

Textual Sermons



Miscellaneous Sermon Outlines

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To God Be The Glory!

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Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Genesis 4:9

INTRODUCTION

1. Perhaps one of the more thought-provoking questions in the Bible is that one asked by Cain...
 - a. Cain had killed his brother because God had accepted Abel's offering, but not his own - **Gen 4:3-8**
 - b. When the Lord inquired concerning Abel, Cain's response was:

"Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9)

2. This is a question we would do well to ask ourselves today...
 - a. Are we our brothers' keeper?
 - b. Do we have a responsibility to watch out for and care for one another?

[When one turns to the New Testament, it becomes clear that the answer is in the affirmative. In fact, there are many passages which emphasize...]

I. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO ONE ANOTHER

A. WE ARE TO "LOVE ONE ANOTHER"...

1. As commanded by Jesus - **Jn 13:34-35; 15:12,17**
2. As taught by Paul - **Ro 13:8; 1 Th 4:9**
3. As instructed by Peter - **1 Pe 1:22**
4. As stressed by John - **1 Jn 3:11** (note v.12), **23; 4:7,11-12; 2 Jn 5**
- But how are we to express such love? Other passages can provide the answer...

B. HOW WE SHOW OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER...

1. We are to "receive one another" - **Ro 15:7**
2. We are to "edify another" - **Ro 15:19**
3. We are to "serve one another" - **Ga 5:13**
4. We are to "bear one another's burdens" - **Ga 6:1-2**
5. We are to be "forgiving one another" - **Ep 4:32**
6. We are to be "submitting to one another" - **Ep 5:21**
7. We are to "exhort one another" - **He 3:12-13**
8. We are to "consider one another" - **He 10:24-25**
9. We are to be "hospitable to one another" - **1 Pe 4:8-10**

[In light of such "one another" passages, is there any doubt that we are to be our brother's keeper? But how well are we doing? To stimulate our thinking and help us reexamine how well we are fulfilling our obligations to one another, consider the following questions...]

II. EVALUATING OUR ROLE AS OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER

A. WHEN ONE BECOMES A BROTHER...

1. Do we **receive** them into the family of God, or ignore them? - **Ro 15:7**

- a. Are they properly assimilated in the family life of the congregation?
- b. Do they remain on the fringe?
- If we do not even know their names, we can be sure that we are failing as our brother's keeper!
- 2. Do we **edify** them, or put stumbling blocks in their way? - **Ro 14:19**
 - a. As individuals, are we "bodybuilders", encouraging the members of the body?
 - b. Or are we like a cancer, weakening the members of the body of Christ?
 - 1) By our own example
 - 2) By our words, attitudes, etc.
 - It was said of Philemon that he refreshed the hearts of the brethren; do people say the same of us?
- 3. Do we **submit** to them, or arrogantly rule over them? - **Ep 5:21**
- 4. Do we **serve** them in love, or expect them to serve us? - **Ga 5:13**
- 5. Do we demonstrate **hospitality** to them? - **1 Pe 4:8-10**
 - a. By visiting them in their need?
 - b. By inviting them into your home (or accepting invitations to their home)?

B. WHEN A BROTHER IS OVERTAKEN IN A FAULT...

- 1. Do we even **consider** them? - **He 10:24-25**
 - a. Are we even aware of who they are?
 - b. Are we ignorant of their problems? If so, why?
 - 1) Maybe it is because we don't assemble enough ourselves
 - 2) We may "wonder about them", but that is not sufficient!
 - c. Do they drift away, with no one making an effort to reach them?
- 2. Do we **exhort** them, lest they become hardened by sin? - **He 3:12-14**
 - a. Or are we afraid to confront them, for fear of running them away?
 - 1) If we truly love them and approach them with humility, they are not likely to run away
 - 2) If they do, they are running away from God, not you!
 - b. Remember, such exhortation is to be daily! Perhaps we wait too long...
- 3. Are we willing **bear their burdens**? - **Ga 6:1-2**
 - a. So as to help them overcome and become stronger
 - b. Or do we rather not be bothered?
- 4. Are we quick to **forgive** them when they repent? - **Ep 4:32**
 - a. Fear of not being forgiven and accepted back into the family may keep some from repenting and returning to the fold
 - b. Do we communicate a willingness to accept with open arms and offer complete forgiveness?

CONCLUSION

- 1. How we answer such questions may reveal how well or poorly we are...
 - a. Fulfilling our responsibility to be our brother's keeper
 - b. Living up to the one responsibility we have that includes all others: to love one another as Christ loved us - **Jn 13:34-35**
- 2. If we have failed to be our brother's keeper, we need to...
 - a. **Repent** of our lack of concern, our inactivity, or whatever has hindered us
 - b. **Confess** our shortcomings in this area to God

c. **Resolve** to apply with zeal these “one another” passages!

Are you your brother’s keeper? Are you even identified with a congregation whereby you can be a working member who both cares for those in the family, and be cared for by them?

I hope this study has stimulated your thinking about responsibilities you have toward your brethren in Christ...

Noah Found Grace In The Eyes Of The Lord

Genesis 6:8

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Gen 6:5-7**, we read of God's displeasure with the world and its wickedness
2. But as God pronounces judgment upon the world, and prepares to destroy it with a flood, we find encouraging words concerning one man:

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” - Gen 6:8

3. This simply means that Noah found favor in God's sight, and we know the result of that favor: escape for him and his family from the flood...!
 - a. But why Noah?
 - b. Why did Noah find grace in the eyes of the Lord?
 - c. And how might we apply this to our situation today?

[Well, notice first...]

I. WHY NOAH FOUND GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD

A. HE WAS “A JUST MAN”... - Gen 6:9

1. Some translations say “righteous”
2. This likely refers to his moral relation to God (Keil & Delitzsch)

B. HE WAS “PERFECT IN HIS GENERATIONS”... - Gen 6:9

1. Other translations (NASV, NIV) use the word “blameless”
2. Not that he was sinless, but that there were no blatant faults
3. He was a man of moral integrity among the people

C. HE “WALKED WITH GOD”... - Gen 6:9

1. This is how he manifested his righteousness and integrity (Keil & Delitzsch)
2. In walking with God, he imitated the example of Enoch, his great-grandfather - **Gen 5:24**
3. Walking with God in Noah's case likely involved...
 - a. Calling upon the name of the Lord, which began in the days of Seth - **Gen 4:26**
 - b. Offering sacrifices to God, which began in the days of Cain & Abel - **Gen 4:3-4**

D. HE “DID ACCORDING TO ALL THAT THE LORD COMMANDED HIM”...

1. Twice this is emphasized in the Scriptures - **Gen 6:22; 7:5**
2. We learn from Hebrews that this obedience of Noah came from faith - **He 11:7**

E. HE WAS “A PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”... - 2 Pe 2:5

1. He not only “lived” a righteous life
2. But he also proclaimed the need for righteousness, even though he lived in a ungodly world

[Noah certainly was an unusual man, but perhaps we see well why only he and his family “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” What about ourselves? Is there a need for us to “find grace in the eyes of the Lord” today? Yes...!]

II. WHY WE NEED TO FIND GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD

A. NOT BECAUSE WE FACE THE THREAT OF A WORLDWIDE FLOOD...

1. After Noah and his family were saved from the flood, God promised He would never again destroy the world in such a manner - **Gen 9:8-11**
2. The rainbow is a constant reminder of God’s promise - **Gen 9:12-17**

B. BUT BECAUSE WE FACE THE PROMISE OF THE END OF THE WORLD...!

1. Peter reminds us that just as the world was once destroyed by water, so it shall be destroyed by fire when Jesus returns! - **2 Pe 3:3-13**
2. In view of this promise, Peter calls upon us to “be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” - **2 Pe 3:14**
 - a. Just as Noah “found grace in the eyes of the Lord”...
 - b. So we need to “found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless”
3. Is this not simply another way of saying that we, like Noah, need to find grace in the eyes of the Lord?

[Indeed, it is! When the end of the world comes, we had better be in a condition where we too find grace in the eyes of the Lord! Otherwise, we will be like those left outside of the ark when the floods came! Using Noah as an example, then, consider...]

III. HOW WE CAN FIND GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD

A. WE MUST BE “JUST” IN HIS SIGHT...

1. Fortunately, the good news of the gospel is that God sent Christ in order to make us “just” (righteous, forgiven) in His sight! - **Ro 5:8-9**
2. This blessing is available to all who demonstrate true faith in Jesus - **Ro 3:24-26**
3. Being justified, we can have peace with God (concerning which Peter wrote) - **Ro 5:1**; cf. **2 Pe 3:14**

B. WE MUST BE “PERFECT” IN OUR GENERATION...

1. That is, to be complete, mature, to be everything God desires of us
2. Again, the good news of the gospel of Christ is that God has provided the necessary elements for us to be “perfect”!
 - a. The blood of Christ, to cleanse us of our sins - **1 Jn 1:7-9**
 - b. The Word of God, to guide us to completion - **2 Ti 3:16-17**
 - c. The strength of the Spirit, to help us in our struggles - **Ep 3:16; Ro 8:13**
 - d. The providence of God, who will work with us and lead us to victory! - **2 Th 3:3; 1 Pe 5:10**

C. WE MUST “WALK WITH GOD”...

1. Of course, this would mean that we can “no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk...” - cf. **Ep 4:17-20**
2. Rather, it requires that we be “followers of God as dear children” (**Ep 5:1**), and that we...
 - a. “Walk in love” - **Ep 5:2**

- b. “Walk as children of light”, exposing the sins of darkness - **Ep 5:8-11**
- c. “Walk as wise”, with an understanding of what the Lord’s will is - **Ep 5:15-17**

D. WE MUST “DO ALL THAT THE LORD HAS COMMANDED”...

- 1. Observing not just “some” things, but “all” things - cf. **Mt 28:20**
- 2. For in so doing, we demonstrate our faith to be “a living faith” - cf. **Ja 2:17,24,26**

E. WE MUST BE “PREACHERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”...

- 1. It is God’s will that we “proclaim the praises of Him”, which would include His righteousness - cf. **1 Pe 2:9**
- 2. This can be done most vividly by example, in living transformed lives - cf. **Ro 12:1-2**

CONCLUSION

- 1. God does not want anyone to perish in the great conflagration that is yet to come, but He does require all to come to repentance - **2 Pe 3:9; Ac 17:30-31**
- 2. And when we turn from sin and turn to God, what do we find? The same thing Noah and his family found: **“Grace in the eyes of the Lord”!**
- 3. Speaking of the salvation of Noah should remind us of the comparison Peter makes between Noah’s salvation and our own; i.e., the part baptism serves in our salvation - **1 Pe 3:20-21**
 - a. Just as God used the element of water to save Noah from a wicked world...
 - b. ...so in His grace does God utilize water in our salvation through the blood of Jesus!

If you have not done so, why not find favor in God’s sight by being baptized for the remission of your sins (**Ac 2:38; 22:16**)? Then, as we look forward to the coming of the Lord in which He will usher in “the new heavens and new earth”, give special heed to the words of Peter:

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.” - 2 Pe 3:14

The Choice Of Lot

Genesis 13:10-12

INTRODUCTION

1. The examples of men and women as recorded in the Bible can provide valuable lessons...
 - a. From **Abraham** we can learn the value of faith in God
 - b. From **Joseph** we see the workings of God's providential care
 - c. From **Job** we learn the importance of patience and faith under trial
2. From **Lot**, the nephew of Abraham, we can also glean valuable lessons in...
 - a. The art of decision making
 - b. The importance of making proper choices

[We will first take an overall look at the life of Lot, and then focus upon a decision he made and how it affected his life...]

I. LOT'S CHOICE

A. IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS, LOT IS INTRODUCED TO US AS...

1. The nephew of Abraham who sojourned with him - **Gen 12:15; 13:1**
2. A man who like his uncle became quite wealthy - **Gen 13:2-5**
 - a. Because of the combined wealth of Abraham and Lot, they were forced to separate - **Gen 13:6-9**
 - b. Given the opportunity to choose where he could go...
 - 1) Lot made a choice, which on the surface was a good one - **Gen 13:10-12**
 - 2) As good as it may have seemed, it resulted in much sorrow and hardship for Lot!

B. AS A RESULT OF HIS CHOICE, LOT SUFFERED...

1. War - **Gen 14:11**
2. Kidnapping - **Gen 14:12**
3. Oppression and torment by the citizens of Sodom - **2 Pe 2:7-8**; cf. **Gen 19:1-11**
4. Loss of all his material wealth - **Gen 19:15-16, 24-25**
5. The death of his wife - **Gen 19:17, 26**
6. The shame of incest with his daughters - **Gen 19:30-36**
- All these things happened despite the fact that Lot was a righteous person - cf. **2 Pe 2:7-8**

[The example of Lot should impress us with the importance of making the proper choices in our lives. In view of what happened to Lot, we will now consider:

- ◆ Some of the choices we make that greatly affect our lives
- ◆ Some suggestions on how to make the right decisions
- ◆ What to do when we realize that we have made the wrong ones

Consider, then...]

II. OUR CHOICES

A. WHAT CHOICES DO WE MAKE THAT GREATLY AFFECT OUR LIVES...?

1. **Choosing to follow Jesus**
 - a. The one that will affect your life more than any other!
 - b. It will determine your place in eternity
 - c. It will have a bearing on every other choice you make; for as a follower of Christ you will be concerned with doing His will, not your own
2. **Choosing your career**
 - a. The choice you make can have a lasting effect upon your marriage, family, and your service to God
 - b. Even from a worldly viewpoint, your choice is important, for the job market can change drastically
3. **Choosing your mate**
 - a. The decision made will to a great extent determine your degree of happiness in this life
 - b. It will have a permanent bearing on your children and their emotional well-being!
 - 1) You may think you can simply divorce a person who turns out to be a bad choice
 - 2) But once you have children, there is no way to reverse the choice you made as to who is the mother or father of your children!
4. **Choosing your friends**
 - a. Having close friends can be a wonderful blessing - **Pro 17:17**
 - b. But the wrong friends can be a curse for the righteous - **Pro 12:26; 1 Co 15:33**
5. **Choosing where you will live**
 - a. It was in this choice that Lot made his mistake
 - b. It might just be there are some modern-day “Sodom” and “Gomorrah”!

B. HOW CAN WE MORE LIKELY MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE...?

1. Ask God for wisdom - **Ja 1:5-8**
2. Seek advice from others - **Pro 11:14; 12:15**
 - a. Discuss your alternatives with older, mature Christians
 - b. Consult the wisdom found in the Bible (especially in a book like Proverbs)
3. Whatever you do, do it for the Lord’s sake - cf. **Psa 37:5-6,23-26; Ja 4:15**

C. WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN WE REALIZE OUR CHOICE WAS WRONG...?

1. **Do what Lot did...**
 - a. Heed the word of God (as in fleeing Sodom and Gomorrah)
 - b. Do what is right without reservation (remember Lot’s wife!)
2. **Do what Peter did after he denied Christ...**
 - a. Repent, if there is sin involved in the choice made
 - b. Resolve to serve the Lord
3. **Do what Paul did after persecuting the church...**
 - a. Accept the forgiveness Jesus provides
 - b. Determine to live for the Lord the rest of your life to the best of your ability
4. The wrong thing to do is to continue in the choice because of pride or some other reason! (although there are some choices we must live with...)

CONCLUSION

1. The example of Lot should serve...
 - a. To teach us that making the proper decision is very important

- b. To warn us not to make our choices lightly
2. **Remember Lot** the next time you are faced with an important decision...
- a. Seek to make that decision based upon the will of the Lord and not your own
 - b. Your eternal destiny (and that of those you love) might rest upon your choice!

