul-winning.

Loving People

The greatest motivation to love other people has already been stated: God loves all people! How can one profess to be a follower of God, yet hate or be indifferent toward others? Such was the inconsistency of unbelieving Jews in the first century. The apostle Paul wrote,

Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all

men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost (1 Thes. 2:15-16).

God loves man even in his sins—even when he is “*unlovable*.” Again it is the apostle Paul that treats this concept by inspiration.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8).

What marvelous love! And what an excellent pattern for man to follow himself! If the God of all Holiness could love sinful, wretched mankind, then surely God’s holy children can find a way to love their fellow-man as well.

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: (1 Thes. 3:12).

Perhaps a key to loving others—even those seemingly “*unlovable*” in their sins—is for the child of God to focus on the potential for good that lies in all people. As noted earlier, all human beings have been created in the image of Almighty God (Gen. 1:26-27). This fact alone should mean something. As the offspring of God (Acts 17:28), men and women in sin simply need to be transformed by the

saving power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 12:2). It is true that people can refuse such transformation and salvation, but Christians who never teach them the gospel essentially make that decision for them!

When Paul came to the city of ancient Corinth, he had made his way into a metropolis known for vice and immorality. Surely the light of the gospel would be a discernible contrast in a city of such darkness, and surely there would be much opposition. However, the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision encouraging him with these words.

Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city (Acts 18:9-10).

No doubt, when the Lord said “*I have much people in this city,*” He was speaking potentially, or prospectively. He knew there were souls there—even in the city of Corinth itself—who would obey the gospel upon hearing it. This is a great lesson for soul-winners still today. The Lord always sees the potential for good that lies in those who are lost, and His disciples should always strive to do the same. Later Paul would write these words to the Corinthian Christians—words of hope and victory.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,

nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Another help in loving one's fellow-man is that of empathy. Every accountable saint has stepped out of a sinful past, by the grace of God. One should never forget this. The thoughtful reflection of many redeemed sinners has been expressed in the adage, "*there, but for the grace of God, go I*" (1 Cor. 15:10). A Christian should never lose sight of the fact that, were it not for the blessed events leading to his own conversion, he would still be lost himself. In this way, the Christian's heart should always be panged at the waywardness and misery of sinners. He should be able to remember similar times in his own previous life. Had somebody not reached out, not taught lovingly the good news, he would still be lost himself. Paul seemingly excelled in maintaining this attitude.

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:14-16).

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was

before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting (1 Tim. 1:12-16).

Learning Better

Seeking to save the souls of others is not a work without its own challenges. It is an effort that is rarely, if ever, easy. Because of its nature, it involves a degree of learning. In calling Simon Peter and Andrew, Jesus said, *“Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men”* (Mark 1:17). These words of Christ indicate a process—one of learning and growth. Certainly Peter and Andrew did not instantaneously become champion soul-winners. But after following in the steps of Jesus for roughly three years, hearing His instruction and witnessing His example, they would go on to win many, many souls as apostles of the Lord. The same concept is still true today for those who would be followers of Jesus Christ. One CANNOT be a follower of Christ without seeking and striving to win precious souls! Nonetheless, Jesus does not send His laborers out into the fields unprepared. Through His inspired

and recorded word, Jesus teaches and equips all who will sit at His feet (2 Tim. 2:24-26; 3:16-17).

One of the first lessons to learn is awareness. Lost souls are literally everywhere. The Scriptures clearly teach the universality of sin among accountable persons (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23). Sin renders one lost—cut off from the fellowship of God (Isa. 59:2; Eph. 2:1). Thus, all accountable persons outside of Christ are LOST (Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:3)! No faithful Christian should be lackadaisical or complacent with this fact. How selfish, indeed, for one to perceive himself as “*safely inside the fold,*” while harboring no care in his heart whatsoever for those precious souls still perilously outside!

Awareness has to be cultivated deliberately. Modern life is hectic; there is no doubt. But the child of God MUST remember his calling (Eph. 4:1; et al.). God has redeemed His children to live their lives on a higher plane—with a higher purpose. Better than anyone, the Christian should perceive the approach of a never-ending eternity. While jobs must be maintained and temporal obligations met, these should never occupy the forefront of one’s attention. The Christian’s LIFE is laboring in His vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16; Luke 10:2). Lost souls are all around, and Christ expects His disciples to make other disciples (Matt. 28:18-20, ASV).

Jesus knew well the human tendency to overlook the imminent need of lost souls. He stressed to His apostles,

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and
then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you,

Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest (John 4:35).

Christ contrasted the ever-present harvest of human souls with the physical harvest of grain that was typically on human minds. Still today, concern for the physical will “*crowd out*” the needed time and attention that should be given to the spiritual. The apostles had to learn better, and Christians today do as well.

An interesting parallel can be drawn between Christ’s instructions to the apostles and what God had told father Abraham.

And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever (Gen. 13:14-15).

God wanted the patriarch to look and see all that he had been promised. Similarly, Christ has promised a harvest of souls (John 4:35-38; Isa. 55:10-11; 1 Cor. 3:6), only His disciples need to look up, giving the needed awareness and attention to the task at hand!

Another lesson to be learned in soul-winning is that of selflessness. Such is a foundational Christian virtue (Matt. 16:24-25; 20:25-28), but it has multiple applications in the realm of seeking to save the lost. First, the soul-winner must be **selfless** in his effort to win the lost. Doing what is necessary

to build rapport with prospective converts, and taking the time to teach them as well, are not always convenient tasks. These things frequently require the adjusting of schedules and the changing of personal plans. Selfish resistance can rear its ugly head, tempting the soul-winner to put off what needs to be done promptly, or to withhold a special effort that might be particularly effective. Satan specializes in such maneuvers, and he delights in successfully hindering soul-winning opportunities. Paul's personal attitude can serve as an antidote when one is tempted to hold back his best effort.

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

Second, selflessness comes to bear in soul-winning through **deflection**. In other words, a soul-winner cannot take criticism and rejection personally. Souls that eventually obey the gospel are often antagonistic and even combative at first. Enduring such volleys is not for the faint of heart. Internalizing harsh words and personal attacks will

not be productive in the evangelistic process or in the spiritual life of the disciple himself. The assaulted child of God might be tempted to give up—to give up his efforts or even to give up his personal faith! The Christian must remember that, ultimately, all resistance and rejection is directed toward Christ—not the Christian (John 12:48; 15:18-21). Noting the world’s treatment of Christ while He was upon the earth, the Christian must not be surprised or discouraged when he meets with much of the same.

In writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul mentioned much that pertains to the present idea of deflection.

And **the servant of the Lord** must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In **meekness** instructing *those that oppose themselves*; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (2 Tim. 2:24-26; emp. mine, CG).

In a real sense, Timothy was instructed to “*take himself out of the picture.*” After all, Timothy’s life and labors were not about Timothy. Timothy is described as “*the servant of the Lord.*” Since when did things revolve around the servant? Do they not rightfully revolve around the Master? This attitude would help Timothy—and Christians still today—to deflect criticism and antagonism. The Christian soul-winner can say, “*It really doesn’t matter what happens to me, or what is said to me. It’s not about*

me. It's about my Lord and about the task He's given me to do."

This is also where the quality of meekness enters into the picture. Meekness has aptly been described as that disposition which would rather be wronged, than ever to be guilty of doing wrong, or harming others. It often manifests itself in a willingness to forbear wrongs patiently, to *"turn the other cheek"* (Matt. 5:38-42). Moses demonstrated such in his life, especially in the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron (Num. 12:1-3). Such an attitude is essential when working with *"those that oppose themselves."* A lost soul that is hostile to the gospel and even antagonistic toward its messenger is his own worst enemy. He certainly does not need the *"soul-winner"* to turn against him as well.

Third, selflessness is essential to **faith** in the gospel's **power**. In other words, the soul-winner must let the gospel do the converting (Rom. 1:16). The best results are achieved when the pure, unadulterated gospel is freely allowed to come in contact with the heart of the hearer. No distractions to this process are desirable. Personal egos, selfish agendas, intellectual strifes, and the like only prove to get in the way. The ultimate power does not lie in the messenger or in the method—it lies in the message. It is true that the soul-winner should do all that he can to expedite the message. In so doing, however, he must never forget that the power lies in the gospel and not in himself.

Looking Forward

In one sense, laying up treasures in heaven is all about perspective. There is an aspect of seeking the lost that is all about perspective as well. The needed perspective is one that looks constantly toward heaven. Perspective has a lot to do with where one is standing, and Christians realize they are standing on the cusp of eternity. The whole world is only one shout and one trumpet blast away from eternity's realm (1 Thes. 4:16). Every individual, likewise, is only one breath and one heartbeat away from eternity's shore. For faithful children of God there is a thrilling facet to this reality. Paul taught that God's children should be "*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,*" (Titus 2:13). Peter similarly instructed, "*Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God...*" (2 Peter 3:12). Heaven's prospect and promise should exhilarate the heart of every believer!

There can be no doubt that the apostle Paul looked forward to heaven. His anticipation of the heavenly reward also factored in the presence of those whom he had led to Christ. The Scriptural evidence of this is unmistakable. Consider the following passages.

As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 1:14).

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and

harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all (Phil. 2:14-17).

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy (1 Thes. 2:19-20).