Have you made the most important decision you will ever face? The decision to follow Jesus as your Lord and Savior? If not, why not today? - cf. **Mt 28:19-20; Ac 2:38**

The Faith Of Abraham

Genesis 15:6

INTRODUCTION

1. One of the greatest men in history has to be the patriarch Abraham...
 - a. Three religions look to him as their spiritual progenitor (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)
 - b. Christians view him as “the father of all them that believe” - **Ro 4:11**
2. What is most noteworthy about Abraham was his faith...
 - a. Paul made reference to his faith time and again - **Ro 4:3,9,11,16-22; Ga 3:7-9**
 - b. James used his example to illustrate saving faith - **Ja 2:21-23**
3. Both Paul and James make reference to the following OT statement about Abraham’s faith:

“And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” (Gen 15:6; cf. Ro 4:3; Ja 2:23)

[What was it about Abraham’s faith that so pleased God? Do we have the same kind of faith? Let’s take a closer look at “**The Faith Of Abraham**”...]

I. ABRAHAM’S FAITH WAS BASED ON REVELATION

A. GOD REVEALED HIMSELF TO ABRAHAM...

1. In Ur of the Chaldees - **Ac 7:2-4; Gen 15:7**
2. At Haran of Mesopotamia - **Gen 12:1-4**
3. At Shechem in Canaan - **Gen 12:6-7**
4. After Lot moved to Sodom - **Gen 13:14-17**
5. And many times more - cf. **Gen 15:1-17; 17:1-27; 18:1-33; 22:1-19**
- **By revealing Himself to Abraham, God provided Abraham ample evidence for him to place his faith and trust in God**

B. OUR FAITH MUST BE BASED UPON REVELATION...

1. Not that God reveals Himself to us as He did to Abraham
2. But faith comes through the Word of God - cf. **Ro 10:17**
 - a. It contains evidence that we might believe - **Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. The more we read, the more God is revealed to us, especially in the person of His Son Jesus Christ!
- **If we desire to have “The Faith Of Abraham”, we must be receptive to God’s revelation of Himself through His Word!**

[Next, it important to note that...]

II. ABRAHAM’S FAITH WAS AN OBEDIENT FAITH

A. BY FAITH, ABRAHAM OBEYED GOD...

1. He left his country - **He 11:8**

2. He sojourned in a foreign land - **He 11:9-10**
3. He offered his son Isaac - **He 11:17**; cf. **Ja 2:21-24**
- **Abraham's faith was not a dead faith (cf. Ja 2:20,26), but a dynamic faith expressing itself in obedience!**

B. BY FAITH, WE MUST OBEY GOD...

1. For the gospel calls for "obedience to the faith" - cf. **Ro 1:5; 16:25-26**
2. We must "obey from the heart" the doctrine of Christ - cf. **Ro 6:17**
3. Woe to those who do not "obey the gospel" - cf. **2 Th 1:7-9; 1 Pe 4:17**
- **If we desire to have "The Faith Of Abraham", we must have a faith that "works through love" (cf. Ga 5:6)**

[While works are an essential element of a saving faith, it is crucial to note that it is the faith behind the works that pleases God (and not the works per se)! Therefore we point out that...]

III. ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS A TRUSTING FAITH

A. ABRAHAM TRUSTED IN GOD, NOT HIS WORKS...

1. Return to our text, and note what is said - cf. **Gen 15:6**
 - a. Abraham believed in the Lord
 - b. "It" (his faith) was reckoned or considered for righteousness
 - c. It was Abraham's faith in God that greatly pleased God
2. Paul stresses this point in his epistle to the Romans - cf. **Ro 4:1-3**
 - a. Abraham was not justified because of his works
 - b. Abraham was justified (declared blameless) because of his faith!
- **Though he had a faith that works, he did not trust in his works; rather in God who justifies the ungodly (cf. Ro 4:5-8)**

B. WE MUST TRUST IN JESUS, NOT OUR WORKS...

1. As noted before, we must obey God which involves certain "works"
 - a. Such as faith, which is a "work" - cf. **Jn 6:28,29**
 - b. Even baptism, which is more a work of God than a work of man - **Co 2:12-13**
2. But when all is done, we must not put our trust in our obedience
 - a. As though we somehow earned our salvation
 - b. For Christ taught us to realize we are still unworthy - cf. **Lk 17:10**
- **It is the faith or trust in Jesus prompting us to obey that pleases God, not some meritorious value of the work done to receive God's grace!**

[So "The Faith Of Abraham" was an obedient faith that placed its trust in God who justifies the ungodly. To be "the sons of Abraham", we must have the same kind of faith. Finally, observe that...]

IV. ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS A GROWING FAITH

A. ABRAHAM GREW IN FAITH...

1. There were times when his faith was weak
 - a. He had Sarah his wife tell a half-truth to save his life - **Gen 12:11-20; 20:1-18**
 - b. He questioned God when he and Sarah did not have children - **Gen 15:2-3**
 - c. He showed weak faith in the case of Hagar - **Gen 16:1-4**
 - d. He offered an alternative to God when he thought it would be impossible for he

and Sarah to have children - **Gen 17:17-18**

2. But God was patient with Abraham, and his faith grew
 - a. He had faith, even against hope, and was able to conceive - **Ro 4:18-22**
 - b. He had faith that God could raise Isaac from the dead, and so was willing to offer him as commanded - **He 11:17-19**
- **“The Faith Of Abraham” was not a static faith, but an ever-growing faith that came through being “a friend of God” (cf. Ja 2:23)**

B. WE MUST GROW IN FAITH...

1. Just as the apostles of Christ did...
 - a. From men with little faith and easily afraid - **Mt 8:25-26; 14:31**
 - b. To men of great boldness - **Ac 4:13**
2. Like the Thessalonians - **2 Th 1:3**
 - a. Their faith was growing exceedingly
 - b. Our faith needs to grow likewise
- **Our faith will grow, if we are willing to “walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had” (cf. Ro 4:12)**

CONCLUSION

1. We have seen that **“The Faith Of Abraham”** was...
 - a. Based upon revelation
 - b. An obedient faith
 - c. A trusting faith
 - d. A growing faith
2. Why do we need this same kind of faith...?
 - a. Because “those who are of faith are the sons of Abraham” - **Ga 3:7**
 - b. Because “those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham” - **Ga 3:9**

Indeed, those who have **“The Faith Of Abraham”** are truly the recipients of the promise made to Abraham:

“In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Gen 18:18)

Are we walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, obeying the Word of God given today through the gospel of Christ, even as he obeyed the word given to him?

The Bad Bargain Of Esau

Genesis 25:29-34

INTRODUCTION

1. One of the saddest figures in the Bible is that of Esau...
 - a. Firstborn son of Isaac and Rebekah, twin brother of Jacob - cf. **Gen 25:21-26**
 - b. Loved by his father Isaac, a skillful hunter - **Gen 25:27-28**
2. Esau was a man who had his good side...
 - a. He show kindness to his brother who had deceived him - cf. **Gen 33:1-16**
 - b. He helped bury his father Isaac - **Gen 35:29**
3. Yet on two occasions he was manipulated by his brother Jacob...
 - a. The first when Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of pottage - **Gen 25:29-34**
 - b. The second when Jacob stole the blessing designed for Esau - **Gen 27:1-41**

[In this study, we shall focus our attention on the first occasion, and lessons we might glean from this unfortunate circumstance in Esau's life...]

I. ESAU SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT

A. ESAU'S BIRTHRIGHT...

1. **The physical advantages** of the birthright
 - a. Contained a double portion of the father's inheritance - **Deu 21:17**
 - 1) The amount would have been very great
 - 2) For what he eventually received was also great - cf. **Gen 36:6-7**
 - b. Offered rule and authority over other members of the family - cf. **Gen 27:29**
 2. **The spiritual advantages** of this particular birthright
 - a. Patriarch and priest of the house on the death of his father (Barnes, Clarke)
 - b. Chief of the chosen family, and heir of the promised blessing (Barnes)
 - c. Able to invoke Abraham's blessing, regarding the promise - cf. **Gen 28:4; 12:1-3**
- **Such were the issues at stake when Jacob and Esau bartered over the birthright**

B. ESAU'S BAD BARGAIN...

1. **Esau chose the sensual over the spiritual**
 - a. He gave into the cravings of his hunger - **Gen 25:29-34**
 - b. He valued the red pottage more highly than his birthright
 - c. For this reason he was called "a profane person" - **He 12:16**
 2. **Esau chose the present over the future**
 - a. He tossed away future rewards for present gratification
 - b. The pottage may have assuaged his hunger for the day, but what of the morrow?
 - c. This too made him a "profane" person
- **For temporary, physical pleasures Esau sold his birthright; what a bad bargain!**

[Certainly we would not think of making the same kind of bargain, would we? Perhaps not with an inheritance we might receive from our parents; but what of our spiritual inheritance...?]

II. ARE WE SELLING OUR BIRTHRIGHT?

A. OUR BIRTHRIGHT AS CHRISTIANS...

1. We are heirs according to the promise made to Abraham - **Ga 3:29**
2. We are joint-heirs with Christ - **Ro 8:16-17**
 - a. We are heirs according to the hope of eternal life - **Ti 3:7**
 - b. We are heirs of the kingdom which He has promised - **Ja 2:5**; cf. **2 Pe 1:11**
3. In Him, all things are ours - **1 Co 3:21-23**; cf. **Re 21:7**
4. An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, reserved in heaven - **1 Pe 1:4**
- **What a wonderful birthright, and not just limited to the hereafter!** - cf. **Mk 10:28-30**

B. ARE WE MAKING A BAD BARGAIN...?

1. How might we sell our birthright?
 - a. Succumbing to the passing pleasures of sin - cf. **He 11:24-26**
 - b. Lusting for things of the world - cf. **1 Jn 2:15**; **Ja 4:4**
 - c. Walking after the flesh rather than after the Spirit - cf. **Ga 5:16-26**
2. How might we hold on to our birthright?
 - a. Pursue peace and holiness - cf. **He 12:14**
 - b. Be careful not to fall short of God's grace - cf. **He 12:15**
 - c. Exercise discipline and godliness - cf. **1 Co 9:24-27**; **1 Ti 4:7-8**

CONCLUSION

1. Esau made the mistake of...
 - a. Depreciating the value of his inheritance
 - b. Succumbing to the desires of the flesh
2. We can make a similar mistake...
 - a. Not appreciating the value of our inheritance in Christ!
 - b. Giving in to the allure of immediate gratification of the flesh!

If we are not careful, the time will come when it is too late; no matter how many tears we may shed, it will be too late to change God's mind (cf. **He 12:17**). That is why we need to heed such warnings as that one given by the apostle Paul:

“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Co 6:1-2)

Are you in danger of selling your birthright as a Christian?

The Forgotten Vow Of Jacob

Genesis 35:1-7

INTRODUCTION

1. We begin our study today with a reading of **Gen 35:1-7**...
 - a. Where we find God telling Jacob to go to Bethel
 - b. In which he is to build an altar
2. Why did God command this?
 - a. Nearly thirty years earlier, Jacob had made a vow
 - b. But he seems to have forgotten about it, and God is now calling him to fulfill it
3. There are several lessons that can be gleaned from this “**forgotten vow of Jacob**” which can be easily applied to our service as Christians

[But before I point these lessons out, a little more historical background might be helpful...]

I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. THIRTY YEARS BEFORE, JACOB HAD MADE A VOW...

1. It was made as he was fleeing the wrath of Esau (for Jacob had stolen Esau’s blessing from their father Isaac)
2. Leaving **Beersheba**, he headed toward **Haran** (consult map)
3. On the way, he stopped at what is now called **Bethel** (consult map) - **Gen 28:10-15**
 - a. There he had a dream, in which he saw what we commonly call “Jacob’s Ladder” (angels ascending and descending on a ladder between heaven and earth)
 - b. In this dream, God promises to be with him and safely return him to his home
4. The dream prompted Jacob to make his vow - **Gen 28:16-22**
 - a. To make the LORD his God if God carries out His promise
 - b. To sanctify the stone upon which his head had rested and which he has set up as a pillar
 - c. To give God a tenth of all that God will give him

B. FOR THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS, JACOB DWELLS IN HARAN...

1. As God promised, He was with Jacob
2. Jacob prospered both in family, and in gaining wealth - **Gen 29-30**
3. Upon Jacob’s return, God kept him safe...
 - a. From Laban, who was pursuing him - **Gen 31**
 - b. From Esau, who was coming to meet him - **Gen 32-33**

C. BY THE TIME OF OUR TEXT (GEN 35), JACOB HAD BEEN LIVING IN CANAAN TEN YEARS...

1. He had settled near the city of **Shechem** (consult map) - **Gen 33:18**
2. But he had not bothered to go back to **Bethel**, where the Lord had appeared to him and where he had made his vow

[So it appears that Jacob had forgotten his vow, and for this reason God commands him to return to Bethel (**Gen 35:1**). What lessons or principles of truth can we learn from this? There are several...]

II. THE APPLICATION

A. FIRST, GOD EXPECTS US TO KEEP THE VOWS WE MAKE...

1. He does not take vows lightly, and neither should we - cf. **Ecc 5:2-5**
2. So let's be sure to keep any covenant or vow that we make with God; for example...
 - a. The "vow" we made when we became Christians
 - b. I.e., to turn from sin, and to follow Christ with all our heart
 - Are we faithfully keeping this "vow"?

B. SECOND, WE ARE PRONE TO FORGET OUR VOWS WHEN GOD HAS FULFILLED HIS SIDE OF THEM...

1. We saw where God fulfilled His side, but Jacob had not
2. This "forgetfulness" seems to occur most often when vows are made in times of trouble
 - a. Like those made in a foxhole
 - b. Or those made in an airplane during extreme air turbulence or mechanical problems
 - c. Or those made in an effort to solve marital problems
3. But such vows are just as binding as those made upon careful reflection!

C. THIRD, WE ARE PRONE TO FORGET OUR VOWS WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL...

1. In the case of Jacob...
 - a. He had a nice family
 - b. He had become extremely wealthy
 - c. He had settled down in his home country
2. The same is often true of many Christians...
 - a. Many obey the gospel at times in their lives when they are troubled
 - b. But later, especially if they enjoy financial security, they forget their commitment to God and Christ
3. But consider God's warning to Israel against forgetfulness after they entered the "promised land" - **Deu 8:11-20**

D. FOURTH, WE ARE PRONE TO FORGET OUR VOWS WHEN WE HAVE ALLOWED OURSELVES TO BE INFLUENCED BY THE WORLD...

1. Note that Jacob's family had accepted the foreign gods of the people around them - cf. **Gen 35:2**
2. In similar fashion, many people do not live up to the vow they made when they became Christians - cf. **2 Ti 4:10** (Demas)
 - a. E.g., many teen-age Christians
 - 1) Zealous at first
 - 2) But when influenced by...
 - a) Their peers
 - b) Popular music
 - c) Humanistic teaching in the schools
 ...they often lose interest in spiritual matters
 - b. E.g., many adult Christians, who are influenced by the materialism and immorality of our society

3. But again, this is no excuse for “forgotten vows”

E. FIFTH, IF WE HAVE FORGOTTEN OUR VOWS, WE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING...

1. We noticed that Jacob was told to go back to **Bethel**
2. In a similar way, Jesus told the church at **Ephesus** to go back to the beginning - **Re 2:4-5**
 - a. They had left their “first love”
 - b. They were told to “remember...from where you have fallen”
 - c. And to “repent and do the first works”
3. For Christians who have left their “first love”, they too need to “do the first works” (the fundamentals, such as Bible study, prayer, etc.)