There must be a great deal of this concept that will remain unexplained until God's faithful enter the heavenly home. It seems obvious, however, that there will be knowledge and recognition "*on the other side.*" Paul fully intended to know the Corinthian, Philippian and Thessalonian brethren at the Second Coming of Christ. His knowing them implies that such brethren will also know and remember Paul.

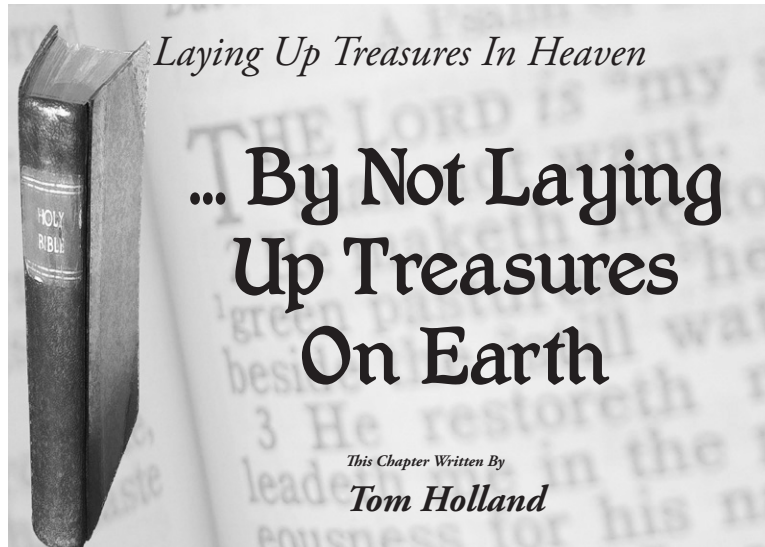
Only eternity will tell the joys that are awaiting Christ's soul-winners! Being before the throne of Almighty God, surrounded in part by those whom one helped to get there, is an experience one can only imagine this side of eternity. The words of Scripture forever ring true.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

... BY HOW WE SEEK TO SAVE

And as John wrote,

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord
from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that
they may rest from their labours; and their
works do follow them (Rev. 14:13).



While we live in a material world, we must be careful that we do not let the material world live in us. The material things are so near and they may be used for our enjoyment or pleasure now. Jesus knew the danger the earthly things were to His followers so He explained to us the way we may keep the material things of the world from controlling our lives and even robbing us of the spiritual blessings which bless us now and can bless us eternally. We will consider the challenge Jesus gives, the contrast that He presented, and the consideration of the spiritual by illustrations from the natural world.

The Challenge

Jesus said, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth...*” (Matt. 6:19). Jesus used a present imperative when He said “*lay not...*” which means keep on not laying up for yourselves treasures on earth.

There are problems with earthly treasures. They are subject to moth, rust and thieves. Literal moths or the “*moths of style*” may destroy expensive clothing. Expensive automobiles may be ruined by wrecks, storms, hail, and model changes.

One of the real problems with material things comes from thieves who steal them. Scams and scam artists are one of the salient characteristics of our day. Electronic stealing is one of the real problems. Electronic thieves are so prominent that we pay organizations to protect our bank accounts, credit cards, and our savings from crooks.

Would you put your money in a bank whose demise was imminent? Would you buy stock in a company that you knew was on the verge of collapse? Would you invest in a Corporation whose management had been indicted for fraud?

In contrast we try to secure our valuables. We rent lock boxes at a bank, or we buy a fireproof lock box to keep at home and we keep a loaded firearm ready in case of a home invasion. The insecurity of our valuables is demonstrated in the insurance we buy to replace our valuables if they are stolen or destroyed by fire or a storm. We record the serial numbers on our guns so they can be traced if stolen.

All our efforts to secure our earthly treasures are demonstrations of what Jesus said about the insecurity of earthly treasures or possessions.

The Contrast

Jesus said, “*But lay up treasures in heaven*” (Matt.

6:20). Heaven to Jesus was a real place. Heaven was not a mere condition of the mind. Seventeen times in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5, 6, 7) Jesus talked about heaven! So when we think about laying up treasure in heaven, we are thinking about a real place of security. There *“neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal”* (Matt. 19:20).

With these promises of our Lord sincerely believed, the important question becomes: How do we lay up treasure in heaven? We get an insight into the answer to the question of how we lay up treasure in heaven by an examination of the way Jesus informed a rich young ruler he could lay up treasure in heaven. Although many people would think that this young man should have been satisfied, because he had riches, power and youth. He also knew that he needed to know how to *“have eternal life”* (Matt. 19:16). Jesus said, *“sell what you have and give it to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven”* (Matt. 19:21). Is there any other way to *“lay up treasure in heaven”* other than giving? In a significant chapter on giving, the apostle Paul quoting from Psalm 122 wrote: *“He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever”* (2 Cor. 9:9).

In addition to this information about giving to have treasure in heaven, we have the Lord’s criterion by which we may test ourselves relative to our relationship to material things. This criterion comes in the Savior’s application of the rich but foolish farmer. This man thought that by building bigger barns and storing

up his wealth he could say “*soul take thine ease.*” God identified the man as a fool because he would die that night and then who would have all of his wealth? Jesus said a person is being as foolish as this farmer who lays up treasure and is not “*rich toward God*” (Luke 12:21).

A sincere person can take the Lord’s criterion and decide how much he/she can invest in an automobile, the price of house in which to live, the price of clothes to wear, or any material thing. The question is: “*am I rich toward God?*”

Timothy was instructed to “*charge them that are rich...not to trust in uncertain riches...(to) do good, that they be rich in good works*” (1 Tim. 5:18).

Someone once said, “*Some people are so heavenly minded that of little earthly good.*” Is that our real problem? Jesus must have known the danger we face of being too earthly minded because He warned of the danger of putting our treasures on earth. Where we put our treasures is where we put our hearts. If Jesus thought that His followers would be too heavenly minded why did He keep talking about heaven? Furthermore, why did Jesus use the illustrations to show the danger of being too earthly minded?

Compelling Illustrations

Jesus said, “*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore the eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light*” (Matt. 6:22). **A single eye is a focused eye.** The focus of the spiritual is Jesus. There are real challenges to the single eye. One is the “*cataract of covetousness.*” Jesus used the parable of the foolish wealthy farmer to

illustrate His warning of the danger of covetousness. In fact, Jesus said,

Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses (Luke 12:15).

One may become so involved in the pursuit of material things that he loses sight of the more important things, namely the spiritual. Paul said a covetous man is an "*idolator*" (Eph. 5:5). Among the things to be put to death by those who have been risen with Christ (Col. 3:1; 2:12) and so then "*set their minds on things above*" is "*covetousness, which is idolatry.*" The covetous person has the eye focused on business, a profession, a job, sports, or things belonging to the present temporal world and these things can hinder the vision of the eternal permanent things.

The single eye may become out of focus by the astigmatism of selfishness. The selfish person is focused on self. Jesus knew the possibility of His followers becoming selfish, so the Lord declared:

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me (Matt. 16:24).

The person who has denied himself/herself is no longer focused on what he/she wants, but what the Lord wants that person to do in doing God's will on earth as God's will is done in heaven. Selfish people are concerned about their own pleasures, wants and desires instead of how they may glorify God with their lives.

The single eye is hindered by the myopia of materialism. Materialism covers a broad range of subjects from a philosophical to a practical view of things on earth. Philosophical materialism has been embraced by atheists who, in the words of the atheist astronomer who asserted: *“The universe is the only thing there is or ever was or ever will be.”* In other words, the material world is the only reality.

Philip Johnson who debated prominent atheists traced Darwinian evolution to its philosophical foundation. He said, *“Evolution is not a fact, it’s a philosophy. The materialism comes first (a priori), and the evidence is interpreted in light of that unchangeable commitment”* (Johnson).

Philosophers call gene selection reductionism and *“Reductionists claim that everything, including our minds, can be ‘reduced’ to its material base”* (Johnson).

Materialism robs people of the joy of knowing God and keeps them from the blessing of life now and eternally (John 17:3).

Then there is practical materialism which tends to put the regard for the material things of life as its most important things. Religion for practical materialists becomes a matter of convenience rather than commitment and dedication and the result is religious indifference and apathy.

Jesus used some simple but profound illustrations to emphasize the importance of being heavenly-oriented in our lives, or as the Holy Spirit said through Paul’s inspired pen, *“set your affection”* or *“set your minds on things above, not on things which are on the earth”* (Col.

3:1-3). Jesus talked about birds and flowers. Too much emphasis on the physical aspects of life may result in *“taking thought”* or being anxious (Matt. 6:25).

Jesus said the birds neither reap nor gather into barns but God feeds them. Jesus said the heavenly Father provides food for the birds. He then asks, *“Are ye not much better than they?”* (Matt. 6:26).

Why should people worry about expensive clothing when the lilies of the field, *“clothed by God,”* were more beautiful than *“Solomon in all his glory”* (Matt. 6:28-30).

Jesus said that the Gentiles are seeking, or *“running after”* the material things of this earthly existence. Their hearts are involved in these things because that is where they put their treasures.

The providence of God is evident in the explanation of Jesus when the Savior said that God feeds the birds. Then Jesus asked: *“are ye not better”* than the birds? If God clothed the *“grass of the field”* will He not clothe His children?

Jesus concluded His teaching about the material and spiritual things of life by declaring: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matt. 6:33).