F. FINALLY, WHEN WE FULFILL OUR FORGOTTEN VOWS, THERE ARE RENEWED BLESSINGS...!

1. When Jacob fulfilled his vow, God appeared to him and renewed the promises that had been made to Abraham and Isaac - **Gen 35:9-15**
2. So it can be with us!
 - a. It may be that we have forgotten the original commitment we made when we first obeyed the gospel of Christ
 - b. But if we will just return to Christ...
 - 1) In full repentance and prayer
 - 2) And fulfill our vow of service and devotion to Him...all the spiritual blessings that He has to offer can be ours again! - cf. **1 Jn 1:9**

CONCLUSION

1. Are you a Christian, but not living the dedicated and committed life that God expects...?
2. Then, like Jacob, you have forgotten your vow...
 - a. And you need to come back to the Lord in full repentance
 - b. The blessings of heaven await you if you do!

If you are not yet a Christian, these same blessings can be yours if you will only accept the gospel of Jesus Christ - cf. **Mark 16:15-16**

The Character Of Joseph

Genesis 37:1-50:26

INTRODUCTION

1. When we think of “the patriarchs”, the following likely come to mind...
 - a. Abraham, man of faith
 - b. Isaac, son of promise
 - c. Jacob, father of the twelve tribes of Israel

2. Yet consider this about the patriarch Joseph...
 - a. More space in Genesis is devoted to him than the others
 - b. There is not a single word of reproof against Joseph

3. Indeed, “**The Character Of Joseph**” is worthy of careful study...
 - a. His nobility of character, his purity of heart and life
 - b. His magnanimity as ruler and brother
 - Make him, more than any other of the Old Testament characters, an illustration of that type of man which Christ was to give to the world in perfection (**ISBE**)

[Let’s review the life of Joseph, and be reminded of the wonderful character displayed by this man of God. We begin with..]

I. JOSEPH AS A SON IN CANAAN

A. HATED BY HIS BROTHERS...

1. Telling on his brothers didn’t help - **Gen 37:2**
2. Favoritism by his father certainly hurt - **Gen 37:3-4**
3. His dreams made it worse - **Gen 37:5-11**
4. They eventually sold him as a slave - **Gen 37:12-36**
 - a. Spared initially by Reuben who intended to free him - **Gen 37:21-22**
 - b. Spared death by Judah, who suggested slavery instead - **Gen 37:26-27**

B. FAITHFUL TO HIS FATHER...

1. Some children rebel against their parents to win approval from their siblings
2. Joseph remained faithful to his father, willing to obey his wishes - **Gen 37:13**

[One might think such ill-treatment, followed by separation from country and kin, would produce bitterness and hopelessness in such a young man. Yet “**The Character Of Joseph**” really shines as we consider...]

II. JOSEPH AS A SLAVE IN EGYPT

A. OVERSEER IN POTIPHAR’S HOUSE...

1. Blessed by God, Joseph found favor in Potiphar’s eyes - **Gen 39:1-6**
 - a. Though a young man, he proved industrious and trustworthy
 - b. He made the best of the situation, and God blessed him and Potiphar

2. Handsome in appearance, Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife - **Gen 39:6b-20**
 - a. She tried time and again to seduce him
 - b. He resisted, out of faithfulness to Potiphar and God - **Gen 39:8-9**
 - c. Her advances spurned, she spitefully accuses him wrongfully
 - 1) Angering her husband
 - 2) Resulting in his imprisonment

B. OVERSEER IN PHARAOH'S PRISON...

1. Blessed by God, Joseph is favored by the keeper of the prison - **Gen 39:21-23**
 - a. Placed in charge of the other prisoners, with complete trust
 - b. Prospered in his new role by God, who was with him
2. Interpreter of dreams, Joseph is forgotten then remembered - **Gen 40:1-41:36**
 - a. He interprets the dreams of the butler and the baker
 - 1) Acknowledging God as the interpreter - **Gen 40:8**
 - 2) The dreams are fulfilled, yet Joseph was forgotten - **Gen 40:20-23**
 - b. He interprets the dreams of Pharaoh
 - 1) Again acknowledging God as providing the answer - **Gen 41:16,25,32**
 - 2) Offering advice in regards to the dreams' fulfillment - **Gen 41:33-36**

[Falsely accused, then forgotten by man, many might wonder "Why bother to be righteous?" But Joseph maintained his integrity and was not forgotten by God. Just as he found favor in the eyes of Potiphar and the keeper of the prison, so he enjoyed favor in the eyes of Pharaoh...]

III. JOSEPH AS A PRINCE IN EGYPT

A. WISE IN HIS SERVICE TO PHARAOH...

1. At the age of thirty, Joseph is exalted to rule over Egypt - **Gen 41:38-46**
2. His wisdom manifested in his administration
 - a. Showing foresight during the years of plenty - **Gen 41:47-49**
 - b. Showing shrewdness during the years of famine - **Gen 41:53-57; 47:13-26**
3. Mindful of God's blessings - cf. **Gen 41:50-52**

B. MERCIFUL IN HIS TREATMENT OF HIS BRETHREN...

1. Finally reunited with his brothers and father - **Gen 42:1-45:15**
2. Arranged for them to live in Goshen - **Gen 46:16-20,28-34; 47:1-12**
3. Reassured his brothers that he has forgiven them
 - a. When he first revealed himself to them - **Gen 45:4-8**
 - b. When their father Jacob died - **Gen 50:15-21**

C. BELIEVING IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD...

1. That God could make good things come out of evil intentions - **Gen 50:20**
2. That God would keep His promises made to His people - **Gen 50:24-25**

CONCLUSION

1. In the life and story of Joseph, we see the value of a character...
 - a. Centered in faith and trust in God
 - b. Devoted to serving God and man with honor and dependability
 - c. Unwilling to be deterred by the hatred, betrayal, and forgetfulness of others

- d. Willing to forgive the wrongs committed by others
 - e. Able to see the big picture, God's wonderful workings in the affairs of men
2. This noble character can be useful in all the seasons of life...
- a. As a youth, tempted and tried with no help from family or friend
 - b. As a mature individual, charged with important responsibilities
 - c. As an aged person, knowing that death is imminent

May "**The Character of Joseph**" serve to inspire us to develop our character as well, that in some small way we too can be...

*"..an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
(1 Ti 4:12)*

Certainly this is the case with the patriarch Joseph!

The Excuses Of Moses

Exodus 3:1-4:17

INTRODUCTION

1. When God appeared to Moses at the burning bush...
 - a. He called him to the task of leading the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage
 - b. In response, Moses gave excuses as to why he did not think he was the man for the job
2. The excuses of Moses, and God's response to them, will serve as the basis for our study...
 - a. For in a similar way, as God's people today, we have received from God a special calling
 - b. Not to go to a country to deliver those in physical bondage, but to a world to deliver those in the bondage of sin - cf. **Mk 16:15; 1 Pe 2:9**-- Too often, though, we behave just like Moses, making the very same excuses!

[Let's begin by reading **Exo 3:1-10**, refreshing our memories of how God called Moses. Reminded of this call, we are now ready to consider the first of five excuses given by Moses...]

I. "WHO AM I?"

A. FOUND IN EXO 3:11...

1. Though Moses was once a member of the ruling house of Egypt...
 - a. He was now but a lowly shepherd
 - b. 40 years had passed since he had been in Egypt
 - c. He was an 80 year old man, already past the average life span for his generation-- This prompted Moses to wonder whether he was the right man for the job
2. But God's response was quick, and should have been adequate...
 - a. "I will certainly be with you..." - **Exo 3:12**
 - b. God promised to be with Moses, and this alone should have been sufficient
 - c. As Paul later wrote, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" - **Ro 8:31**

B. SOME USE THIS SAME EXCUSE TODAY...

1. Trying to excuse ourselves by believing that we are insufficient for the task
 - a. It is true that by ourselves that we are insufficient
 - b. But God can make us sufficient - cf. **2 Co 3:5-6**
 - c. Look what He did with the apostles! (uneducated and untrained men - **Ac 4:13**)
2. Through Jesus, God has provided us the same assurance given Moses - cf. **Mt 28:20**
3. With His help, we can accomplish anything He wants us to do! - **Ph 4:13**

[As will be apparent later, any excuse for not doing what the Lord has called us to do is simply a smokescreen. So it was with Moses, and we find him quickly coming up with another excuse...]

II. "WHAT SHALL I SAY?"

A. THIS EXCUSE IS FOUND IN EXO 3:13...

1. Moses knew that should he go to the children of Israel, there were bound to be questions
 - a. Such as, "Who is this God who sent you to us?"

- b. And perhaps, “Why are we to leave this country we have come to consider our home for over 400 years?”
-- Moses expresses inadequacy in knowing what to say
2. Again, God’s response was quick...
 - a. “Thus you shall say...” - **Exo 3:14-15**
 - b. God tells Moses what he needs to say in response to their questions

B. AGAIN, A SIMILAR EXCUSE IS SOMETIMES GIVEN TODAY...

1. We try to excuse ourselves by saying that our knowledge is inadequate
2. But God has told us what to say...
 - a. It is really quite simple - cf. **Mk 16:15-16**
 - b. How simple? - cf. **1 Co 15:1-4; 2:2**

[And so, as with Moses, we have no reason for saying “what shall I say?” As we return to Moses, we see that despite God instructing him what to say, he soon raises a third objection...]

III. “SUPPOSE THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE ME?”

A. THIS EXCUSE IS FOUND IN EXO 4:1...

1. Now that he knows what to say, he balks at the idea that the people may not listen
 - a. Is he afraid of failing?
 - b. Has he already forgotten that God will be with him?
2. God responds by equipping him with several convincing proofs...
 - a. The **rod**, which turns into a serpent - **Exo 4:2-5**
 - b. His **own hand**, which turns into leprosy - **Exo 4:6-8**
 - c. The **water**, which will turn to blood when dropped on the dry ground - **Exo 4:9**

B. SOME HESITATE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL FOR THE SAME REASON...

1. The fear of failure keeps them from trying
2. But just as God gave Moses convincing proofs, so He has given us the evidences necessary to convince the honest and sincere person...
 - a. The Word of God, able to produce faith - **Ro 10:17; Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. Especially its evidences concerning resurrection of Christ, fulfilled prophecy, etc.
-- With such aids, we cannot justify our inactivity in sharing the gospel with others!

[You would think by now Moses would accept the call; but a fourth excuse is quickly given...]

IV. “I AM SLOW OF SPEECH AND SLOW OF TONGUE”

A. WE FIND THIS EXCUSE IN EXO 4:10...

1. Moses claims that he is not an eloquent speaker
2. But God is not moved by this objection...
 - a. He already knows the inability of those He calls - **Exo 4:11**
 - b. But He is able to make up for anyone’s shortcomings
 - 1) Again, promising to be with Moses - **Exo 4:12**
 - 2) He had even arranged for Aaron to be Moses’ mouthpiece - **Exo 4:14-16** (who

B. SOME CHRISTIANS TRY TO USE THIS EXCUSE AS WELL...

1. But it did not stop the apostle Paul - cf. **1 Co 2:1,3-4**

2. It has not stopped others
 - a. I know of some who overcame speech impediments to become preachers
 - b. I know of one who despite stammering would preach any opportunity he could
3. At the very least, we can make use of those who can speak by arranging studies for them with others (as did Cornelius - **Ac 10:24,33**)

[We have considered four excuses that Moses gave; but as mentioned earlier, they were really smokescreens. The true reason for all these excuses is found in revealed in **Exo 4:13...**]

V. **“PLEASE SEND...WHOMEVER ELSE YOU MAY SEND”**

A. MOSES SIMPLY DID NOT WANT TO GO...!

1. The previous excuses were simply a smokescreen attempt to hide this fact!
2. Now that the smokescreen is removed, God’s impatience with Moses becomes evident
 - a. His anger was kindled against Moses - **Exo 4:14a**
 - b. Read **vs. 15-17** with an emphasis on the word “shall” to appreciate the Lord’s anger

B. BRETHREN, THE SAME IS TRUE WITH US TODAY...!

1. Any and every excuse we could offer is only a smokescreen
2. We really would rather that God use someone else!
3. We really don’t want to do what God has called us to do’
4. But brethren, the Lord’s anger is kindled against those who do not live up to their calling!
-- If we have been making excuses, we need to repent!

CONCLUSION

1. With Moses, we know the rest of the story...
 - a. Moses answered the call, and went to Egypt
 - b. With the help of God, he delivered the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage
2. But what about us? What will be the rest of our story...?
 - a. Shall we heed the call to preach the gospel to the lost?
 - b. Or shall we make excuses and one day suffer the wrath of God?
-- Only time will tell, but I pray that I encouraged all not to make excuses...

What about the call to obey the gospel of Christ? Are you making excuses for not responding as you know you should? A future lesson will address some of the excuses people give for putting off their obedience, but if you know what you should do, you need to act today!

The Hardening Of Pharaoh

Exodus 4:21-23

INTRODUCTION

1. When God sent Moses to free the Israelites from Egyptian bondage...
 - a. He said that He would harden the heart of Pharaoh - **Exo 4:21**
 - b. Even though it would result in the death of Pharaoh's son - **Exo 4:22-23**
2. Because this sounds unjust, some explain it as hardening **indirectly**...
 - a. "God does not harden men by infusing malice into them, but by not imparting mercy to them."
 - b. "God does not work this hardness of heart in man; but he may be said to harden him whom he refuses to soften, to blind him whom he refuses to enlighten, and to repel him whom he refuses to call." -- **As quoted by Adam Clarke**
3. If God hardened the heart of Pharaoh **directly**, the evidence shows it was still done...
 - a. Without violating his free will
 - b. Without impugning the justice of God

[The hardening of Pharaoh also provides insights as to how and why God hardens people today. So let's take a closer look at the evidence involved in...]

I. THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH

A. THE WORD "HARDEN"...

1. **chazaq** (Heb.) - **Exo 4:21; 7:13,22; 8:19; 9:12,35; 10:20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8,17**
 - a. "to strengthen, prevail, harden, be strong, become strong, be courageous, be firm, grow firm, be resolute, be sore" - **BDB**
 - b. "literally signifies to strengthen, confirm, make bold or courageous;" - **Clarke**
 2. **qashah** (Heb.) - **Exo 7:3**
 - a. "to make hard, make stiff, make stubborn" - **BDB**
 - b. "harden, stiffen" - **Strong**
 3. **kabed** (Heb.) - **Exo 7:14; 8:15; 8:32; 9:7,34; 10:1**
 - a. "hard, difficult, burdensome" - **BDB**
 - b. "heavy; figuratively...in a bad sense, severe, difficult...grievous, hardened" - **Strong**
- **So Pharaoh's heart was made strong, stiff, stubborn; even if God did so 'directly', consider what else we learn as we examine the scriptural evidence below**

B. PHARAOH HARDENED HIS OWN HEART...

1. And Pharaoh's heart grew hard (**chazaq**), and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said. - **Exo 7:13**
2. So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard (**kabed**); he refuses to let the people go." - **Exo 7:14**
3. Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart grew hard (**chazaq**), and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said. - **Exo 7:22**
4. But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened (**kabed**) his heart and did not heed them, as the Lord had said. - **Exo 8:15**

5. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart grew hard (**chazaq**), and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said. - **Exo 8:19**
 6. But Pharaoh hardened (**kabed**) his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go. - **Exo 8:32**
 7. Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard (**kabed**), and he did not let the people go. - **Exo 9:7**
 8. And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened (**kabed**) his heart, he and his servants. - **Exo 9:34**
 9. So the heart of Pharaoh was hard (**chazaq**); neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the Lord had spoken by Moses. - **Exo 9:35**
- **In the first five plagues, and in the seventh, Pharaoh hardened his own heart**

C. THEN GOD HARDENED PHARAOH’S HEART...

1. And I will harden (**qashah**) Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. - **Exo 7:3**
 2. But the Lord hardened (**chazaq**) the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses. - **Exo 9:12**
 3. Now the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened (**kabed**) his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him,” - **Exo 10:1**
 4. But the Lord hardened (**chazaq**) Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.- **Exo 10:20**
 5. But the Lord hardened (**chazaq**) Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go.- **Exo 10:27**
 6. So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the Lord hardened (**chazaq**) Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land. - **Exo 11:10**
 7. Then I will harden (**chazaq**) Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. - **Exo 14:4**
 8. And the Lord hardened (**chazaq**) the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness. - **Exo 14:8**
 9. And I indeed will harden (**chazaq**) the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. - **Exo 14:17**
- **Not until the sixth plague did God begin to harden Pharaoh’s heart**

D. THE PURPOSE OF HARDENING PHARAOH’S HEART...

1. To convince the **Egyptians** that the LORD is truly God - **Exo 7:3-5; 14:4**
 - a. By multiplying the signs and wonders in the land
 - b. By delivering Israel through great judgments
2. To convince the **Israelites** that the LORD is truly God - **Exo 10:1-2**
 - a. By His signs done in the land of Egypt
 - b. That generations to come might be told
3. To convince the **world** that the LORD is truly God - **Exo 9:13-17**
 - a. God could have easily overwhelmed Pharaoh with His signs
 - b. But God “raised” Pharaoh up, even as Pharaoh was “exalting” himself
 - 1) “God kept Pharaoh ‘standing’, i. e. permitted him to live and hold out until His own purpose was accomplished.” - **Barnes**
 - 2) “God had preserved him for this very purpose, that he might have a farther

opportunity of manifesting that he, Jehovah, was the only true God for the full conviction both of the Hebrews and Egyptians.” - **Clarke**

- 3) Thus God hardened, or strengthened, one who was determined to resist
 - c. That God might show His power and proclaim His name in all the earth!
- **God never forced Pharaoh to resist against his will; having demonstrated his own obstinacy and desire to resist, God simply strengthened him that he might continue his resistance until God’s own purposes were fulfilled**

[Such ‘hardening’ was not unique to Pharaoh. It happened in Jesus’ day (e.g. **Jn 12:37-41**), and it is not limited to the past...]

II. THE HARDENING OF PEOPLE TODAY

A. THE NATION OF ISRAEL...

1. A ‘partial hardening’ (NASB) or blindness of Israel has occurred - **Ro 11:25**
 2. Was this hardening or blindness against their will? No!
 - a. It was only after they had ample opportunity to hear God’s Word - **Ro 10:16-19**
 - b. It was only after they had repeatedly rebelled against God - **Ro 10:21**
 3. Was this a hardening of ‘all’ Israel? No!
 - a. It is a ‘partial’ hardening
 - b. God has always preserved the faithful remnant - cf. **Ro 11:1-7**
 - c. Many Jews have accepted Jesus, both then and now
 4. What was the extent of this ‘hardening’?
 - a. As with Pharaoh, it gave them strength of heart to continue in their resistance
 - b. With Israel, it enabled them to resist against the Word of God - cf. **Ro 11:7-10**
 5. What was the purpose of this ‘hardening’?
 - a. It was an act of mercy!
 - 1) Their unbelief justified God terminating His covenant with Israel and making a new covenant that involved both Jews and Gentiles - cf. **Jer 31:31-32; Ep 2:11-19**
 - 2) By allowing Gentiles in this new covenant, God hopes to make unbelieving Jews jealous enough to come back - **Ro 11:11-15**
 - b. Thus the ultimate purpose was to save both Jew and Gentile! - cf. **Ro 11:30-32**
- **Until the “fullness of the Gentiles has come in”, the nation of Israel (as a whole) has been hardened**

B. THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE...

1. Paul writes of another ‘hardening’ (though the word is not used)
 - a. In connection with the apostasy preceding the return of Christ - **2 Th 2:1-10**
 - b. In which God will send a strong delusion upon some, to believe a lie - **2 Th 2:11-12**
2. Is this being done against their will? No!
 - a. It involves people who did not receive the love of the truth - cf. **2 Th 2:10**
 - b. It involves people who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in sin - cf. **2 Th 2:12**
3. Why is God doing this?
 - a. That they might be condemned (judged) - cf. **2 Th 2:12**
 - b. Just as hardening Pharaoh made his obstinacy more evident, so the delusion to believe a lie will reveal one’s pleasure in sin
4. How can we be sure that we will not experience this strong delusion?
 - a. Have a love for the truth! - cf. **2 Th 2:10**
 - b. Do not take pleasure in unrighteousness! - cf. **2 Th 2:12**

-- **The choice is ours as to whether we will experience this ‘delusion’!**

CONCLUSION

1. We have seen that God hardened the hearts of the wicked, and is willing to send a strong delusion for them to believe a lie...
 - a. Not in violation of their free will, but in conjunction with it
 - b. “The ‘hardening’ of men’s hearts by God is in the way of punishment, but it is always a consequence of their own self-hardening.” - **ISBE**
 - c. Strengthening the resolve of the wicked if it somehow serves God’s purpose
2. How much better for us to have God strengthen our hearts in doing good, not evil...
 - a. As Paul prayed for the Thessalonians - **2 Th 2:16-17**
 - b. As Peter prayed for those in Asia - **1 Pe 5:10**

This God will gladly do...if we **love** the truth, **believe** the truth, **receive** the truth by obeying the gospel, and **remain firm** in holding to it. **In what way will God ‘strengthen’ your heart today...?**

The Sin Of Nadab & Abihu

Leviticus 9:22-10:7

INTRODUCTION

1. The O.T. is of much value to the Christian...
 - a. Written for our learning, a great source of hope - **Ro 15:4**
 - b. Written for our admonition, that we might not make similar mistakes - **1 Co 10:11**
2. This includes even the book of **Leviticus**...
 - a. A dry book to many, but of value to all
 - b. Its name is derived from **Levi**, from which tribe came the priests
 - c. It is primarily a handbook for priests under the Law of Moses
 - d. Reading it helps the Christian to better understand The Book Of Hebrews
3. Though primarily a book outlining priestly rituals, it does record an incident involving two sons of Aaron: **Nadab** and **Abihu**
 - a. What happened to them can provide valuable lessons for us
 - b. What did happen and what we can learn from it will serve as the basis for this study

[Let's begin by reading about...

I. THE INCIDENT INVOLVING NADAB & ABIHU

A. CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING UP TO THEIR ACTIONS...

1. The consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests had just been completed - **Lev 8-9**
2. In **Lev 9:22-24**, the glory of the Lord appeared when Aaron blessed the people
 - a. Fire came out from before the Lord
 - b. The fire consumed the fat on the altar
 - c. The people shouted and fell on their face

B. THE PROFANE FIRE OFFERED BY NADAB AND ABIHU...

1. They offered a fire not commanded by the Lord - **Lev 10:1**
 - a. It is called a "strange" fire (cf. KJV, NASB)
 - b. The NIV translates it as "unauthorized" fire
 - It is important to note is that it was something the Lord had not commanded!
2. Fire went out from the Lord and devoured them - **Lev 10:2**
 - a. Compare the fire of **Lev 9:24** with that of **Lev 10:2**
 - 1) The one indicated God's acceptance; the other, God's rejection
 - 2) The one indicated God's blessing; the other, God's curse
 - b. Why was God displeased? Several explanations have been offered:
 - 1) They put hot coals in their censers which were not from the altar of burnt offering - cf. **Lev 16:12; Exo 30:9**
 - 2) The prohibition against intoxicating drinks which followed lead some to believe they may have been drunk - cf. **Lev 10:8-10**
 - 3) Their attempt to enter the Holy Place at an inappropriate time - cf. **Lev 16:1-2**
 - Their sin may have been a combination of these things, but **verse one** notes that it

was **doing that which God had not commanded**

C. MOSES' EXPLANATION FOR WHAT HAPPENED...

1. Those who approach God must regard Him as "holy" - **Lev 10:3a**
 - a. "Holy" means "to set apart, consecrated"; i.e., to treat as special
 - b. Evidently the actions of Nadab and Abihu did not so respect God
2. God must be "glorified" before all - **Lev 10:3b**
 - a. This word means "to honor"
 - b. The actions of Nadab and Abihu therefore did not honor God

D. MOSES' FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS...

1. Nadab & Abihu's bodies to be removed outside the camp - **Lev 10:4-5**
2. Aaron and his surviving sons were not to grieve while still consecrated for service - **Lev 10:6-7**

[It must have been very difficult for Aaron to lose his two sons in this way, on an occasion that should have been a time of great rejoicing for him. Since these things were written for our admonition (1 Co 10:11), what lessons might there be for us...?]

II. LESSONS TO BE GLEANED FROM THIS INCIDENT

A. REGARDING THE WORSHIP OF GOD...

1. When we approach God in worship, we must do only what He has commanded
 - a. This was the main mistake made by Nadab and Abihu - **Lev 10:1**
 - b. When we offer something God has not commanded...
 - 1) We do not regard Him as holy - **Lev 10:3**
 - 2) We do not truly glorify Him - **Lev 10:3**
2. If God is holy and truly worthy of glory...
 - a. How can sinful man know what God desires as acceptable worship?
 - b. Can sinful man read the mind of God?
 - 1) If so, then God is not all that holy (i.e., set apart)!
 - 2) If so, then God is not all that different from man and therefore not worthy of glory!
 - c. Indeed, man cannot know without Divine revelation how God ought to be worshipped and glorified - cf. **Isa 55:8-9**
3. This is one reason why I choose not to use mechanical instruments in worship
 - a. In the New Testament, only singing is specified - e.g., **Ep 5:19; Co 3:16**
 - 1) To offer praise with mechanical instruments...
 - a) Would be something God has not commanded
 - b) Would be presumptuous on our part
 - 2) To do so would be trying to second-guess God
 - a) If God wanted such, He would have told us
 - b) Since He didn't, we respect Him by offering only what He commands
 - b. What about God's approval of mechanical instruments in the Old Testament?
 - 1) Here we can learn from the example of Moses
 - a) At one time, God told him to strike the rock to obtain water - **Exo 17:6**
 - b) Later, God told him to speak to the rock - **Num 20:8**
 - c) When Moses did the second time what God said to do the first time...
 - 1/ He failed to "hallow" (show reverence) God - **Num 20:11-12**

- 2/ He lost the right to enter the Promised Land - **Num 20:12; Deu 32:51**
- 2) What can we learn from the example of Moses?
 - a) We must do what God has revealed for the time appropriate for us
 - b) God may have approved of instrumental music in the past, but He commands singing in the New Testament
 - c) We cannot simply say, "God allowed it in the past"

B. REGARDING THE PRIORITY OF GOD...

1. Service to the Lord comes before service to the family
 - a. This we learn when Aaron was not allowed to grieve for his sons
 - 1) It was necessary for others to take the bodies out of the camp - **Lev 10:4-5**
 - 2) Aaron had been consecrated, and service to the Lord came first - **Lev 10:6-7**
 - b. Jesus made a similar point on several occasions
 - 1) As He was calling people to follow Him - **Lk 9:59-62**
 - 2) As He addressed the multitudes following Him - **Lk 14:25-33**
 - 3) As He prepared His disciples for their work - **Mt 10:34-37**
2. When conflict arises between the Lord and the family, Christ comes first!
 - a. E.g., obeying the gospel despite the objection of family members
 - b. E.g., putting the assemblies of the Lord's church first when company comes
 - 1) This does not require that we be rude to our guests
 - 2) Let them make themselves at home until you return-- This is what it means to "seek first the kingdom of God..." - **Mt 6:33**

CONCLUSION

1. It is very easy for us to become complacent in our service to the Lord...
 - a. When this happens, it shows in our worship and service to the Lord
 - b. Rather than regard Him as Holy and glorify Him as He deserves...
 - 1) ...by doing exactly as He commands
 - 2) ...we begin to offer in worship **how** we want and **when** we want
 - c. Thus our worship is one of convenience rather of conviction!
2. We need to be reminded of incidents like that which happened to Nadab and Abihu...
 - a. To humble us in the presence of God
 - b. To remind us of the seriousness of serving God

Do we regard God as holy, and properly glorify Him in our service to Him? Do we serve Him first? Even above those closest to us?

May the example of Nadab and Abihu encourage us to do that which honors God!

The Priestly Blessing

Numbers 6:22-27

INTRODUCTION

1. In a book filled with “numbers”, we find a beautiful gem of scripture, which has been called “the Lord’s Prayer of the Old Testament”:

*“The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.”*

2. As noted in **Num 6:22-27**, it is the blessing of the Lord with which Aaron and his sons were to bless the children of Israel...
 - a. Aaron and his sons made up the priesthood for the nation of Israel
 - b. Therefore this passage has often been called “**The Priestly Blessing**” (also the Aaronic Benediction)
3. In this passage, I believe we learn things about the Lord which are just as true today...
 - a. Even though we do not live under the Old Covenant, with its Aaronic priesthood
 - b. We do have a “High Priest”, who desires to bless us just as richly (if not more so)!

[To understand what I mean, let’s first look more closely at...]

I. THE PRIESTLY BLESSING DEFINED

A. “THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU...”

1. The word “**ble**ss” means to confer well-being or prosperity
 - a. The promise of such blessings was conditional - cf. **Deu 28:1-6**
 - b. Failure to meet God’s conditions brought curses, not blessings - cf. **Deu 28:15-19**
2. The word “**ke**ep” means to provide and care, to guard and protect
 - a. A beautiful psalm which speaks of God’s care is **Psa 121:1-8**
 - b. Like a shepherd guarding and providing his sheep, the benediction calls upon God to keep watch over Israel

B. “THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE UPON YOU, AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU...”

1. To “**make His face shine**” may be an idiom...
 - a. Indicating God’s smile of favor on His people, evidenced by His being “gracious” (**Wenham**)
 - b. Note how it is used elsewhere - **Psa 31:16; 80:3; Dan 9:17**
2. To “**be gracious**” means to bestow favor, especially that which is unmerited
 - a. The parallelism of this benediction suggests this favor refers to the blessing and keeping by the Lord mentioned previously
 - b. Perhaps emphasizing that such blessings are unmerited, even though conditional

C. “THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON YOU, AND GIVE YOU

PEACE...”

1. To **“lift up His countenance”** may be similar to smile (**Believers’ Study Bible**)
 - a. As such it suggests pleasure and affection (**Allen**)
 - b. Also approval and recognition (**Ryrie**)
2. The word **“peace”** is not just the absence of war, but a positive state of rightness and fullness of well-being (**Allen**)
 - a. For the nation of Israel, God had promised peace if they were faithful - **Lev 26:6**
 - b. There was also peace for the individual who trusted in God - **Isa 26:3**

[That God would have Aaron and his sons bless the children of Israel with this benediction indicates that God really wanted to bless and provide for them. How about today? Does God desire to bless us, and if so, how?]

II. THE PRIESTLY BLESSING TODAY

A. “THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU...”

1. Indeed the Lord does desire to bless us!
 - a. Today, those blessings come through Jesus Christ - **Ep 1:3**
 - b. They come especially to those described in **Mt 5:3-12**
 2. And the Lord desires to provide and care for us!
 - a. As described by Jesus in **Mt 6:25-32**
 - b. But this care is conditional, the condition described in **Mt 6:33**
- **Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the priestly blessing will be upon you too!**

B. “THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE UPON YOU, AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU...”

1. Just as all spiritual blessings come through Jesus, so God’s grace is now manifested through His Son - cf. **Jn 1:17**
 2. Yes, God desires to show His smile of favor upon us, but it is imperative that we not receive it in vain! - cf. **2 Co 6:1-3**
- **How sad that God’s grace is so freely extended, yet so few accept His grace!**

C. “THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON YOU, AND GIVE YOU PEACE...”

1. Through Christ, peace with God is now possible - **Ro 5:1**
 2. And as we continue to pray, God bestows peace through His Son - **Ph 4:6-7**
- **The Father is willing to give us peace, but do we accept it?**

CONCLUSION

1. We have been talking about **“The Priestly Blessing”**...
 - a. How God wanted to bless Israel under the Old Covenant
 - b. Through His priests in the Aaronic priesthood
2. We have noted that the same sort of blessings are available today...
 - a. But the blessings of God are bestowed through His Son, Jesus Christ
 - b. Who today is our **“High Priest”** - cf. **He 4:14-16**

3. The point of this lesson is simple, yet profound...
 - a. If you desire **“The Priestly Blessing”** today, you must be in Christ
 - b. He must be your High Priest; for that is how God is blessing His people today! - cf. **Ep 1:3**

Are you in Jesus Christ? How does one get “into” Christ, where they can receive the blessings He offers as our High Priest? Consider what is said in **Ga 3:26-27**...