If we put two things as the priority of life we will have our values in order and the spiritual will be more important to us than the material things of life; by seeking those two things we will be *“laying up treasure in heaven.”*

Jesus said, *“seek the kingdom of God.”* Since Matthew had been in a type of government business it

seems appropriate for him to write about the kingdom of God which Matthew identified as the “*kingdom of heaven*” about thirty-two times in the twenty-eight chapters of Matthew. How any Jewish person of the first century would read Matthew and the emphasis on the “*kingdom of heaven*” and still conclude that the kingdom of God identifies the establishment of an earthly political kingdom is hard to imagine.

The word Jesus used for “*kingdom*” denotes, “*SOVEREIGNTY, royal power, dominion*” (Vine). In a form of parallelism Jesus explained the nature of the kingdom. He taught the disciples to pray, “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matt. 6:10). Citizens of the kingdom of God do the will of God. God’s will is now revealed by His Son in the new covenant (Heb. 1:1-3; 8:6-13).

Does God rule in the hearts and lives of those who by sin are alienated from God in the world where Satan is “*god?*” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Or, does He reign through His Son in the hearts and lives of those who have been “*called out of the world?*” The people who comprised the church at Colosse had been “*translated out of the power of darkness and into the kingdom of God’s dear Son*” (Col. 1:13).

While the words “*kingdom*” and “*church*” do not mean the same, they nonetheless identify the same people. Faithful members of the church of Christ are seeking the kingdom as a first priority of life. They are the people who give money, time, and talent in serving the Lord.

The second thing Jesus urged His followers to seek first is, “*the righteousness of God*” (Matt. 6:33).

In its simplicity “*righteousness*” identified “*right doing as decreed and declared by the Lord in His word.*” The “*righteousness of God*” is the “*sum total of the requirements of God*” (Matt. 6:33) (Vine). In the inspired writings of Paul “*righteousness*” is right action (Vine). The Lord’s church consists of people who are “*servants of righteousness*” (Rom. 6:18).

The Lord’s people become servants of righteousness when they are “*buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:3-5).

So who is laying up treasure in heaven? People of the world who are alienated from God (Col. 1:21)? Or, those who have been called out of the world of sin by the gospel (2 Thes. 2:13-14), to be a part of the “*body of Christ*” which is His church (Eph. 1:22-23)?

The heart of the world is on the things of the world: the material things, the lusts, the power, the pride and pleasures of this temporal, passing scene.

Those who are heaven bound people send their hearts on ahead (Col. 3:1-3), and that is where they put their treasure.

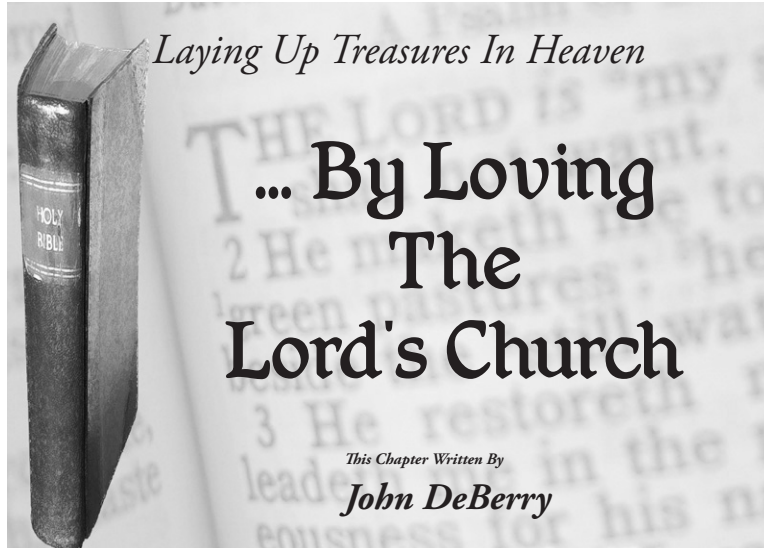
An old song says, “*Everybody talking about heaven ain’t going there.*” That song probably is true. However, those of us who are going there talk about it, write about it, pray about it, dream about it, and sing about it.

Since Jesus talked so much about heaven in His profound Sermon on the Mount, perhaps the following words will echo the Savior’s emphasis on heaven:

Heaven, the home of the soul,
Heaven, the Christian’s true goal,

Heaven, land of eternal day,
Heaven, where tears are wiped away,
Heaven, the heart's sweetest delight,
Heaven, where cometh no night,
Heaven, God's abode with man,
Heaven, on the far away strand,
Heaven, prepared by the Lord,
Heaven, revealed in God's word,
Heaven, where Jesus awaits,
Heaven, entered by pearly gates,
Heaven, above the bright blue,
Heaven, a reservation for you,
Heaven, where life's water is pure,
Heaven, where treasures are secure.

- Tom Holland



Introduction

Our Lord and Savior was the perfect example of how to address every issue and challenge of life. Because of **God's love**, Jesus' obedient sacrifice and the Holy Spirit's divine competence, we can all learn from the One person who never failed. The Hebrew writer, when speaking of Christ's superior priesthood, tells us that only the Son never succumbed to sin.

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (Heb. 5:8-9).

Because Christ became a man, He is therefore, sympathetic to man's flaws and He overcame all the various temptations which distracted Him;

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).

Therefore, who better than Jesus Christ to teach us about what is most important in life? When the Lord spoke from the hillside in Matthew 5, 6, 7, He gave what we call the "*Sermon on the Mount.*" Christ, on this occasion, gave His longest continuous discourse; the Beatitudes, teachings on anger, adultery, divorce, and in chapter six His teaching on almsgiving, were all within this great unprecedented sermon. Eventually within this diverse and profound sermon our Savior spoke about treasures in heaven. He clearly teaches that we are not to store up earthly, carnal, things of value, but those things which are of heavenly value.

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).

Your Treasure Reflects Your Heart

We humans are natural hoarders. We store away food, clothing, money and the other provisions of life, anticipating a time when these store goods will be needed. When the Lord taught on the side of that obscure mountain, He spoke to a group of people who had very little of those things needed in life to have well being. Quite often Jesus and His close disciples found themselves providing food for thousands of hungry,

sick and displaced people. This collection of many of the most important teachings of our Lord occurred on a hillside near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had been recently baptized by John and was now giving His essential and irrevocable instructions on discipleship and godliness. The Lord's teachings were groundbreaking, because they defied the outward, selfish, shallow and hypocritical teachings and examples of the Jewish big shots. Jesus categorically spoke of the importance of **inward purity** as opposed to **outward piety**. His audience had been humbled, insulted and misused by the Jewish hierarchy for generations. No one until the advent of this young rabbi, named Jesus, had shown the courage or authority to speak against their abuse of God's word/law, and God's people. Everything that the people had seen of their religious leaders up to this point was corrupted with greed, arrogance, disrespect and man-made tradition. This clearly led to an attitude of attempting to have all of one's treasure on earth. This materialistic and worldly example had turned the people's hearts from a faithful God who cared for them, to trusting in the unfaithful riches of this world. Jesus reminded the people of the wise man, Solomon's teachings, concerning treasure on earth;

Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven... For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee (Prov. 23:4-5, 7).

Treasure Thief — “Covetousness”

Jesus knew that covetousness was the prevailing sin of their time. He also knew that the test of human character is the willingness to release one's love of earthly treasure and instead store up heavenly treasure. In Matthew's gospel, the Lord took an opportunity to teach a rich young ruler this lesson, later in His personal ministry. This young man who clearly believed he was **perfect** in the Law, approached Jesus giving him the occasion to set a few things straight for him then, and for all of us in the future. After the young man's confident declaration of **perfection**, the Lord knocked him back down to size by exposing his imperfections, **covetousness**;

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions (Matt. 19:21-22).

This impressive young man had to learn what we are all to learn from the theme of this great lectureship; only those things that ingratiate us to God and are obedient to His will are treasures worth hoarding and storing up while on this earth. For as Paul taught Timothy and the church;

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 (1 Tim. 6:7-8).

We know that there is no greater and more essential spiritual blessing than the Lord's church, and

the love of the people. My topic, storing treasure **in heaven** by “*loving the Lord’s church,*” reminds us of the true treasure of “*love **from** God and love **for** God.*” We become truly rich when we restrain ourselves to “*love not the world*” (1 John 1:15), and instead love the Lord’s church, **a real blessing from heaven.**

I. Love The Church That The Lord Built.

I often say that “*God the promise **maker** is God the promise **keeper.***” God’s fidelity is important to note within this lesson, because God promised to save man by providing reconciliation and redemption. From the first messianic prophecy (Gen. 3:15), God sought to present this salvation, prepared before the foundation of the **world** (1 Peter 1:20; Eph. 1:4). God’s eternal purpose for our redemption, therefore, always included the church that the Son was to build. The apostle Paul made this very clear to the church at Ephesus as he sought to enlighten them of God’s scheme of **redemption:**

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord...Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Eph. 3:10-11, 21).

Love The Right Church

Therefore, we cannot lay up treasure in heaven unless we actually love the right church, the one

purposed by God and established by Jesus Christ. In what we often call the golden text of the Bible, Jesus personally stated during His discourse with Nicodemus,

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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:16-17).

God had planned and produced this wonderful salvation, and the church wherein we have access, the apostle Paul did a masterful job explaining this to the church at Rome;

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8).