Caleb Followed The Lord Fully

Numbers 14:24

INTRODUCTION

1. A familiar story of the Bible is that of the twelve spies of Israel...
 - a. Sent to spy out the land of Canaan - **Num 13:1-2**
 - b. Spending 40 days traversing the land - **Num 13:21-25**
 - c. Bringing back both good news and bad news
 - 1) A land of milk and honey, as evidenced by the fruit - **Num 13:27**
 - 2) A land occupied by strong people and giants - **Num 13:28**
 - d. One of the spies, Caleb, sought to reassure the people - **Num 13:30**
 - e. Yet ten of the spies overwhelmed the people with their bad report - **Num 13:31-14:4**
 - f. Only Joshua and Caleb had confidence in the Lord - **Num 14:6-9**
 - g. But the people heeded the bad report, resulting in God's condemnation
 - 1) Israel was to spend 40 years of wandering in the wilderness - **Num 14:29-34**
 - 2) The ten spies died by a plague before the Lord - **Num 14:36-37**
 - 3) Only Joshua and Caleb were spared - **Num 14:38**
2. The Lord spared Caleb because "he...has followed Me fully" - **Num 14:24**
 - a. A similar statement about Caleb made time and again - **Num 32:11-12; Deu 1:36; Josh 14:8-9,14**
 - b. What a wonderful epitaph: "He wholly followed the LORD God of Israel."

[What does it mean to follow the Lord fully as Caleb did? How might we follow Christ fully today...?]

I. WHAT IT IS TO FOLLOW THE LORD FULLY

A. TO FOLLOW JESUS ALL OUR DAYS...

1. Such was the case with Caleb
 - a. He followed the Lord in the wilderness
 - b. He followed the Lord in land of Canaan, 45 years later - **Josh 14:8-10**
 2. Yet many do not
 - a. Like Lot's wife, they turn back - **Gen 19:26**
 - b. Like the Galatians, they are easily bewitched - **Ga 3:1**
 3. What of us who follow Jesus today?
 - a. Shall we follow Him in our youth? - cf. **1 Ti 4:12**
 - b. Shall we follow Him in our old age? - cf. **Ti 2:1-5; Psa 92:12-15**
- **Shall we follow Jesus like Caleb followed the Lord, all the days of our life?**

B. TO FOLLOW JESUS WITH ALL OUR HEART...

1. Caleb followed the Lord "fully", "wholly"
 - a. That is, with his whole heart
 - b. The perfect role model for keeping "the greatest commandment" - cf. **Mt 22:36-38**
2. Sadly, many try to serve the Lord with divided hearts
 - a. Like Solomon, who was influenced by his foreign wives - **1 Kin 11:4**
 - b. Like those in James' epistle, seeking to be friends with the world - **Ja 4:4**

3. What of us who follow Jesus today?
 - a. Shall we follow Him with all our heart? - cf. **Jn 14:15**
 - b. Shall we follow Him with undivided affection? - cf. **1 Jn 2:15-17**
- **Shall we follow Jesus like Caleb followed the Lord, with all our hearts?**

C. TO FOLLOW JESUS DESPITE THE HAZARDS...

1. Caleb followed the Lord despite the dangers
 - a. He was willing to face the giants in the land - cf. **Num 13:33**
 - b. He was willing to face the wrath of his brethren - cf. **Num 14:10**
 - c. He was willing to take a mountain from the giants in his old age - cf. **Josh 14:10-12**
 2. Many will serve the Lord only when it is convenient
 - a. When it is popular, like the crowds who followed Jesus
 - b. When it is safe, like Peter before confronted by the maiden - cf. **Mt 26:69-70**
 3. What of us who follow Jesus today?
 - a. Shall we follow Him only when convenient?
 - b. Shall we follow Him despite ridicule, persecution, dangers? - cf. **Mt 5:10-12**
- **Shall we follow Jesus like Caleb followed the Lord, despite the hazards?**

[Certainly the commitment of Caleb to his Lord is commendable. How was he able to be so committed? How might we be so enabled...?]

II. HOW WE ARE ENABLED TO FOLLOW THE LORD FULLY

A. BY KEEPING OUR EYE ON HIM...

1. Caleb's faith was in the Lord, not himself
 - a. He was confident they could take the land - **Num 13:30**
 - b. But that was because he knew the Lord would be with them - **Num 14:6-9**
 - c. Thus his eye was on the Lord!
 2. So we need to keep our eye on Jesus - cf. **He 12:1-4**
 - a. Looking unto Him as the author and finisher of our faith
 - b. Considering the hostility He endured, knowing the Father will help us as He helped Him to endure
- **Shall we look to the Lord for our inspiration and confidence, like Caleb did?**

B. BY HAVING A DIFFERENT SPIRIT...

1. Caleb was noted for a having a different spirit - **Num 14:24**
 - a. Different than the spirit in the other ten spies, who were defeatists - **Num 13:31**
 - b. Different than the spirit in the rest of Israel, who complained - cf. **Num 14:1-2**
 2. We can be strengthened by a different spirit
 - a. Certainly the spirit of a positive attitude will help - **Ph 4:13**
 - b. How much more so, with the Spirit of God helping us! - cf. **Ro 8:12-13; Ep 3:16**
- **Shall we have a "can do" attitude, knowing we are clothed in the strength of God's might? - cf. Ep 6:10-13**

[Finally, let us seek to discern to glean from the example of Caleb...]

III. MOTIVATION TO FOLLOW THE LORD FULLY

A. IT LEADS TO A USEFUL LIFE...

1. Consider how God was able to use Caleb:
 - a. As a leader in Israel - cf. **Num 13:2,6; 34:18,19**
 - b. As a servant of God, first to spy out the land, then to divide it - cf. **Num 14:24a**
 - c. As an example of faith and courage - **Num 13:30; 14:8,9**
 - d. As a reminder of God's justice - **Num 14:29-30**
 - e. As an inspiration of service, even in old age - **Josh 14:6-12**
 2. How useful will we be, if we follow Jesus fully?
 - a. We can be an example in youth - **1 Ti 4:12**
 - b. We can be useful to the Master - **2 Ti 2:20-22**
- **Don't we want to be useful to Jesus?**

B. IT LEADS TO A FULFILLED LIFE...

1. Consider how Caleb was fulfilled in life:
 - a. Only he and Joshua were blessed to enter Canaan - **Deu 1:35-36**
 - b. He received the land around Hebron as an inheritance - **Josh 14:6-14; 21:12**
 - c. His land had rest from war - **Josh 14:15**
 2. What kind of fulfilled life does Jesus offer those who follow Him fully today?
 - a. One that experiences love which passes knowledge - **Ep 3:19**
 - b. One that experiences peace which surpasses understanding - **Ph 4:7**
 - c. One that experiences joy inexpressible - **1 Pe 1:8**
 - d. One in which our daily needs are provided - **Mt 6:33**
- **Don't we want to have a fulfilled life?**

CONCLUSION

1. Let the example of Caleb inspire you to follow the Lord fully in your life...
 - a. To follow Jesus all the days of your life
 - b. To follow Jesus with all your heart
 - c. To follow Jesus despite the hazards
2. Shall we, like Caleb, follow the Lord fully so we too may...
 - a. Have a useful life in service to the Lord?
 - b. Have a fulfilled life that is blessed by the Lord?

Don't forget - Caleb and Joshua were the only two (out of **603,550** men) who survived the forty years of wilderness wanderings and entered the promised land (**Num 32:10-13**). Their brethren did not enter Canaan, for as the Lord said of them "they have not wholly followed Me".

How are we following the Lord? Like Caleb? Or like those who died in the wilderness...?

Shall Your Brethren Go To War While You Sit Here?

Numbers 32:6

INTRODUCTION

1. Prior to Israel's occupation of the Promised Land, the tribes of Reuben and Gad wanted to settle in the land east of the Jordan
2. Their request and Moses' response are found in **Num 32:1-23**, and have practical application to our service in the church today

[Let's begin our study with a review of...]

I. THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT IN NUMBERS 32

A. REUBEN AND GAD EXPRESS THEIR DESIRE...

1. They were two tribes with much livestock - **Num 32:1a**
2. They saw that the land of Jazer and Gilead (the Transjordan) was good for livestock - **Num 32:1b**
3. So they requested to be given the land as their possession, and not taken over the Jordan river with the rest of Israel - **Num 32:2-5**

B. MOSES RESPONDS...

1. "Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?" - **Num 32:6**
 - a. Shall they be at ease, while their brethren must fight?
 - b. Was it not with their brethren's help that the land they desire is now available?
2. How Moses viewed their request...
 - a. They would discourage their brethren - **Num 32:7**
 - b. They would be no different than the ten spies
 - 1) Who discouraged Israel by their report - **Num 32:8-9**
 - 2) Who aroused God's anger against them - **Num 32:10-13**
 - c. They would be a brood of sinful men, and increase God's anger against Israel - **Num 32:14**
 - d. They would in essence destroy God's people! - **Num 32:15**

C. AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED...

1. Reuben and Gad offer to send their soldiers to help possess the Promised Land - **Num 32:16-19**
2. Moses agrees, but with a stern warning - **Num 32:20-23**
 - a. The land they desire will be theirs if they carry through with their offer
 - b. But if they don't keep their agreement...
 - 1) They will have sinned against the Lord!
 - 2) Be sure their sin will find them out!

[In **1 Co 10:11** we are told that what happened to Israel serves as examples to us, and were written for our admonition. With this in mind, let's consider the following...]

II. APPLICATION FOR US TODAY

A. LIKE ISRAEL, WE ARE AT WAR...

1. A spiritual war, to be sure - **2 Co 10:3-5**
2. A war against Satan, and the spiritual forces of wickedness - **Ep 6:10-18**
3. The Lord's army (the church) fights this battle as her members serve in such areas as evangelism, edification, and benevolence

B. MUCH HAS BEEN DONE UP TO THE PRESENT...

1. Many have stood for the truth in the past
 - a. Coming out of denominationalism
 - b. Standing firm against innovations which would lead to apostasy
2. Making it possible for us today:
 - a. To know the truth of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - b. To worship God in spirit and truth
 - c. To enjoy the blessings of God's family
3. But the war wages on!
 - a. Every thought must be brought captive to Christ - **2 Co 10:5**
 - b. We must continue to stand strong against the wiles of the devil - **Ep 6:11**

C. SHALL OUR BRETHERN GO TO WAR WHILE WE SIT HERE?

1. By lettings others do the work of the Lord's army?
 2. Shall we just sit, enjoying the efforts of others?
 - a. The efforts of those who labored in the past?
 - b. The efforts of those who labor now, making it possible for us to enjoy the blessings of fellowship and worship?
- **If not actively involved in some phase of the Lord's work, that is exactly what we are doing!**

D. IF WE ARE SITTING, WHAT IS THE EFFECT...?

1. We discourage our brethren! - cf. **Num 32:7**
 - a. Who often must carry the burden alone
 - b. Who easily get "burned out" trying to do it all
 2. Lack of involvement is just as detrimental as active opposition!
 - a. The slothful is a brother to him who destroys - **Pro 18:9**
 - b. If we do not gather, then we scatter; there is no neutral ground! - **Mt 12:30**
- **Like just sitting in a wagon, instead of pulling or pushing, we hinder its progress!**

E. WHAT WILL BE THE END RESULT?

1. We will have sinned against the Lord! - cf. **Num 32:23a**
 - a. For what one does or doesn't do for the church, it affects Christ!
 - b. As Paul learned when he persecuted the church - cf. **Ac 9:1-5**
 - c. Yes, when we sin against the brethren, we sin against Christ! - **1 Co 8:12**
2. Be sure that our sin will find us out!
 - a. It will come out in the growth of the congregation
 - 1) Proper growth is possible only if ALL are doing their part - **Ep 4:15-16**

- 2) Growth may occur with inactive members, but the growth will be stunted, retarded, handicapped!
- b. It will come out on the Day of Judgment!
 - 1) When we have to answer for our laziness!
 - 2) Remember the parable of The Talents? - cf. **Mt 26:24-30**

CONCLUSION

1. When Reuben and Gad realized the effect of sitting while their brethren went to war, they immediately made arrangements to do their part...
 - a. Moses was even patient with them, allowing them time to care for their families - **Num 32:24**
 - b. They in turn promised to do their part in going to war - **Num 32:25-27**
 - Certainly we can be patient in helping our brethren prepare for “war”, if need be
2. But may we all determine not to rest until the work is done, by resolving to be...
 - a. More diligent in the spiritual battle we face!
 - b. More active in whatever area of service for which we are best suited!
3. Let your brethren know that you desire to serve, and not just sit while others work!

Are you in the army of Christ, actively engaged in the service of His kingdom?

The Leadership Qualities Of Joshua

Joshua 24:29-31

INTRODUCTION

1. It is impressive to note the great influence that Joshua had with those of his generation - cf. **Josh 24:29-31**
 - a. Of course, much was due to God being with him and doing many “great works”
 - b. Such as the parting of the Jordan River, the fall of Jericho, the day the sun and moon stood still
2. But credit must also be given to Joshua, for from the very beginning the promise of God’s support was based upon Joshua’s faithful obedience to the Word of God - **Josh 1:1-9**
3. Joshua therefore stands before us as an example of what it takes to be a great leader...
 - a. Every generation needs good leadership, especially in times of struggle and doubt
 - b. For those who lead, or who might one day serve as leaders, Joshua serves as a role model
 - c. For those who follow, he serves as an example of what we should look for in our leaders

[In this lesson, we shall consider more closely those qualities of Joshua that served to make him the great leader that he was, so that we know what to expect in those who would lead today. We begin by noticing that Joshua was...]

I. A MAN OF HUMILITY

A. BEFORE HE WAS A LEADER, HE WAS WILLING TO SERVE...

1. For forty years he served under Moses in the Wilderness
 2. He was known as “Moses’ assistant”, “his servant” - **Exo 24:13; 33:11**
- **Great leaders are people who have no problem with serving others if that is their lot in life; indeed, it helps prepare to them to lead**

B. EVEN AS A LEADER, HE WAS WILLING TO SERVE...

1. Though having been magnified by the Lord himself - **Josh 3:7; 4:14**
 2. He was still willing to serve One greater than himself - **Josh 5:13-15**
- **Great leaders do not let praise go to their head; they are also humble enough to know when it is time to serve once again**

[Joshua’s humility is also demonstrated as we consider another quality that we find in him...]

II. A MAN OF FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD

A. AS DEMONSTRATED WHEN SENT TO SPY OUT THE LAND...

1. Ten of the twelve spies demonstrated their lack of faith by their report - **Num 13:25-28**
2. But despite the “peer pressure” he must have felt, Joshua (along with Caleb) demonstrated his faith in God by his report - cf. **Num 14:6-9**

B. AS DEMONSTRATED IN THE FALL OF JERICHO...

1. The Lord gave him the instructions to take the city - **Josh 6:1-5**

2. Only full trust and faith in the Lord could have led Joshua to follow such instructions, but he did! - cf. **He 11:30**

[Great leaders realize they cannot place their faith in men (including themselves); they must look to God!

Closely related to this is another quality of Joshua that made him a great leader. He was...]

III. A MAN OF GOD'S WORD

A. HIS SUCCESS WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO HIS ADHERENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD...

1. To ensure success, he had to fulfill all the Law as given by Moses - **Josh 1:7**
2. To ensure that he did, he was to meditate upon the Law day and night - **Josh 1:8**

B. TIME AND AGAIN, WE SEE THAT JOSHUA WAS TRUE TO THE WORD...

1. In reminding the two and half tribes of their responsibility - **Josh 1:12-15**
2. In renewing the covenant at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim - **Josh 8:30-35**
3. A summary of Joshua's devotion is found in **Josh 11:15**
4. Even at his life's end, he encouraged the nation to heed God's Word - **Josh 23:6,14-16**

[Faith comes from the Word of God (**Ro 10:17**), so we really can't expect one to be a man of faith without being a man of God's Word. For those who would lead, they need to heed the charge God gave Joshua (**Josh 1:8**), which is similar to the charge Paul gave Timothy (**1 Ti 4:13-16**). Also closely related to being a man of faith and trust is being...]

IV. A MAN OF PRAYER

A. WE SEE HIM PRAYING FOR HIS PEOPLE'S FAILURES...

1. Following the defeat at Ai - **Josh 7:6-9**
2. In which he and the elders pleaded with God in behalf of Israel

B. WE SEE HIM PRAYING IN THE MIDST OF WARFARE...

1. As Israel is routing the kings of the south - **Josh 10:9-14**
2. Trusting not in their own strength, he looks to the Lord for help, Who caused the sun and moon to stand still

[If Joshua had not been a man of prayer, the aid of the Lord would not have been provided. When leaders need all the help they can get, they need to be men of prayer! Finally, it should be clear from what we have already seen that another quality of leadership found in Joshua is that he was...]

V. A MAN WHO PUT GOD FIRST

A. BEFORE THE BUSINESS AT HAND...

1. Even in the middle of a military campaign - **Josh 8:30-35**; cf. **Deu 27-28**
2. Though it gave their enemies time to join together in opposition (**Josh 9:1-2**), Joshua still put God first and kept His commandment concerning the blessings and cursings

B. BEFORE OTHERS...

1. He cared not what others might do or think, he would serve the Lord! - **Josh 24:14-15**

2. His strong stand influenced others for good - **Josh 24:16**

CONCLUSION

1. It was qualities such as these that made Joshua the strong leader that he was...
 - a. He was a man of humility
 - b. He was a man of faith and trust in God
 - c. He was a man of God's Word
 - d. He was a man of prayer
 - e. He was a man who put God first
2. But he was not alone in these things, as it appears that others of his generation were much the same - cf. **Josh 24:31**
 - a. As long as the elders who had been contemporary with Joshua survived, the nation as a whole served the Lord
 - b. So we are not talking about supernatural qualities, but those which each and every person is capable of possessing!

Finally, consider some similarities between Joshua and Jesus...

- ◆ Their names are the same (Joshua is Hebrew, Jesus is Greek), which means "savior"
- ◆ Joshua was the leader of the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan; Jesus is our leader into the promised land of heaven - cf. **Jn 14:1**
- ◆ As Joshua pointed the people to the Word of God, so did Jesus - **Mt 7:21**
- ◆ As Joshua was an agent of both grace (cf. Rahab) and damnation (cf. nations of Canaan), so Jesus is both savior and judge of all men, who metes out death as well as life - **Mt 25:34,41**

Have you humbly submitted to the One who should be the Commander and Leader of your life...?

The Story Of Ruth

Ruth 1:1-4:22

INTRODUCTION

1. The story of Ruth is a beautiful “interlude of love,” set in...
 - a. The period when judges ruled Israel - **Ru 1:1**
 - b. An era marked by immorality, idolatry, and war - cf. **Judg 21:25**
2. It tells a heartwarming story of devotion and faithfulness...
 - a. Concerning a Moabite widow (Ruth) who leaves her homeland
 - b. To live with her Jewish mother-in-law (Naomi) in the land of Israel
3. God honors Ruth's commitment...
 - a. By guiding her to the field of Boaz (a near kinsman to Naomi)
 - b. Where she gathers grain and finds a place in the genealogy of Christ!
4. It has been said the book of Ruth serves two purposes...
 - a. To illustrate how Jehovah rewards those who make wise spiritual choices and show steadfast familial loyalty
 - b. To explain how Ruth, a Moabitess, came to be an ancestor of David, and ultimately, the Messiah - cf. **Ru 4:21-22; Mt 1:5-6**

[The book’s brevity and beauty makes it easy to read in one sitting, and it easily divides into four sections. In chapter one, we learn of...]

I. RUTH’S NOBLE CHOICE: “I WILL GO” (1:1-22)

A. FATEFUL SOJOURN IN MOAB...

1. Famine prompts the journey
 - a. The setting - **Ru 1:1**
 - b. The family - **Ru 1:2**
 - c. The move - **Ru 1:2**
2. Death strikes three times
 - a. Elimelech dies - **Ru 1:3**
 - b. Mahlon and Chilion marry - **Ru 1:4**
 - c. Mahlon and Chilion both die - **Ru 1:5**

B. FATEFUL RETURN TO JUDAH...

1. Naomi chooses to return home
 - a. The famine in Judah has ended - **Ru 1:6**
 - b. Naomi encourages her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab - **Ru 1:7-9**
2. Ruth chooses to return with her
 - a. At first, both want to return with Naomi - **Ru 1:10**
 - b. Naomi tries to dissuade them - **Ru 1:11-13**
 - c. Ruth cannot be dissuaded - **Ru 1:14-18**
 - d. Note carefully Ruth’s noble choice - **Ru 1:16-17**

3. Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem
 - a. Their arrival sparks excitement in the city - **Ru 1:19**
 - b. Naomi believes she should be called Mara - **Ru 1:20-21**
 - c. Naomi and Ruth settle in Bethlehem at the beginning of harvest - **Ru 1:22**

[“**Ruth’s Noble Choice: I Will Go**” has brought her to a strange land. Now let us read of..]

II. RUTH’S LOWLY SERVICE: “LET ME GLEAN” (2:1-23)

A. RUTH GLEANS IN THE FIELD OF BOAZ...

1. Ruth requests to glean in the fields
 - a. We are introduced to Boaz - **Ru 2:1**
 - b. Ruth gains permission from Naomi to let her glean - **Ru 2:2**
 - c. Ruth “happened” to come upon the field belonging to Boaz - **Ru 2:3**
2. Boaz inquires about the woman in the fields
 - a. We see the respect between Boaz and his workers - **Ru 2:4**
 - b. Boaz asks about the strange woman - **Ru 2:5-7**

B. BOAZ EXTENDS KINDNESS TO RUTH...

1. His initial kindness
 - a. Boaz encourages her to glean in his field alone - **Ru 2:8-9**
 - b. Ruth learns why he is so kind to her, a foreigner - **Ru 2:10-12**
 - c. Ruth is comforted by his kindness - **Ru 2:13**
2. His extended kindness
 - a. Shown to her at the noontime meal - **Ru 2:14**
 - b. Shown by the instructions given his young men - **Ru 2:15-16**
 - c. Allowing her to reap an ephah (30-50 pounds) of barley - **Ru 2:17**

C. NAOMI RESPONDS WITH GREAT JOY...

1. Ruth shares her produce with Naomi
 - a. Shows her mother-in-law what she has gleaned - **Ru 2:18**
 - b. Gives Naomi her excess grain - **Ru 2:18**
2. Naomi rejoices over God’s kindness
 - a. When Ruth tells her about Boaz - **Ru 2:19**
 - b. Naomi blesses the Lord for His kindness - **Ru 2:20**
3. Naomi counsels Ruth to continue
 - a. When told of Boaz’s instructions - **Ru 2:21**
 - b. Encourages Ruth to stay with the women in Boaz’s field - **Ru 2:22**
 - c. Which Ruth does till the end of the harvest, living with Naomi - **Ru 2:23**

[“**Ruth’s Lowly Service: Let Me Glean**” provides for Naomi’s care, and opens the door to further blessings for Ruth. As we continue to read, we learn of...]

III. RUTH’S TENDER PLEA: “TAKE YOUR MAIDSERVANT” (3:1-18)

A. NAOMI’S ADVICE TO RUTH...

1. Motivated by motherly concern
 - a. Naomi loves her daughter-in-law as a daughter - **Ru 3:1**
 - b. She is concerned for Ruth’s security and well-being - **Ru 3:1**

2. Prompted by providential circumstances
 - a. Boaz, in whose field Ruth works, is a relative - **Ru 3:2**
 - b. Boaz would be winnowing barley at the threshing floor - **Ru 3:2**
3. Devised to prompt a response
 - a. Ruth told to wash, anoint herself, and put on her best garment - **Ru 3:3**
 - b. Ruth told to wait, until Boaz has eaten and fallen asleep - **Ru 3:4**
 - c. Ruth told to uncover Boaz's feet, lie down, await his response - **Ru 3:4**
 - d. Ruth consents to Naomi's plan - **Ru 3:5**

B. RUTH AT THE FEET OF BOAZ...

1. Ruth follows Naomi's advice
 - a. She goes to the threshing floor - **Ru 3:6**
 - b. She does as instructed by her mother-in-law - **Ru 3:6-7**
2. Boaz startled by Ruth's presence
 - a. At midnight he is startled by a woman's presence - **Ru 3:8**
 - b. Upon inquiry, Ruth identifies herself and makes her plea - **Ru 3:9**
3. Boaz responds with gratitude, honor, and kindness
 - a. He is grateful for her kindness - **Ru 3:10**
 - b. He is concerned about preserving her honor - **Ru 3:11-14**
 - c. He gives Ruth six ephahs of barley - **Ru 3:15**

C. RUTH RETURNS TO NAOMI...

1. Ruth reports to Naomi
 - a. All that Boaz has done for her - **Ru 3:16**
 - b. Explains the six ephahs of barley - **Ru 3:17**
2. Naomi advises Ruth
 - a. To wait and see how things turn out - **Ru 3:18**
 - b. Confident Boaz will act immediately - **Ru 3:18**

["**Ruth's Tender Plea: Take Your Maidservant**"] sets the stage for the happy solution to the misfortune experienced by Naomi and Ruth. In the final chapter of the story of Ruth, we read of...]

IV. RUTH'S MARITAL JOY: "SHE BORE A SON" (4:1-22)

A. BOAZ CONFRONTS A CLOSE RELATIVE...

1. At the town gate
 - a. Boaz meets a close relative at the gate - **Ru 4:1**
 - b. Boaz calls together ten elders of the city - **Ru 4:2**
2. Regarding Naomi's land
 - a. Naomi had sold her husband's land - **Ru 4:3**
 - b. Boaz encourages the close relative to redeem it, or Boaz will - **Ru 4:4**
3. Who refuses to redeem the land
 - a. Boaz points out the obligation involving Ruth - **Ru 4:5**
 - b. Prompting the relative to refuse to redeem the land - **Ru 4:6**

B. BOAZ REDEEMS NAOMI AND RUTH...

1. The transaction for Naomi's land
 - a. Confirmed by the removal of a sandal - **Ru 4:7-8**
 - b. Witnessed by the ten elders and all the people - **Ru 4:9**

2. The arrangement for Ruth's hand
 - a. Boaz has acquired Ruth as wife - **Ru 4:10**
 - b. Witnessed and blessed by townspeople and the elders - **Ru 4:11-12**

C. BOAZ MARRIES RUTH...

1. They have a son named Obed
 - a. With conception given by the Lord - **Ru 4:13**
 - b. With praise and prayer offered by the women - **Ru 4:14-15**
 - c. With nursing by Naomi - **Ru 4:16**
 - d. With his name (Obed) given by the neighbor women - **Ru 4:17**
2. Who will be grandfather to David
 - a. As mentioned - **Ru 4:17**
 - b. As illustrated in the genealogy of Perez - **Ru 4:18-22**

CONCLUSION

1. At the beginning of our study, we noted that the book of Ruth serves two purposes...
 - a. How God rewards those who make wise spiritual choices and show steadfast familial loyalty
 - b. How Ruth, a Moabitess, came to be an ancestor of David, and ultimately, of the Messiah - cf. **Ru 4:21-22; Mt 1:5-6**
2. The book also reveals examples of commendable character...
 - a. The nobility of **Ruth**, who proved to be better to Naomi than seven sons!
 - b. The nobility of **Boaz**, as an employer, and believer in God's promises and commands

Remember that such character was manifested during a dark period in Israel's history:

*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
- Judg 21:25*

May their example of character encourage us to do what is right, even when we live among people who seem to be little different than those in the days of the Judges...!

Hannah - A Woman Of Faith

1 Samuel 1:1-2:10

INTRODUCTION

1. The Old Testament contains many role models for us today...
 - a. Great men like Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel
 - b. Great women like Sarah, Ruth, Esther
2. A wonderful role model for women of faith today is that of Hannah...
 - a. The mother of Samuel, one of the greatest prophets of Israel
 - b. Whose story is told in the first two chapters of 1 Samuel

[From just a simple reading of the material in these two chapters we can glean several lessons from "Hannah - A Woman Of Faith". For example, as we read **1 Sam 1:1-8**, we learn that...]

I. WOMEN OF FAITH ENDURE REAL PROBLEMS

A. HANNAH'S PROBLEMS...

1. Womb closed by the Lord - **1 Sam 1:1-5**
2. Provoking by her rival - **1 Sam 1:6-8**

B. WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM HANNAH...

1. Women of faith are not without problems in this life
 - a. The righteous often suffer (remember Job)
 - b. Sarah likewise suffered ridicule from her handmaiden Hagar - **Gen 16:3-5**
2. We should not let others deter our trust in the Lord
 - a. Hannah could have used her misfortune and mistreatment as an excuse
 - b. Yet year after year Hannah continued to worship the Lord - **1 Sam 1:7**

[Women of faith have problems just like other women. What distinguishes them as women of faith is what they do when faced with their problems, as we glean from reading **1 Sam 1:9-18...**]

II. WOMEN OF FAITH EXTEND VIBRANT PRAYERS

A. HANNAH'S PRAYER...

1. With the bitterness of soul - **1 Sam 1:10**
2. With weeping in anguish - **1 Sam 1:10**
3. With offers of a solemn vow - **1 Sam 1:11**
4. With persistence - **1 Sam 1:12**
5. With her heart - **1 Sam 1:13**
6. With all her soul - **1 Sam 1:15-16**
7. With faith in God's promise - **1 Sam 1:18**

B. WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM HANNAH...

1. Pray **fervently** - she put her soul in her prayers - **Co 4:2a**
2. Pray **persistently** - she continued steadfastly in prayers - **Co 4:2b**

3. Pray **faithfully** - she believed that God would answer her prayers - **1 Jn 5:14-15**

[Women of faith believe in the efficacy of prayer. God takes notice of such faith (**2 Chr 16:9**), so we should not be surprised to see as we continue reading (**1 Sam 1:19-20**) that...]

III. WOMEN OF FAITH EXPERIENCE GOD'S PROVISIONS

A. HANNAH'S PROVISIONS...

1. When the Lord remembered her - **1 Sam 1:19**
2. When the Lord gave her a son, whom she named Samuel ("heard of God") - **1 Sam 1:20**

B. WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM HANNAH...

1. God may sometimes give us what we want
 - a. It must be according to His will - **1 Jn 5:14**
 - b. We must abide in His words - **Jn 15:7**
 - c. Selfish prayers will not be answered as we wish - **Ja 4:3**
2. God will always provide what we need
 - a. It may not be what we want or expect
 - b. But it will meet our needs, and be for our good - cf. **Mt 6:33; Ro 8:28**

[In Hannah's case, she received that for which she asked. But she had made a vow, and as we read on (**1 Sam 1:21-28**), we see that...]