According to God's plan and time table, Jesus Christ established the church. Near the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus promised to build an exclusive and **distinctive** organization that even His execution, and three days of head **incarceration** would not delay or detour. The Lord declared to Peter and the other disciples;

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

It is therefore, imperative that we **find** and **follow** that which is right, if our eternal treasure is to be laid up in heaven. The Greek, tupos, conveys the biblical concept of that which is according to the pattern principle.

Man in his arrogant disobedience has cluttered the world with various choices and styles of faith, worship and religion. However, God demands that we obey the Son, and will only accept those who love the Lord's church and follow the New Testament pattern. Jesus denounced the traditions of the Pharisees and promised that God the Father would uproot them; *"Every plant, which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up"* (Matt. 15:13).

We must love the church that Jesus built because only when connected to Him as the life and the life giver will we find spiritual vitality. When we lose our love for the Lord's church, we lose our ability to produce spiritual fruit:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit...Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me (John 15:1-2, 4).

Think about it, how can one even claim to love the Lord and not accept His church. How is that separation done? Jesus told His disciples a little while before His death, that love is not manifested by speech and position, but by obedience:

If ye love me, keep my commandments...He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him (John 14:15, 21).

Because the Godhead acting in unity, placed the Lord's church here for our spiritual health and reconciliation, it should motivate us to love it and walk worthy of it. When the apostle Paul wrote the saints and faithful brethren of Colosse, he urged them to appreciate what God had done;

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; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:10-12).

God Provides But We Must Possess

While God wants all men to be saved, and enjoy the blessings provided within the Lord's church, He will not save a person against their will. God cannot and will not violate our free agency and force us into the church. The scripture teaches that in order to be saved, one makes a personal choice. This choice will be obedience when one learns to love the Lord's church. When we have developed a sincere desire to obey and serve God, we will love the Lord's church. When Paul and Silas left Thessalonica, where they were mistreated by those who refused the Lord and His church, they

received a much better reception in Berea.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore, many of them **believed**; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few (Acts 17:11-12, emp. added).

When John wrote to the church by virtue of, “*the well beloved Gaius*,” he was pleased to hear that there were those who loved the church and took care of servants doing its work. He addressed them both as his friends and friends of the Lord’s church.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles (3 John 4-7).

Those who love the Lord’s church do all within their ability to aid the work of the mission of the church.

God’s people show their love, because their time, talent and treasure are given as a living sacrifice to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). To the church at Ephesus Paul wrote as a “*prisoner of the Lord*” (Eph. 4:1). He gave the brethren the “*great exhortation*,” that should guide the service of all who claim to love the **Lord’s church**;

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us,

and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour (Eph. 5:1-2).

Those who love the Lord's church will submit to the Lord of the church. Paul compared this submission to a relationship all cultures understood, that of the husband and the wife.

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. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:23-26).

Those who love the Lord's church do all possible to ***“behave themselves”*** properly. They realize that it is the church of the Living God, *“the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim. 3:15). Their love for this church, will compel them to the obedient and loving behavior that will allow Christ to complete His mission toward the blood bought church;

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27).

Paul also reminded the brethren at Colosse that the Lord and His church had changed and transformed them. Consequently their love and appreciation was to be shown by their lives being dedicated to the Lord.

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col. 1:21-23).

The whole world had been delivered and preached the good news of the gospel and the Lord's church. Now, the whole world is required to love it, if they are to have treasure in heaven.

Lay Up Treasure In Heaven

II. Love The People Of The Lord's Church.

There are those within the body who seek to separate the Lord and the Lord's church. They claim to have great affection for Jesus, but they cannot stand the people of His church. These misguided souls have a complete misunderstanding of what and who the Lord's church actually is. The traditions of men over the past two thousand years have given many a cold, institutional and organizational perception of the church. They see the church from a business point of view and believe it to be a dynamic establishment in search of human contribution and acceptance. They do not feel compelled to make an investment of **love** and **passion** toward its members, because the institution is bigger than the members and institutional maintenance is the only thing that really matters. However, this is **not the New Testament pattern**. The Lord's intent

was not just to convince man that they were wrong, but to express that they were loved. While unworthy and unappreciative, Christ died for us, "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*" (Rom. 5:6). It is this truth that give basis to the Lord's commands that we also love those who have even to return that love.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:46-48).

To have treasure in heaven we must follow the example of heaven and even love the unlovable.

False Doctrine Hinders Love

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, it was a ministry of love and compassion, not for an institution but for the people. As He went about teaching and preaching, the common people heard Him gladly, (Mark 12:37). Our Lord rejected the overbearing traditions of the Jewish leaders ceremonial **laws and rules**, and insisted on an humble obedience to the law of God. As earlier stated, the religious bigshots of the Jewish religion had so mislead the people that only an authoritative rebuke of their hypocrisy would lead the people back to the love of God and of one another. Mark records one such occasion, when Jesus had fed the hungry multitude and then sent His disciples ahead of Him to Bethsaida, while He dealt the people

a little longer (Mark 6:35-45). After Jesus had gone to the mountain to pray He came to His disciples walking upon the water, while they struggled with their boat in an evening storm (Mark 6:46-51). The next day a group of these Jewish leaders who had followed Him down from Jerusalem came together to question Him about their ignoring the traditions. These scribes and Pharisees had noticed that His disciples ate with “*unwashed hands*” (Mark 7:1-4). These leaders assumed that they would take this opportunity to **expose** Jesus of Nazareth for “*not holding the traditions of the elders*” (vs. 3), but instead, Jesus exposed them for not holding the commandments of God;

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition (Mark 7:5-7, 9).

While these insincere leaders loved only themselves and the advantages of their position, Jesus genuinely loved the people and cared about their well being (Mark 8:1-9). He was the perfect example of **love** and **compassion**. Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve God who sent Him and serve the people He sent Him to. Jesus make it very clear to His disciples that

true and lasting treasure was service and obedience to the will of the Father.

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:27-28).

As the Lord's fame spread, it was obvious that He was a different type of leader with a revolutionary style. He did exemplify **power prestige and position**, but credibility, care and compassion. As Matthew recorded after Herod's cowardly act of having John the Baptist beheaded, Jesus was not moved with anger, but with concern for people who had lost a great leader;

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick (Matt. 14:14).

In Mark's account of this occasion he states the Lord incredible heart of love for the lost and downtrodden,

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things (Mark 6:34).

Considering the mess the Jews had made of themselves, God's people and the world Jesus had to give a new **doctrine, Love**. His disciples were to know that they were what was important to God and they were to have true treasure by loving Him and one another;

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).

III. Love Identifies The Lord's Church.

From its first day of existence the Lord's church was an example of the word **love** and **compassion**. Considering the Lord's church aforementioned example, how could the Lord's church be any different? Luke records for us in the second chapter of the Acts of the apostles, the momentous happenings on the day of Pentecost. Included in the record is not only the 3000 souls who became members of the church that day, but also, how they loved and cared for one another;

And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts 2:44-46).

The church in these early days understood that they had been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. His public execution and now the great happening of Pentecost had pricked their hearts. Finally they understood; Jesus was in fact the Son of God and the Savior of the world. They were compelled by shame, appreciation, and love to love one another in the same sacrificial way that Christ had loved them. Luke gives us a glimpse of these great days of love;

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need (Acts 4:32, 34-35).

After understanding the Lord's sacrificial life and victorious resurrection, earthly treasure had lost its appeal. Now the true treasure was in heaven, in Christ Jesus. They learned from Jesus and now the apostles, that we are not to struggle among ourselves for position, power and property, but give ourselves away to one another as Christ did. Paul's description of the Lord's mind of sacrifice was given so that we also learn to empty ourselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 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. 2:4-8).

It is for this reason that the church at Corinth had to be taught what was truly of value. They had become intoxicated by spiritual gifts and temporary abilities

given to various individuals. They had developed a treasure of envy and covetousness. Paul stressed that true treasure was **love** and the **gifts of love**.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1).

According to Paul there is no treasure laid up worth having from simply doing “*stuff*” without Love; attributes which are godly and Christ-like and will never fail (vs. 4-8).

Conclusion

Treasures on this earth, are at best insecure. For this reason we do not place our hope in Christ. Our affections should not be on things of earth but on things above (Col. 3:2). There is no particular blessedness in having this world’s wealth and not having spiritual wealth and contentment. We are thus commanded to keep our priorities straight and God has promised to give us those things needed in life;

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. 6:33-34).

Those of us who trust in God will love the Lord’s church. Only then can we have treasures stored in heaven. We must never lose sight that we are pilgrims

... BY LOVING THE LORD'S CHURCH

and sojourners on this earth...we are just passing through (Heb. 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11).



Introduction

As a roaring lion, our enemy “walketh about seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Indeed, the devil is depicted in Scripture as walking about looking for his next victim. The book of Job reveals two occasions when the Lord asked Satan where he had been. Satan replied, “From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 1:7; 2:2, emphasis added). Combining these passages from Job with the text in 1 Peter 5:8, we observe that Satan is busy walking about for the purpose of devouring as many souls as possible.

There is good news, though. While Satan is walking about seeking to devour us, there is a walk that we can walk that will defeat Satan. Enoch walked such a walk, for “**Enoch walked with God: and he was not, for God took him**” (Gen. 5:24, emp. added). The

Hebrews writer indicates that walking with God is defined as pleasing God:

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God (Heb. 11:5).