IV. WOMEN OF FAITH EXCEL AT KEEPING PROMISES

A. HANNAH'S PROMISE...

1. She planned to keep her promise - **1 Sam 1:22**
2. She carried out what she promised - **1 Sam 1:24-28**
3. She worshipped the Lord - **1 Sam 1:28**

B. WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM HANNAH...

1. We should keep our vows
 - a. God has no pleasure in fools who do not keep their vows - **Ecc 5:4-5**
 - b. As Christians, even our 'yes' and 'no' are as solemn vows - **Mt 5:33-37; Ja 5:12**
2. We should worship the Lord
 - a. Fulfillment of vows or promises should not be done begrudgingly
 - b. We should with gratitude of heart do the will of the Lord - cf. **Co 3:17**

[Finally, we note Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving (**1 Sam 2:1-10**), which is reminiscent of Mary's 'Magnificat' (**Lk 1:46-55**). Both prayers reveal that...]

V. WOMEN OF FAITH EXPRESS THEIR PRAISE

A. HANNAH'S PRAISE...

1. With great joy in her heart - **1 Sam 2:1**
2. With praise for the Lord for His help - **1 Sam 2:2-10**

B. WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM HANNAH...

1. We should rejoice in blessings received

- a. For we are to rejoice always - **1 Th 5:16**
- b. How much more so when we have received blessings from the Lord!
2. We should offer praise for blessings received
 - a. As David offered thanks, and promised to praise God - **Psa 18:49**
 - b. Praising God is how Christians offer spiritual sacrifices to God - **He 13:15**

CONCLUSION

1. **“Hannah - A Woman Of Faith”** serves to remind us that all women of faith...
 - a. Endure real problems
 - b. Extend vibrant prayers
 - c. Experience God’s provisions
 - d. Excel at keeping promises
 - e. Express their praise
2. Today, anyone can become a person of faith...
 - a. Even though you face many problems
 - b. If you are willing to come to God in prayerful obedience to the gospel of Christ
 - c. Receive the gift of salvation provided through God’s Son
 - d. Remain true to your commitment to His authority as Lord of your life
 - e. Offer your life and the fruit of your lips in praise to Him

May everyone, whether male or female, be able to say together with Hannah:

“My heart rejoices in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord.” - 1 Sam 2:1

Note: The main points of this outline were adapted from a sermon by **Brian Hill**.

Eli's Ineffective Reproof

1 Samuel 2:22-25

INTRODUCTION

1. A man might be on the whole a good man, and yet be marked by some defect...
 - a. Which mars his character and prevents his usefulness
 - b. Which makes him the unintentional cause of much grief

2. Eli was such a man...
 - a. He was a descendant of Ithamar, the youngest son of Aaron
 - b. He held the office of high priest, and helped to raise Samuel
 - c. He became judge at age 58, and judged Israel for 40 years - cf. **1 Sam 4:18**
 - d. When first mentioned, he must have been around 70 years old
 - e. His sons were children of his old age, for sometimes afterward they were spoken of as young men - cf. **1 Sam 2:17**

3. Yet he will always be known as man who did not restrain his sons...
 - a. His sons Hophni and Phineas were corrupt, and did not know the Lord - **1 Sam 2:12-17**
 - b. He sought to reprove his sons, but it was ineffective - **1 Sam 2:22-25**
 - c. Therefore God sent a man of God to pronounce judgment on his household - **1 Sam 2:27-36**
 - d. The Lord also told Samuel of the reason for such judgment - **1 Sam 3:11-14**

[Eli's reproof was clearly ineffective, and did not absolve him of responsibility for his sons' behavior. Here are some possible reasons why...]

I. IT WAS NOT ADMINISTERED IN PROPER TIME

A. IN THE CASE OF ELI AND HIS SONS...

1. His sons' propensity to sin must have been seen long before the rumor of their flagrant transgressions reached him
2. It was evident his sons did not know the Lord, yet they had been appointed priests
3. Eli, being old and weak, was evidently of gentle and easy going temperament
4. Thus he failed to reprove them until they were too devoted to their evil ways
5. In this Eli was like David and his son Adonijah - cf. **1 Kin 1:6**

B. THEREFORE WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

1. The tendency to go wrong appears at an early age
2. A little plant may be easily rooted up, but when it becomes a tree it can only be removed by extraordinary efforts
3. Some children can be 'discouraged' by too much strictness - cf. **Co 3:21**
4. Yet far more are spoiled by too much indulgence ("Indulgence never produces gratitude or love in the heart of a child.")

[The ineffectiveness of Eli's reproof may also have been because...]

II. IT WAS NOT GIVEN WITH SUFFICIENT EARNESTNESS

A. IN THE CASE OF ELI AND HIS SONS...

1. It was not sufficiently pointed in its application
 - a. Given to them collectively rather than individually
 - b. By way of question, rather than a direct charge - **1 Sam 2:23**
 - c. Concerning things he had heard, but had not troubled himself to find out for certain
2. It exhibited no sufficient sense of the evil of sin
 - a. He spoke of the consequences of sin rather than the nature of sin
 - b. He seemed more concerned about the reputation than the sin itself - **1 Sam 2:23-24**
3. It showed no sufficient determination to correct the sin
 - a. He did not threaten to judge them for their injustice toward men
 - b. He simply left them to the judgment of a higher tribunal - **1 Sam 2:25**
 - c. "In the case where the rebuke should have descended like a bolt from heaven we hear nothing but low and feeble murmurings, coming, as it were, out of the dust. Cruel indeed are the tenderest mercies of parental weakness and indulgence. And the fate of Eli shows that by such tender mercies the father may become the minister of vengeance unto his whole house." (**Le Bas**)

B. THEREFORE WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

1. To make sure our reproofs sufficiently pointed ("You are the man!") - cf. **2 Sam 12:7**
2. To communicate the exceedingly sinfulness of sin
3. To make every effort within our power to stop the sinning being done

[We also see the ineffectiveness of Eli's reproof in that...]

III. IT WAS NOT FOLLOWED BY ADEQUATE CHASTISEMENT

A. IN THE CASE OF ELI AND HIS SONS...

1. The law of Moses in the case of disobedient children was very severe - **Deu 21:18-21**
2. But Eli did not observe this law "when they hearkened not to his voice" - **1 Sam 2:25**
3. Nor did he take any further steps to prevent the continuance of the evil which he reproved
 - a. He did not have the zeal for which Phinehas the son of Eleazar was approved - cf. **Num 25:1-13**
 - b. But as a father, a high priest, and a judge he was guilty of culpable infirmity and willful disobedience - cf. **1 Sam 3:12-13**
 - c. "Osiers" (flexible twig of a willow tree), says an old writer, "can never be pillars in the State or in the Church."

B. THEREFORE WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

1. Fathers who love their children chastise them appropriately - cf. **He 12:6-8**
2. Fathers in a position to restrain their children's sinful behavior, have the duty to do so
3. Whether it be in the home, in the church, or in the community

[Finally, we note the ineffectiveness of Eli's reproof by the fact...]

IV. IT DID NOT RESULT IN ANY IMPROVEMENT

A. IN THE CASE OF ELI AND HIS SONS...

1. Their contempt of reproof revealed that they were already infatuated and hardened

2. God had already given them up to destruction - **1 Sam 2:25**
3. In them the proverb was to be fulfilled: “He that hateth reproof shall die” - **Pro 15:10**

B. THEREFORE WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

1. If we wait too long to reprove, it may be too late
2. It is possible for one to become hardened by sin - **Ro 2:4-5; He 3:12-13**
3. One can reach a point where it becomes impossible for us to restore them again to repentance - **He 6:4-6**

CONCLUSION

1. Reproof is a solemn obligation...
 - a. It should be given in an effective manner
 - b. When not so given it can do more harm than good
2. When justly given, reproof should be humbly and obediently received...
 - a. As Eli did, when he accepted the Lord’s judgment - cf. **1 Sam 3:15-18**
 - b. How much better, to receive it before its too late! - cf. **Pro 1:23**

How sad, that Eli could accept reproof, but not give it as one should...!

He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly. - Pro 13:24

Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction. - Pro 19:18

The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. - Pro 29:15

Correct your son, and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul. - Pro 29:17

Note: This outline was heavily adapted from a homily by **B. Dale** in **The Pulpit Commentary**.

A Man After God's Own Heart

1 Samuel 13:13-14

INTRODUCTION

1. In Paul's sermon at Antioch, in which he briefly recounts the history of Israel, he refers to the statement made by God concerning David:

"I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." - Ac 13:22; cf. 1 Sam 13:13-14

2. This beautiful compliment, "a man after My own heart", is one that should characterize every person who wears the name of Christ...
 - a. For David was not only the ancestor of Christ according to the flesh...
 - b. But he possessed many of the attitudes that:
 - 1) Were later perfected by Christ
 - 2) Should characterize all those who are disciples of Christ
3. In this study we shall...
 - a. Consider some of these attitudes that David had
 - b. See the similarities between his attitudes and those of Christ
 - c. And encourage all who are Christians to have the same so that we too might be people "after God's own heart"

[We begin, then, by noticing that...]

I. DAVID LOVED THE WORD OF GOD

A. "OH, HOW I LOVE YOUR LAW..." - Psa 119:97

1. In this psalm, if not written by David it certainly expresses his sentiment found elsewhere, we find one who has a great love for God's Word - cf. **Psa 119:47-48**
2. This love for God's Word is due to the fact that...
 - a. It protects him from sin - **Psa 119:11**
 - b. It revives him in affliction - **Psa 119:50**
 - c. It gives him great peace of mind - **Psa 119:165**

B. JESUS LOVED THE WORD OF GOD...

1. As is evident from His frequent quotation of it
2. Especially at the time of His temptation - **Mt 4:4,7,10**

C. HOW IS OUR LOVE FOR THE WORD OF GOD...?

1. Do we "hide" it in our heart?
2. Do we find it to be a source of comfort in times of affliction?
3. Does it give us peace of mind?
4. If not, we should give heed to the instructions of David in **Psa 1:1-3**
 - a. Learn to delight in the Word
 - b. Learn to meditate upon it daily

-- Then will we be truly “blessed”!

[We next see that...]

II. DAVID LOVED TO PRAY

A. “I WILL CALL UPON HIM AS LONG AS I LIVE...” - Psa 116:1-2

1. His love for prayer was based upon the fact God had answered him before - **Psa 116:1-2**
2. It was based upon the fact that God had greatly blessed him - **Psa 116:12-13**
3. It was based upon the fact that prayer brought God close to him - **Psa 145:18**

B. JESUS WAS ALSO A MAN OF PRAYER...

1. He made it a point to often slip away to pray privately - **Lk 5:16**
2. In times of greatest trial, Jesus resorted to prayer...
 - a. At Gethsemane - **Mt 26:36-44**
 - b. On the cross:
 - 1) “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” - **Lk 23:34**
 - 2) “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” - **Mt 27:46**
 - 3) “Father, into your hands I commend My Spirit.” - **Lk 23:46**

C. HOW IS OUR LOVE FOR PRAYER...?

1. Have we found it to be a source of peace “which surpasses all understanding”? - **Ph 4:6-7**
2. Do we “pray without ceasing”? - **1 Th 5:17**
3. If not, let David instruct us to depend upon prayer for our very preservation - **Psa 32:6-7**

[In addition to the Word of God and prayer...]

III. DAVID LOVED TO PRAISE GOD

A. “SEVEN TIMES A DAY I PRAISE YOU...” - Psa 119:164

1. He praised God because of His righteous judgments
2. He praised God because of His greatness and loving kindness - **Psa 95:1-7**
3. And he was determined to sing praises as long as he lived - **Psa 104:33**

B. JESUS ALSO LOVED TO PRAISE GOD...

1. As He did on one occasion publicly in prayer - cf. **Mt 11:25-26**
2. As He did with his disciples in song - cf. **Mt 26:30**

C. DO WE LOVE TO PRAISE GOD...?

1. Do we delight in singing praises to God in song?
2. Do we take time to praise God in our prayers?
3. Once again, David has words to encourage us in this activity - **Psa 147:1**
-- **Thus it is becoming for those who profess to be children of God to praise their Heavenly Father!**

[We note also that...]

IV. DAVID LOVED UNITY AMONG BRETHREN

A. “BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS...” - Psa 133:1

1. David knew the value of good friendship and unity, as exemplified in the relationship he had with Jonathan - **1 Sam 18:1**
2. He also knew the terrible pain of division within a family (cf. his sons, Amnon and Absalom - **2 Sam 13**)

B. JESUS LOVED UNITY ALSO...

1. He prayed diligently that His disciples might be one - **Jn 17:20-23**
2. He died on the cross that there might be unity - cf. **Ep 2:13-16**

C. DO WE LOVE UNITY ENOUGH TO PAY THE PRICE...?

1. By diligently displaying the proper attitudes necessary to preserve the unity Christ has accomplished through His death? - cf. **Ep 4:1-3**
2. By marking those who needlessly cause division? - **Ro 16:17**

[Finally, we note that...]

V. DAVID HATED EVERY FALSE WAY

A. “I HATE EVERY FALSE WAY...” - Psa 119:104

1. His hatred was based upon his understanding of God’s precepts - cf. **Psa 119:104**
2. His hatred affected his selection of activities and friends - cf. **Psa 101:3-4,6-7**

B. JESUS ALSO HATED ERROR AND FALSE WAYS...

1. As manifested in His driving the moneychangers out of the temple - **Mt 21:12-13**
2. As manifested in His denunciation of the hypocritical Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers - cf. **Mt 23:13-36**

C. WHAT IS OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD FALSE WAYS...?

1. Are we soft or compromising?
2. Or do we realize that we are involved in a “battle” over the souls of men, and do not think lightly of that which is false - cf. **2 Co 10:3-5**
3. While we are to love the sinner, we must ever hate the sin!

CONCLUSION

1. In closing, we note that it was said concerning David that he was one “...who will do all My will.” - **Ac 13:22**
 - a. Because he was “a man after God’s own heart” and had all these attributes we have considered in this lesson...
 - b. God was confident that David would do **all** that God asked of him
2. Thus it requires all of the attributes to motivate one to be faithful to all that God may ask...
 - a. We have seen where Jesus possessed them, and He was certainly motivated to do the Father’s will - cf. **Jn 4:34; Mt 26:42**
 - b. How about us? Are we motivated to do **all** of God’s will? - cf. **Mt 7:21**

David Strengthened Himself In The Lord His God

1 Samuel 30:6

INTRODUCTION

1. What's the first thing you do in times of trouble...?
 - a. Everybody has problems from time to time, but not everyone tries to solve their problems in the same way
 - b. What **is** the best way?

2. One person in the Bible who had more than his share of trouble was King David...
 - a. For example:
 - 1) He was pursued by King Saul
 - 2) He barely escaped several assassination attempts
 - 3) He had to spend much time hiding in the wilderness
 - 4) His entire family was kidnapped on one occasion
 - 5) His friends turned against him and were ready to kill him
 - 6) He suffered the shame of having committed adultery and murder
 - 7) His son Amnon raped his daughter Tamar
 - 8) His other son Absalom murdered Amnon
 - 9) Absalom led a revolt against his father
 - 10) Absalom himself was killed, much to David's grief
 - b. Need I go on? David was certainly a man with many problems!

3. Yet somehow, he survived them all and has come to be remembered as "a man after God's own heart." How was he able to do this...?