Enoch's great grandson walked in the footsteps of his great grandfather by also walking with God (Gen. 6:9). At a time when Satan had successfully influenced the rest of mankind to think only evil thoughts, and that continually (Gen. 6:5), nevertheless, "*Noah walked with God.*" Consequently, he found grace in the eyes of the Lord and was saved, along with seven other family members, within the ark of safety, which he obediently built at God's command (Gen. 6:8, 14-22; 1 Peter 3:20). Unquestionably, Satan wanted to influence Noah to be lost along with the rest of the world. However, Noah's walk with God defeated Satan's purpose.

The children of Israel did some walking of their own when they fled from the Egyptians at the Exodus. Although the Red Sea stood between them and safety from Pharaoh's army,

...the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left (Exod. 14:29, emp. added).

A spiritual walk with God (i.e., agreement to follow His instructions) of necessity preceded their physical walk across the Red Sea. Of course, Satan would love to have seen them all perish at the Red Sea, thus nullifying God's seed promise to Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob. However, because the children of Israel walked with God on that occasion they defeated Satan's desires.

God Himself employed the imagery of "*walking*" to define whether His people would be blessed or cursed. In Leviticus 26:3, God told His people,

If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit...and **I will walk among you**, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people (Lev. 26:3-4, 12, emp. added).

On the other hand, God said:

And **if ye walk contrary unto me**, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate. And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will **I also walk contrary unto you**, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins...And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins (Lev. 26:21-24, 27-28, emp. added).

Repeatedly, throughout the Scriptures, the activity of walking is depicted. Of the over 400 references to "*walking*" in the Scriptures the bulk of these have to do with physical walking, but there are also many passages that refer to someone's walk as a euphemism for the

direction of their spiritual journey, whether good or bad. This contrast between walking by the Spirit versus walking in the flesh is distinctly seen in Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, **let us also walk in the Spirit.** Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another (Gal. 5:17–26, emp. added).

Paul's letter to the Romans puts a spotlight on this contrast between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the

flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they **that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.** For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. **So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.** But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you...Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. **For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live** (Rom. 8:1–8, 13, emp. added).

The book of Ephesians also spotlights the fleshly walk versus the spiritual walk. Consider the inspired contrast between the two as unfolded in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

The Fleshly Walk

Paul reminded the Ephesians of a time in their lives when they were not walking to defeat Satan. Rather, Satan had defeated them. They were "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph. 2:1) because Satan had enticed them to walk "*according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*" (Eph. 2:2). The fleshly walk of the Ephesians manifested itself in their pursuit of the lusts of the flesh, and their quest to fulfill

the desires of the flesh and of the mind—a carnal mind (Eph. 2:3). F. B. Meyer points out:

It is as ruinous to indulge the desires of the mind as those of the flesh. By the marvelous gift of imagination we may indulge unholy fancies, and throw the reins on the neck of the steeds of passion—always stopping short of the act. No human eye follows the soul when it goes forth to dance with satyrs or to thread the labyrinthine maze of the islands of desire. It goes and returns unsuspected by the nearest. Its credit for snow-white purity is not forfeited. It is still permitted to watch among the virgins for the Bridegroom's advent. But if this practice is unjudged and unconfessed, it marks the offender a son of disobedience and a child of wrath.

Paul knew that governing the mind is the key to avoiding the fleshly walk. Hence, he exhorted the Ephesians, “*that ye walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind*” (Eph. 4:17, emp. added). Paul reminded the Ephesians that they were Christians now, not Gentiles. He also proceeded to describe several characteristics of the fleshly walk. The fleshly walk is...

1. **A Sightless Walk.** Those who walk after the ways of the flesh have their “*understanding darkened*” and are ignorant “*because of the blindness of their heart*” (Eph. 4:18). As the “*god of this world,*” Satan,

Hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:4).

Jesus also spoke of some who were walking the sightless walk. He quoted Isaiah's prophecy, which said of some:

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;
and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:
for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their
ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have
closed; lest at any time they should see with
their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should
understand with their heart, and should be
converted, and I should heal them. But blessed
are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for
they hear (Matt. 13:14-16).

It is sad and needless for men to walk in darkness when they could very easily walk in the light.

2. **A Lifeless Walk.** Paul observed that the sightless walk is also a lifeless walk, for those who walk in darkness are "*alienated from the life of God*" (Eph. 4:18). Eternal life is found in following in the footsteps of the Son of God, because "*in him was life; and the life was the light of men*" (John 1:4; 1 John 5:11). However,

This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved (John 3:19-20).

Life and light are coupled together often in Scripture. The light leads to life. The narrow way is the way that leadeth unto life (Matt. 7:14). On the other hand, those who walk in darkness walk a path that leads to death rather than life. Tragically, some are not willing to walk the narrow path that leads to life. They choose

to walk the worldly way, the broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13). If only we could get the world to see that the fleshly walk is a lifeless one!

3. **A Shameless Walk.** Paul described those who walk the fleshly walk as *“being past feeling”* (Eph. 4:19). The Greek word that translates this phrase is quite vivid:

Moule translates it: *“having got over the pain.”*
How expressive! When conscience is at first denied, there is a twinge of pain; there is a protest that can be heard. But if the voice is silenced, presently the voice becomes less clear and clamant; the protest is smothered; the twinge is less acute, until at last it is possible to *“get over the pain.”*

If we persist too long on the worldly trail, then our consciences can become calloused. The longer we walk in sin the more danger there is that we will become insensitive to sin. Some in Jeremiah’s day had become so accustomed to sin that they felt no shame—they couldn’t even blush (Jer. 6:15; 8:12). In the New Testament, Paul provides a description of the attitude of the shameless in both Romans 1 and Ephesians 4. In fact, there is a great similarity between Paul’s descriptions of the Gentiles in these two chapters. In Romans 1, he described them as follows: (1) they became vain in their imaginations; (2) their foolish heart was darkened; (3) they became fools; (4) they changed the truth of God into a lie; (5) they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator; (6) they burned in their lust for those of the same gender; (7) they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; (8) they were filled with all unrighteousness. Consequently, God

“also gave them up to uncleanness” (Rom 1:24), *“gave them up unto vile affections”* (Rom. 1:26) and *“gave them over to a reprobate mind”* (Rom. 1:28).

In Ephesians 4, Paul described the Gentiles as (1) walking in the vanity of their mind; (2) having their understanding darkened; (3) being alienated from the life of God through ignorance; (4) being blind or calloused in heart; (5) being past feeling; (6) having given themselves over unto lasciviousness, and (7) working all uncleanness with greediness. The IVP Bible Background Commentary informs us,

Premarital sex, homosexual intercourse and idolatry were typically Gentile sins from which nearly all Jews abstained. By contrast, pagans were raised this way; many Greek boys were ushered into ‘manhood’ by an older man’s molestation.

No wonder Paul wrote that the Ephesians should *“walk not as other Gentiles walk!”* They were so shameless that they cast off every shred of self-restraint and just let themselves go. They deliberately gave themselves over to *“lasciviousness,”* which Thayer defines as *“unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence.”* Furthermore, they were absolutely insatiable in their quest to pursue the lusts of the flesh. They did not just work at being unclean—that would have been bad enough—they worked at being unclean with a greedy intensity. In their commentary on Ephesians, Jamieson, Faussett and Brown explain that the Greek implies that they worked at uncleanness *“with a deliberate view to the*

working (as if it were their work or business, not a mere accidental fall into sin) of uncleanness of every kind.”

4. **An Aimless Walk.** To sum it up, the fleshly walk is an aimless walk. Paul said as much when he described the Gentiles as walking “*in the vanity of their mind*” (Eph. 4:17). The word translated “*vanity*” in the King James Version can also be translated with the word “*futility*.” The Greek word (mataiotēti) “*suggests being void of useful aim or goal.*” During His earthly ministry, Jesus told His hearers,

Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth (John 12:35).

Whereas the one walking in darkness does not know where he is going, there is a walk that we can walk which provides assurance and certainty of where we came from, what we are doing here, and where we are going.

The Spiritual Walk

After spending three chapters reminding the Ephesians of how they had forsaken the fleshly walk by their obedience to the Gospel, Paul wrote,

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called (Eph. 4:1).

The Ephesians had been dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1).

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead

in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,
(by grace ye are saved;) (Eph. 2:4-5).

The Ephesians began their walk with Christ when they were saved by God's grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). The Bible is its own best interpreter and, since Acts 19:1-6 reveals that the establishment of the Ephesian church involved twelve men being baptized into Christ, we see that baptism is a part of what it means to be saved by grace through faith.

But it was not enough for the Ephesians to begin their walk with Christ. Paul's statement in Ephesians 4:1 demonstrates clearly that the Ephesians had exchanged the worldly walk for the worthy walk. Throughout the book of Ephesians we find the characteristics that comprise the spiritual walk. The spiritual walk is...

1. **A Working Walk.** Immediately after reminding the Ephesians of how they had been saved by grace through faith, Paul reminded his readers,

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ
Jesus unto good works, which God hath before
ordained that we should walk in them (Eph.
2:10).

Although we are not saved by meritorious works of which we can boast (Eph. 2:9), we are nevertheless expected to work obedience to the commands of God both before and after our conversion. God did not save us with the expectation that we would sit idly by thereafter. Rather, the very purpose for which we were created in Christ Jesus is to engage in good works. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commanded,

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Dorcas was a woman who took these words to heart. She was *“full of good works”* (Acts 9:36). Scripture teaches us that this is a characteristic of any woman who professes godliness (1 Tim. 2:10). It is so important for the Christian walk to be a working walk that unless widows were *“well reported of for good works”* they were not to be supported by the church treasury (1 Tim. 5:10). Furthermore, those who are monetarily rich are also required to be *“rich in good works”* (1 Tim. 6:18). Titus was instructed to live his life in such a way that it would serve as *“a pattern of good works”* (Titus 2:7). Christians who have been purified from their iniquities and purchased by Christ are expected to be *“zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:14).

The tense of the verb *“walk”* in Ephesians 2:10 indicates continuous action. Our good works are not to be *“a flash in the pan”* but rather Paul affirmed constantly that *“they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works”* (Titus 3:8). We are to *“learn to maintain good works for necessary uses”* so that we are not unfruitful (Titus 3:14). Indeed, the worthy walk is a working walk.

2. A Loving Walk. Paul instructed the Ephesians to:

Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour (Eph. 5:2).

In the previous chapter he had encouraged them to walk the worthy walk “*with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love*” (Eph. 4:1-2). Fortunately, Jesus Christ has already provided the Christian with an example of how to walk in love, which is precisely why Paul qualified his instruction to the Ephesians to walk in love by quickly adding, “*as Christ also hath loved us*” (Eph. 4:2). How did Christ walk in love? It is interesting to note that every quality listed in Ephesians 4:2 is one that Jesus demonstrated to perfection. He demonstrated “*lowliness and meekness*” in humbling Himself to take upon Him the form of a servant and to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5-9). While on earth, He affirmed that He was “*meek and lowly in heart*” (Matt. 11:28) and demonstrated the same by seeking to serve others, rather than selfishly demanding that His needs be met (Matt. 20:28). His lowliness was unforgettably depicted in John 13 when He took a towel and washed the feet of His disciples. To walk the worthy walk we must seek to imitate to the best of our ability His lowliness and meekness.

It should be noted that He was meek and lowly because He loved others more than Himself. His determination to walk in love was a prerequisite to walking in lowliness and meekness. People who love themselves above others are anything but humble. They are arrogant and pompous, the very opposite of what Jesus was/is.

Jesus also walked in love by being longsuffering and forbearing. When His disciples should have been more faithful Jesus bore patiently with them and tried

to help them along in the development of their faith. He was certainly longsuffering with Peter and all of the verbal gaffes he committed. Jesus also bore patiently with those who had nothing but scorn for Him. While men mocked Him beneath His cross, Jesus prayed for them to have the opportunity to be forgiven (Luke 23:34). As we walk in love and imitate our Saviour's footsteps (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6), we will love our enemies and do good to those who hate us, and we will pray for them which despitefully use and abuse us (Matt. 5:44-45).

Of course, the ultimate exhibition of Jesus walking in love is His willingness to walk the road to Calvary. The Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, but the Son had to also be willing to give Himself. That is precisely what Paul reminded the Ephesians of when he noted that Jesus "*hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God*" (Eph. 5:2). It was His love for His Father, and for you and me, that led Him to the cross. Paul acknowledged this in his own life when he wrote that Jesus as the Son of God "*loved me and gave himself for me*" (Gal. 2:20). Our task is to be imitators of God, as His dear children (Eph. 5:1). This imitation will include a fervent commitment to walk in love, a love that is selfless and sacrificial.

3. A Lighted Walk. Paul told the Ephesians, "*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord*" (Eph. 5:8). The walk formerly characteristic of the Ephesians was a walk in the dark. The imagery of darkness as a symbol of wickedness is threaded throughout the Scriptures. The Proverbs writer spoke

of some who leave the paths of uprightness “*to walk in the ways of darkness*” (Prov. 2:13). Indeed, “*the way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble*” (Prov. 4:19). There were some in Isaiah’s day who “*put darkness for light*” by calling evil, good and good, evil (Isa. 5:20). However, Isaiah prophesied of a time when “*the people that walked in darkness*” would be privileged to see “*a great light*” (Isa. 9:2). The New Testament reveals that Jesus was/is the “*great light*” that came to shine in the midst of this dark world (Matt. 4:13-17; John 1:4-5; 3:19). In fact, Jesus said that if we will follow Him, we will not walk in darkness, but our path will be lighted by His glorious guidance (John 8:12; 12:35, 46).

Of course, we would not even know that Jesus is the light of the world if not for the light of God’s Word. What would you know about Jesus if the Bible did not exist? To truly know the light of the world, we must bask in the light of the Word. God’s Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psm. 119:105). “*For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life*” (Prov. 6:23). Paul told the Ephesians to,

Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but wise,
redeeming the time because the days are evil.
Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding
what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:15-17).

Hence the key to walking in the light is to walk in wisdom. The way to walk in wisdom is to understand what the will of the Lord is and then to behave accordingly. In order to understand what the will of

Lord is, we must read the inspired Word of God, for Paul said, “*when ye read, ye may understand*” (Eph. 3:4). Thus, there is no way to walk in the light of God’s Word if we do not even know what it teaches. To stay in the light we must stay in the Word!

When Saul of Tarsus was commissioned to be an apostle Jesus told him that the thrust of his mission would be to help sinners,

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:18).

Because Paul was faithful to carry out his apostolic mission he could tell the Ephesians that they used to be darkness but were now light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8; cf. Rom. 13:14; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:13).

Having become “*light in the Lord,*” Paul admonished them to “*walk as children of light*” (Eph. 5:8). What is involved in walking as children of light? In the first place, if we are walking as children of light then we must avoid having any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). To walk in the light is to walk in harmony with the Word of God. If we walk in harmony with the Word of God we will avoid participating in “*fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness...filthiness, foolish talking, jesting...*” (Eph. 5:3-4).

The Christian will remember,

That no whoremonger, nor unclean person,
nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any

inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God
(Eph. 5:5).

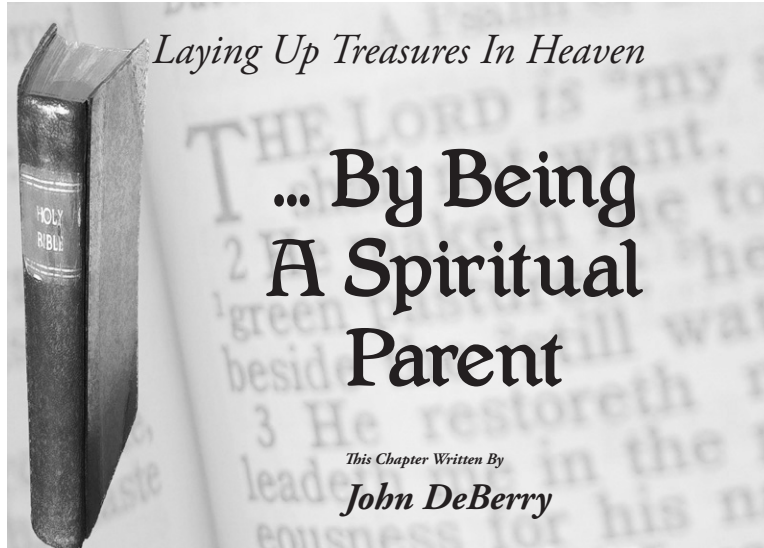
The Christian who walks in the light will not partake with them who partake of these things, knowing that to do so would bring upon us the wrath of God (Eph. 5:6). The lighted walk of the Christian is a walk that will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Eph. 5:9; Gal. 5:22-24), rather than the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

Finally, to fight against the rulers of the darkness of this world, once we begin our walk with God we must maintain our walk with Him by putting on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10-18).

Conclusion

Satan is walking about seeking to defeat us. In order to defeat him we must forsake the fleshly walk and embrace the spiritual walk. If we walk the spiritual walk while here on earth then when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we will have nothing to fear, for we will know the Lord is with us, walking by our side (Psm. 23:4). Finally, and most beautifully, if we walk the spiritual walk with Him now, then the words of Jesus will apply to us: *“they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy”* (Rev. 3:4)!

... BY WALKING IN SPIRIT / NOT IN THE FLESH



In 1974, when I held my newborn in my arms for the first time, I knew right then that I was blessed. I was just barely in my twenties, recently graduated from Freed-Hardeman, married a little more than a year earlier, and now, I was a daddy. My wife and I were not much more than kids ourselves but we both knew that whatever it took from the both of us, this precious child would have the best life we could possibly provide. Being a poor, struggling young minister, there were many fears and anxieties that went through my **youthful** and **inexperienced** mind. However, I had no doubt that with the help of the Lord, my beautiful young wife and my beautiful new daughter would have a husband and daddy who would do all possible to maintain a Christian home and the provisions of life. Believe me, I was afraid. I literally left the dorm in 1973, went to Memphis, got married on Saturday and moved into our new house and was in the pulpit on

Sunday morning. I made just enough money to pay my house note, keep the lights on and keep a little food on the table. There was very little time to grow up. The life of a young minister was hard at best, but we knew that we wanted to start our family. So on faith we did, and now there is this little bundle of life, holding tight to my finger with her little hand and stealing my very heart away. How could I do anything other than make sure that she knew the Lord who had given her to me? God's love was all over that child and I hope that God knew that I was looking to Him with the same trust that my baby girl was looking at me.

Do not ask me how we made it those first two years because I do not know. I did some yard work, I did a few gospel meetings, and I fished a lot. Believe me, I did not fish for fun; I fished for food. My wife was young, but she learned fast. She kept a good house, was an excellent seamstress, and learned quickly to shop on a budget. And she loved fish, thank God! The deal was I had to clean the fish; she froze them in milk cartons and learned to fry them beautifully after battering up the eyes. In essence we had very little of the world's treasure but God had given of His heritage and this heavenly treasure would be loved and raised properly.

When my second child was born, I was still a struggling preacher, but we had plenty of stuff, so it was not that bad. Plus being older and more experienced, a new baby girl was not as scary as the first time around. However one thing did not change—my heart was stolen away for a second time. This child was almost

like the rebirth of our family, new life, new hopes, and new commitment. Each of us had new roles; my wife had two children, I had two little girls, a larger family to support, and my daughter was an adoring big sister. One thing was sure, once again a little new person held my finger tight and looks at me with the most gorgeous trusting eyes, and once again I looked to my Father in heaven for the strength, courage and wisdom to take care of this treasure from heaven. I needed His help to be a spiritual parent.

This Was God's Child

When the Psalmist penned Psalm 127, it was meant as a song of reliance upon God. The principle of the Psalm is that all human efforts are empty and vain unless they are blessed by God, the Father. There is eternal value in things only when they are dedicated to God, even our children;

Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Psm. 127:3-5).

Too many parents look upon their children as personal property and personal possessions. From this flawed mindset children are often educated, socialized, dressed up and surrounded by technology. However, in many homes they are not raised as though they belong to God. The apostle Paul knew that there were many

problems within the church at Ephesus. He knew that there would be men to arise among them and teach perverse and ungodly teachings to draw away disciples after them as Luke recorded in Acts 20:30. Because of this coming apostasy and the temptations of idolatry and sin in a big city like Ephesus, Paul urged that attention be given to the children;

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Then as now, if there is going to be a continuation of our **cultures**, our **nation** and our **faith**, we must prepare for the future by preparing the children. Solomon's advice is ageless. He knew that the godly instruction given to a child at the proper time and in the proper way will last a lifetime.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6).

God gives us children so that they can be *“molded into acceptable human beings.”* This is not a one-dimensional process, but requires attention to the whole person. When Jesus was only twelve years old His family went to Jerusalem. When His family left town, Jesus stayed behind in the temple. When His mother inquired why? He said, *“I must be about my father's business”* (Luke 2:41-49). Within this story, there is a great assessment of Jesus' development as a child. What is said about Him should be a benchmark in the development of all children; *“And Jesus increased*

in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). What a wonderful testament to Godly child rearing, and successful parenting.

Jesus was a well-rounded young man according to Luke’s record. He grew in **wisdom**; He grew **intellectually**. He grew in stature as He grew physically. He grew in favor of **God**; He grew **spiritually**. He grew in favor of **man**; He grew **socially**. In essence, Jesus grew up to be what God intended—perfect **humanity** and perfect **divinity**. All parents should learn from the way Jesus was raised and see to it that God’s children are properly brought up. Remember Jesus was an obedient child, however, He also had obedient and spiritual parents. Jesus humbled Himself to submit to the authority of His parents and young people today should learn also. *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered”* (Heb. 5:8).

Paul exhorted the children at Ephesus to submit to their parents;

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) (Eph. 6:1-2).

The word honor in this context means inward respect and sincere reverence. When parents manifest godliness before their children, their children will have equal reverence for them.

Lost Treasure

Sad but true, many families today are dysfunctional and unproductive. Many parents have

forsaken their God-given position of authority and attempt instead to be their child's friend, buddy and homey. How ridiculous! If children were capable of raising themselves God would not have given them parents. Many parents have so involved themselves in the gathering of earthly treasures that they have lost the heavenly treasure, *"their children."* For some parents, it is as though they have put their home on *"Automatic Parent Mode."* The fridge is filled, the power is on, there are computers, I-Pads, phones, even sometimes tutors, clubs, and activities. The Auto Parent Mode will seek to simply keep hours of the child's life filled, so that it does not get in the way of the real parent's lives. And it gets better when the child can drive. Now the child gets a car key, a house key and enough money to keep them busy and out of the way. I always say that many parents spend their resources giving their children what they did not have (material things). However they fail to give them what they did have (a treasured godly upbringing)—spiritual parents.

Tarnish Treasure

Some families are in so much trouble that the children feel worthless and abandoned. Consider these facts:

- Most biblically illiterate generation in history of this nation.
- Most unchurched generation.
- Most morally undisciplined.
- Since 1999 ever-increasing divorce rate.
- Highest suicide rate among children in history.

- Most families without fathers in history.
- The Juvenile crime rate tripled since 1965.
- Teenage girls involved in more violent crimes.
- The school dropout rate highest in the world.
- Since 1991 more children dependent not on their families but on government. (Pray for these poor children).
- More children born out of wedlock.
- More small children placed on mind-altering drugs instead of godly discipline.
- More young men in jail than in college.

Our children are our treasure to prepare to go to the future to care for the Lord's church and the United States of America. We are free now to worship as we please. However, that freedom is not **free** and each generation must pay the **cost** of that **freedom**. Are we possibly raising a generation who will be unwilling to fight for those beliefs and values that make America the greatest nation in history? Have we allowed a generation to forget who we are, and why we are who we are. God had that concern that Israel would forget where that came from and the hardship He brought them through. It is easy when you become a great nation to forget that man ruled over you until God liberated you. Moses order that God warned the children and reminded them day and night;

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).

Moses urged the people to repeat the story of the faithfulness of God over and over till it became just as important to their children as if they had lived it with them. We know from a study of the history of Israel that over a period of time, love and appreciation for God eroded. Joshua, who became Moses's successor, forcefully rebuked those who had begun to rewrite history and had forgotten that God liberated them from 400 years of slavery.

...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. 24:14-15).

Joshua assured the people that he intended to serve the Lord and insist that his whole household did the same. What if more heads of households were equally committed to serving God and being spiritual parents? What if more parents realized that they are never successful parents until they become spiritual parents.

What if more children were not only taught of God, but were expected to serve God? If the above were to become a fact, it would make a significant impact on all of the negative statistics creating problems in society. Solomon said a long time ago, *“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he”* (Prov. 23:7). We are all a product of our upbringing and environment. This being true, to raise a spiritual person, we must become spiritual parents.

Make Your Child A Treasure Of The Family Of God

It has been said that while children are about 25 to 30% of the population, they are 100% of the future. This makes children a particular treasure to our families, our nation, and the Lord’s church. In order to be a spiritual parent, we must, therefore, value those things which are spiritual. When the apostle Paul wrote the church at Corinth, he pointed out that a carnal mind, filled with carnal desire will hinder spiritual growth and activity.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

According to Paul, carnal minds will place more importance on the things of this world than the things of God. Therefore, a carnal-minded parent will treasure

a great athlete, or musician, or cheerleader, or honor roles and academic acclaim more than a child who is a faithful Christian. So many parents seem surprised when their children reach eighteen, or leave for college, or even have a family of their own, and serving God, and the church is their least concern. Some are even drawn to denominationalism by their spouses. How tragic. But, they lost their faith because they were not raised by spiritual parents.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Rom. 8:13-14).

Conclusion

Those two little girls I spoke of earlier are both grown women now. We look at them and how they have developed into wonderful and faithful Christian women, and thank God for wisdom and courage. My eldest daughter is an attorney, married to a fine young physician. He is a deacon in the church and they have two fine daughters themselves. We raised her in a spiritual environment and because of her, this fine young man was converted.

My youngest daughter is a faithful Christian. She is completing her Master's degree at Old Miss in early childhood counseling. She is still single; I raised her to set the bar high. She gives her time to help at risk children. They both teach church school and are a great asset to the local congregation.

This was not magic; it was obedience. God gave them to us to be stewards of their lives and souls at that critical and vulnerable time. We treasured them, and gave God two jewels that will sparkle in the church long after we are gone. **YOU CAN DO IT, TOO!**

... BY BEING A SPIRITUAL PARENT



Why are you a Christian? Why do you choose to live the Christian life? Why have you chosen a life that requires you to carefully make choices in harmony with God's directives, rather than just doing what you want to do? What is your motivation for devoting yourself to Christian living? I suspect that we all have more than one answer to such questions. But surely the central motivation for our choice of lifestyle is that we are seeking that ultimate eternal home wherein we can exist for eternity with Deity. In the final analysis, that is what keeps us going. We may have lots of encouragement along the way from our mates, our families, and our brethren; but ultimately, we expect to be accepted by our God and our Christ into the heavenly realm where we will be safe and happy forever.

So no matter what we face in this life, no matter how tragic, no matter how discouraging, no matter

how uncomfortable or distasteful, we are able to bear it by keeping our spiritual eyes on our eternal reward. The keys to achieving this single-sighted, all-consuming purpose in life are not mysteries or difficult to understand. You know them well: constant Bible study, continual prayer, and consistent church attendance and worship. Only in these ways are we able to keep the multitude of distractions and allurements from overtaking our determination to be faithful. Only in these ways can we push away from us those moments in life when we are tempted to succumb to Satan's ploys.

We face many temptations that are in and of themselves innocent and not sinful: fishing, hunting, gardening, education, friendships, romantic relationships, and an innumerable host of other daily activities that fill our lives. Yet these are the very avenues that Satan uses to divert our spiritual eyes away from our eternal home. These are the very things that can sometimes interfere with seeking the kingdom **first**.

How To Keep Spiritual Our Eyes On Heaven: Consider Job

But in addition to our everyday activities, think of the times when we encounter bumps in the road that momentarily jar our spiritual sensibilities. I am thinking of illness, the death of loved ones, financial hardship, mistreatment by others, and other occurrences that bring heartache, grief, and suffering into our lives. It is at such times that we undoubtedly face more vividly whether our decision to be a Christian is the

right decision. The Bible in its entirety is the only true source of the necessary means for weathering the harsh storms of life. More specifically, Job is certainly one to whom we should go to learn how to keep our spiritual eyes on our eternal home when we are facing significant adversity.

You are well aware of what happened to Job: first, his financial empire collapsed—he went from filthy rich to economically devastated; second, he experienced the death of all ten of his children on the same day; and third, he lost his health, enduring excruciating physical pain from what was evidently a terminal illness (17:1). His suffering was so great that he literally begged God to relieve his misery by ending his life (6:8-9; 7:15). Have **you** ever endured such suffering? Have you ever felt completely deserted—as Job did (19:13-14)? Like Job, have you ever desperately wanted answers to your questions that would help you to make sense of your condition? Consider the metaphors that Job used to describe his tortuous agony. He likened his suffering to:

- a target (7:20; 16:12-13)
- being hedged in (3:23; 19:8)
- being scourged (9:23)
- a besieged city, complete with a ramp built against it (10:12), a breached wall (16:14; 19:10), and completely surrounded by the enemy (19:12)
- being God's enemy (13:24; 19:11)
- a moth-eaten garment (13:28)
- being shattered and shook viciously (16:12)

- captured in a net (19:6)
- an uprooted tree (19:10)
- being shot with poisoned arrows (6:4; 30:11)
- blown away by a tempest/storm (9:17; 30:22)
- being plunged into a pit (9:31)
- hunted as prey to the lion (10:16)
- being put in stocks (13:27; 33:11)
- being hunted down and viciously torn by a wild animal (16:9)
- being walled up in a dark room (19:8)
- being thrown in the mud (30:19)

These figurative allusions are graphic in their import. They give us vivid insight into the intensity and depth of Job's tormented condition that unquestionably surpasses anything that you or I have suffered. Yet through it all, he was able to keep his spiritual eyes on the ultimate goal.

What foundational truths does the book of Job provide that enables us to maintain our spiritual focus? Please weigh each of the following eight principles in view of Heaven:

1. It is true that the wicked will ultimately suffer for their sins; but it does not follow that everyone who suffers does so due to their own sin. One's earthly circumstances are not necessarily indicative of spiritual condition.
2. God is omnipotent (42:2), omniscient (12:13, 16; 35:5), sovereign (9:12, 32; 12:10; 23:14) and just.
3. Regardless of how things seem to humans, God

does take note of righteousness and righteousness will ultimately prevail.

4. We should worship God regardless of our life's circumstances—whether good or unpleasant.
5. Many of our questions about life's circumstances are unanswerable this side of eternity.
6. Satan is the archenemy of God and man.
7. Life is brief, unpredictable and transitory. It is to be compared to—the swift movement of a weaver's shuttle (7:6), breath (7:7), a shadow (8:9; 14:2; 17:7), a fast runner (9:25), a swift ship (9:26), a swooping eagle (9:26), the longevity of a flower (14:2), a cloud (30:15), wind (30:15), and running water (14:11).
8. Life will include pain and suffering. But suffering can be good. Death itself can be a blessing, enabling one to escape further trials in this life while entering into the eternal realm to be with the Lord. Life is not to be clung to as if this life is all there is (cf. 1 Thes. 4:13).

OBSERVE: These fundamental principles, when given study and meditation, bolster the soul, fortify the spirit, and motivate us to keep our spiritual eyes on our eternal home.

Listen to Job's final declaration concerning his concluding assessment of his having kept his eyes on heaven:

I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I

did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes (42:2-6).

Permit me to paraphrase what I think Job was saying in these verses:

"I know that You can do everything" [God is omnipotent—He runs the Universe!].

"And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You" [God is sovereign—He wields supreme authority over everything and everyone!].

"You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?'" [God's words to Job in 38:2].

"Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand" [Neither Job nor we are in a position to know the full significance or immediate meaning of why suffering occurs at any particular moment].

"Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" [We must humbly admit our limited knowledge and be about the business of marveling at the wonders of God's activities].

"Listen, please, and let me speak" [I humbly beg you to allow me to express my regret at having questioned You].

“You said, ‘I will question you, and you shall answer Me’” [Job realizes his complete inability to answer God’s plethora of penetrating questions by which He dazzled Job (and us!) with the marvels and complexities of the Universe in chapters 38-41].

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear” [Before his suffering, he had a genuine relationship with God and was following His teachings].

“But now my eye sees You” [Armed with the overwhelming display of God’s greatness, Job has been brought to a new plane of existence in which he realizes he does not need an answer to his questions, but can and must endure whatever pain and suffering life presents].

“Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” [I bow myself contritely before the Supreme Governor of the Universe, having regretted ever having questioned Him about my predicament!].

So no matter what we face in this life, no matter how intense our suffering and hardship may become, when we genuinely shift our attention to **who God is**, we are enabled to cope with our suffering, survive the onslaughts of life, and **keep our spiritual eyes on our eternal home**.

Summary: If Job could endure all that he endured and yet keep his spiritual eyes on God, we have no excuse if we fail to do so. We must not allow ourselves to turn selfishly inward and think that we do

not deserve any hardships. Nothing we can point to in our lives that has dealt us grief can be used to justify abandoning our commitment to God. So we simply must keep trusting in and looking to our God and His Christ!

How To Keep Our Spiritual Eyes On Heaven: Consider What Isaiah Saw

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah was permitted to see God Himself seated in the temple on a high, elevated throne. The train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood angelic beings—seraphim—that had six wings each: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flying. As they were hovering above the throne, one cried out to the other: “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!*” That oral declaration caused the foundations of the threshold to vibrate while the temple began filling with smoke.

Hear Isaiah’s reaction to this stunning scene of divine splendor:

Woe is me! I am undone [lost, ruined]! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts (6:5).

Then one of the seraphim flew to Isaiah with tongs holding a burning coal taken from the altar, touched Isaiah’s mouth with it, and declared his iniquity taken away and his sins purged.

There you go! Focus your mind, your spiritual eyes, on (1) the magnificent Creator enthroned on

high in indescribable glory, splendor, and majesty, and (2) know that He has forgiven your sin by the blood of His Son! This is what life is all about! And it will not get any better than this until we are allowed to actually enter into the presence of Deity in eternity!

How To Keep Our Spiritual Eyes On Heaven: Consider What John Saw

You remember how the book of Revelation depicts John on the Island of Patmos receiving the apocalyptic visions he received from Jesus. In chapter 4, he saw into Heaven itself—the very throne room of Almighty God—and it is not shaking or cowering before the threats of ISIS or anyone else. Here is the same message given to Job and Isaiah: God is on the throne. Nothing more needs to be said! God is absolute monarch of the Universe and beyond. Our lives must be lived in view of that one, all-encompassing, eternal reality—that makes all the difference in the world for keeping our spiritual eyes on our eternal home.

Notice His description: His appearance is like a jasper stone and a sardius stone—the pure white of the jasper stone symbolizing God’s purity and holiness, and the blood red of the sardius representing God’s righteousness. Encircling the throne of this holy, righteous God is an emerald rainbow—symbolizing hope and mercy (cf. Gen. 9:12-17). Signs of divine wrath and judgment proceed from the throne: lightning, thundering, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne—the seven-fold Spirit of God. Before the throne a sea of glass, like crystal. So

though John saw an awesome, transcendent, holy God, he also saw the hope, concern, and care that this God has for His own.

Around the throne are twenty-four elders seated on twenty-four thrones, clothed in white robes and wearing gold crowns—representing the redeemed of the ages. Four living creatures, full of eyes in front and in back, one like a lion, one like a calf, one like a man, and one like a flying eagle, each with six wings—represent the whole of creation. All are focused on the sovereign, invincible God of the Universe. They do not rest day or night in orally declaring: *“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”*

Suddenly, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and worship Him, and toss their crowns before the throne, praising His worthiness and creative power:

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.

Folks, the seven billion people on Earth are scurrying about fulfilling their own desires, instead of directing their spiritual eyes toward Heaven to see the sovereign God, Who is Creator, Who is eternal, Who protects His people and punishes the disobedient. He is on His throne. His enemies may rage against Him—but He is unmoved. He remains invincible. He remains at the very center, the focal point of the Universe. We Christians can be encouraged no matter what we face in life, we can and must keep our spiritual eyes directed heavenward.

Conclusion

Recall a few of the magnificent verses that thrill us in our perpetual efforts to keep our eyes on heaven:

- *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor. 4:8-10).*
- *“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. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:12-13).*
- *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).*
- *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:10-12).*
- *“...if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to*

be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:17-18).

- *“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto the mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:18-29).

Let us pray fervently, and let us bolster our spiritual nerve, that God may grant that, throughout our entire lives, we might **always keep our spiritual eyes on our eternal home.**

... BY KEEPING OUR SPIRITUAL EYES ON HEAVEN