[I believe we can find the answer as we consider what David did when faced with one of his most serious problems, as recorded in **1 Sam 30:1-6...**]

I. WHAT DAVID DID IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

A. THE CONTEXT OF 1 SAMUEL 30:1-6...

1. At this time in his life, David was living in Ziklag
 - a. Having fled from King Saul
 - b. And was now aligned with the Philistines
2. The Philistines were preparing to battle King Saul, and David and his men had gone to join with the Philistines
3. But the Philistines did not fully trust David, so they sent him and his men back to Ziklag

B. READING 1 SAMUEL 30:1-6, WE FIND...

1. That the town of Ziklag had been attacked and burned by the Amalekites - **1 Sam 30:1**
2. The women and children had been kidnapped, including those of his family - **1 Sam 30:2-5**
3. Naturally David is distressed; but on top of this, the people are ready to kill him for not having been there when he was needed - **1 Sam 30:6**

C. BUT NOTICE CAREFULLY THE LAST PART OF VERSE SIX...

1. What does David do when he has lost his family, and his own life is threatened?
2. The Scriptures say, **“But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”**
3. This is what David did first in times of trouble...
 - a. He strengthened himself in the Lord his God!
 - b. With the strength he received, he was then able to deal with whatever the problem was before him!

[But what does it mean to “strengthen himself in the Lord his God”? In an effort to answer this question, I found it helpful to consider some of the Psalms written by David during troublesome times...]

II. HOW DAVID STRENGTHENED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD

A. IN TIMES OF TROUBLE, DAVID OFTEN COMPOSED PSALMS...

1. While pursued by Saul, he wrote **Psalm 59** - cf. **Psa 59:1-4**
2. When imprisoned in Gath, he wrote **Psalm 56** - cf. **Ps 56:1-2**
3. Fleeing from Absalom, he wrote **Psalm 3** - cf. **Psa 3:1-2**
4. Hiding in the wilderness of Judah, he wrote **Psalm 63**

B. FROM THESE PSALMS, WE CAN GLEAN HOW “DAVID STRENGTHENED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD”...

1. From **Psalm 56**, we learn that David would place his trust in God to help him - **Psa 56:3-4, 9-11**
2. From **Psalm 59**, we learn that David was determined to continue praising God for His help - **Psa 59:16-17**
3. From **Psalm 63**, we see that David overcame his problem of loneliness by...
 - a. Seeking the Lord - **Psa 63:1-2**
 - b. Praising and praying - **Psa 63:3-5**
 - c. Meditating upon the Lord - **Psa 63:6-7**
4. In each of these psalms, David is basically saying the same thing...
 - a. In time of trouble, put your trust in the Lord
 - b. Stay close to Him, through praising Him and praying to Him
 - c. Do this, and you will be made strong as the Lord supports you! - cf. **Psa 63:8**

[This was how “David strengthened himself in the Lord his God”, and was able to face and overcome his problems with the help the Lord gave him. How about us today? In times of trouble, do we follow David’s example? Consider a few thoughts along this line...]

III. DEALING WITH OUR PROBLEMS TODAY

A. WE FACE MANY PROBLEMS, EVEN AS CHRISTIANS...

1. Some are related to family, or other matters of personal concern
2. Some are related to jobs, and the issue of financial security

B. IN MANY CASES, PEOPLE TRY TO TACKLE THEIR PROBLEMS ALONE...

1. They leave God completely out of the picture
2. Sometimes they even forsake Him entirely...
 - a. By no longer praising Him and praying to Him daily

- b. By neglecting the assembly in which we gather to edify one another and worship God
3. The reasoning is often expressed this way: “Let me get my life straight, then I will be able to serve God and live for Him.”

C. BUT GOD IS ANGRY IF WE SEEK TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS WITHOUT HIM...!

1. God considers such a person as cursed! - cf. **Jer 17:5-8**
2. A good example of God’s displeasure when His people fail to look to Him for strength is found in Isaiah...
 - a. When attacked by Assyria, Israel placed her trust in Egypt - **Isa 30:1-2**
 - b. Because of this, God promised to frustrate the efforts of Israel to solve her problems by herself! - **Isa 30:3; 31:1-3**
 - c. Yes, God wanted Israel to trust in Him, not themselves - **Isa 30:15-16**
3. Even so today, God wants us to put our trust in Him - cf. **Ja 4:8; 1 Pe 5:6-7**
 - a. The truth of the matter is this...
 - 1) It is **not** “God helps those who help themselves”
 - 2) But rather “God helps those who trust in the Lord with all their heart, and lean not on their own understanding”! - cf. **Pro 3:5-6**
 - b. When we leave God out of the picture in solving problems...
 - 1) One thing is certain: God leaves us to deal with those problems on our own, and without His help!
 - 2) Another thing is possible: In an act of loving discipline, God might frustrate our efforts to solve our problems independent of His help (He certainly disciplined Israel that way!)

CONCLUSION

1. So let us learn from one experienced in dealing with problems (David)...
 - a. In times of trouble, look to the Lord for your strength!
 - b. Trust in the Lord, and be steadfast in praising Him and praying to Him
 - c. Don’t forsake Him, nor forsake the assembly of the saints in which we draw near to Him
2. Let what David said of himself be true of us as well: “My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.” - **Psa 63:8**
3. Remember that those who trust in God will find strength, deliverance, and true happiness!

Do you trust in the Lord? Or in your own strength? Let the Lord be your deliverance!

Especially when it pertains to the problem of the guilt of sin...

At The Front Or At The Base

1 Samuel 30:21-25

INTRODUCTION

1. Review the background of David's pursuit of the Amalekites - cf. **1 Sam 29, 30:1-20**
2. Now read **1 Sam 30:21-25**; notice particularly the ordinance established in Israel...

“...as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.” (1 Sam 30:24)

3. There are some similarities between David's statute and what is true with regards to our service as Christians today...
 - a. For we too are engaged in a battle
 - b. Though our battle is a spiritual one - cf. **1 Ti 6:12; Ep 6:12-13; 2 Co 10:3-6**

[In this lesson, I would like to point some of these similarities; beginning with the idea that...]

I. GOD'S ARMY REQUIRES TWO FORMS OF SERVICE

A. ANY MILITARY VENTURE IS DEPENDENT UPON BOTH SUPPORT AND BATTLE FORCES...

1. Much military planning revolves around how to support those at “the front”
2. For military leaders learned long ago:
 - a. “Men won't fight on an empty stomach”
 - b. “Men won't march without shoes”
3. Many battles have been won by the efficiency of the support forces in keeping up with those on the front
4. This was one reason why Eisenhower was such a great general...he was a logistical genius

B. THE SAME IS TRUE WITH GOD'S ARMY AND THE BATTLE WE FACE...

1. Two forms of service are required:
 - a. There are the “**fighters**”, and the “**guards of the baggage**”
 - b. I.e., there are the “**teachers**” and “**those that support them**”
2. This truth is well illustrated in the N.T.
 - a. During Christ's own ministry - cf. **Lk 8:1-3**
 - b. In the case of Paul, who was supported by:
 - 1) Churches - **2 Co 11:8-9; Ph 4:15-16**
 - 2) Individuals - e.g., Gaius (**Ro 16:23**), Epaphroditus (**Ph 2:25**), Philemon (**Phile 22**)
3. Yes, to carry out God's battle, there must be “**preachers**” and “**supporters**”
 - a. A logical and essential part in the saving of souls - cf. **Ro 10:13-15**
 - b. God's army requires both...
 - 1) Those who are willing to serve at “**the front**”
 - 2) Those who are willing to serve at “**the base**”

[As we examine this concept further, one might ask “Which service is more important?” Well...]

II. BOTH SERVICES ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT

A. THIS IS CERTAINLY TRUE IN PHYSICAL WARFARE...

1. One might think the men on the front are the “most important”
2. While we cannot discount their importance, battles have been won or lost based upon logistical support!

B. THIS IS JUST AS TRUE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST...

1. In **Ro 12:3-8**, we learn that in the body of Christ (the church)...
 - a. There are many members
 - b. The members do not have the same function!
2. In **Ep 4:15-16**, we learn that growth depends upon “the effective working by which every part does its share”
3. In **1 Co 12:12-22**, Paul stresses that all the members and their diverse functions are vital!
 - a. No one can say that they themselves are not important - **1 Co 12:12-19**
 - b. No one can say that others are not important - **1 Co 12:20-22**

C. FAILURE TO REALIZE THIS TRUTH CAN BE DISASTROUS...!

1. It can leave many brethren disappointed, apathetic, and fruitless!
 - a. If we are not careful, we can overemphasize one work to the neglect of others
 - 1) E.g., stressing evangelism to the neglect of edification and benevolence (despite the warning of **Ja 3:1**, and the implication of **1 Co 12:29**)
 - 2) This can make some feel that only one kind of work is worthy, noble, or important
 - b. With such a misconception, some may involve themselves in a work for which they are not suited
 - 1) When failure comes, they become disappointed
 - 2) Unless shown alternative ways to serve, they can become apathetic and fruitless
2. It often hinders the Lord’s cause in spreading the gospel!
 - a. Lack of support has hindered many foreign or smaller works where evangelists were unable to raise support
 - b. If those “at the base” don’t appreciate the importance of their support, the Lord’s body becomes handicapped in its ability to function!

[Realizing the importance of both kinds of service, let no one despise one type of service over another! Let’s find wherever we can best serve the Lord, and do so properly, which leads to our next point...]

III. BOTH SERVICES DEMAND THE SAME GOAL, SACRIFICE, AND ZEAL

A. IN THE CASE OF DAVID AND HIS MEN...

1. The men “at the base” weren’t there because they were lazy or scared
2. Though exhausted, they were just as motivated as those who went on
 - a. Their families had been kidnapped, too!
 - b. Someone had to stay with the baggage, or the rest of the force might not have caught up with the enemy
 - c. Staying behind was a form of sacrifice, when it was your family out there somewhere in the hands of the enemy!
3. With the same goal, sacrifice, and zeal as those who pursued the enemy, they did their job of guarding the baggage!

B. TO FULFILL OUR ROLES IN THE LORD’S ARMY, ALL NEED THE SAME GOAL, SACRIFICE, AND ZEAL...!

1. What is our **“goal”**?
 - a. “that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” - cf. **1 Pe 4:11**
 - b. To glorify God, whether in our service or in our teaching!
 - c. A goal like this can transform even secular or mundane service into a sacred and important one!
 - 1) E.g., providing baby-sitting services so the parents can be free to visit and teach others
 - 2) E.g., working as a common laborer so as to be able to support preachers in a foreign country
2. What kind of **“sacrifice”**?
 - a. “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” - cf. **1 Pe 4:10**
 - b. Each person has a gift (or more), an ability, given to him by God’s manifold grace
 - 1) As stewards, we will one day give an account - cf. **Mt 25:14-30**
 - 2) We may not have the same talent, or number of talents, but we are expected to do the best with what we have!
 - 3) We certainly shouldn’t squander what has been given to us!
 - c. While we may serve in different capacities, we should have the same sense of sacrifice!
 - 1) Some believe preachers should be willing to sacrifice more than others
 - 2) Is such a view consistent with what we are learning here?
 - a) Should the “quartermasters” back at the base be squandering what may have been given them to support the “soldiers” at the front?
 - b) Should we not all have the same willingness to sacrifice if the need is there?
 - c) If brethren “at the base” sacrificed as much as they expected those to do who are “at the front”, would there not be more good things being done?
3. What kind of **“zeal”**?
 - a. “as with the ability which God supplies” - **1 Pe 4:11**
 - b. Whatever our ability, whatever our service, God gives us the strength to do it!
 - c. Shall we be slack with what God has given us?
 - d. We should be zealous to utilize what we have in a manner worthy of God’s gracious gift!

[It is not so much **what** service we render to God, but **how** we do it. And what sacrifice or zeal might be expected of one should be expected of all, for we seek the same goal! Finally, let’s quickly note the point that...]

IV. BOTH SERVICES RECEIVE THE SAME REWARD

A. WE SAW WHERE DAVID MADE THIS A LAW IN ISRAEL...

1. “...they shall share alike” - **1 Sam 30:24-25**
2. Whether they stayed by the supplies, or served in the battle

B. THE PRINCIPLE IS REPEATED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT...

1. Jesus taught it in **Mt 10:41-42**
2. Illustrated with regards to deacons, who are servants of the church - **1 Ti 3:13**
- This should help us in our zeal and sacrifice

CONCLUSION

1. Too often, the Lord's battle is hindered by the lack of support...
 - a. Some may be willing to go and teach
 - b. But others may not be willing to send and support

2. Yet we have seen that both forms of service...
 - a. Are equally important
 - b. Require the same goal, sacrifice, and zeal
 - c. Receive the same reward

3. Wherever we may serve in the Lord's "army", whether "**At The Front Or At The Base**", let's do it as good stewards and with great zeal!

Speaking of the Lord's "army", have you been "enlisted" by the Lord yet (**2 Ti 2:3-4**)? Through the precious gospel of Christ, God is calling all who will come to Him... - cf. **2 Th 2:14**

Nathan's Rebuke

2 Samuel 12:1-15

INTRODUCTION

1. Many are familiar with David's sin involving Bathsheba, resulting in adultery and murder
2. Though these were dark pages in David's record, they were preserved that lessons might be learned by those who followed after - cf. **1 Co 10:11-12**
3. There are lessons to be learned, not only from David's mistakes, but from the rebuke that Nathan gave to David because of his sin
4. Found in **2 Sam 12:1-15**, Nathan's rebuke will serve as the basis for our study today

[Among the lessons that might be gleaned from "Nathan's Rebuke" is this one...]

I. WE ARE OFTEN BLIND TO OUR OWN FAULTS

A. IN THE CASE OF DAVID...

1. He could easily see the sin in the man of Nathan's story - **2 Sam 12:5-6**
2. But not in himself; it took a direct accusation ("You are the man!") by Nathan - **2 Sam 12:7**

B. IN OUR CASE, THIS IS OFTEN TRUE...

1. We can easily see the "mote" in another person's eye, but not the "beam" in our own
2. There are several reasons why this may be so
 - a. We may let strong desires confuse the plain distinction between right and wrong
 - 1) E.g., many have softened their views on divorce and remarriage when it hits their family
 - 2) Therefore changing our convictions on a position when it hits close to home
 - b. We may habitually flirt with evil, diminishing our sense of it as evil
 - 1) E.g., accepting the world's definition of immodesty in regards to apparel
 - 2) Therefore the standards of the world soon become our standards
 - c. We may refuse to apply principles of scripture to the moral nature of our personal conduct
 - 1) E.g., whether or not certain habits are consistent with the Christian life
 - 2) Therefore behaving in a way more becoming a person of the world, than one who is a child of God!

C. BECAUSE WE ARE OFTEN BLIND TO OUR OWN FAULTS...

1. We need to be thankful for friends like Nathan
 - a. Caring enough to bring our faults to our attention
 - b. Courageous enough to challenge our conduct
2. We need to be like David
 - a. Open to the constructive criticism of others
 - b. Not so blind as to fail to see our faults when pointed out by others

[Another valuable lesson from “**Nathan’s Rebuke**” is that we learn...]

II. THE BEST WAY TO BRING ABOUT REPENTANCE

A. APPEAL TO GOD’S LOVE...

1. Nathan reminded David of God’s great kindness - **2 Sam 12:7-8**
 2. This appeal based upon God’s love and mercy is found in the preaching of the gospel
 - a. Paul made it in **Ro 2:4**
 - b. Likewise Peter in **Ac 10:34-36,42-43**
- **In our own efforts to save or restore others, let’s be sure make the same appeal to**

B. REVEAL THE SIN...

1. Nathan was very clear in telling David what he did was wrong - **2 Sam 12:9**
 2. In a similar way, the gospel makes it clear that all are sinners - cf. **Ro 3:23**
- **Since people will not repent unless they realize they are sinners, it is necessary to help them see their sins (with the right attitude, of course)**

C. WARN OF THE CONSEQUENCES...

1. Nathan spelled out what would happen because of David’s sin - **2 Sam 12:10-12**
 2. The gospel, while it contains “good news”, is no different - cf. **Mk 16:15-16; Ro 2:5-11**
- **As we seek to call others to repentance, we must in love and great solemnity point out the consequences of sin!**

[As we continue our examination of “**Nathan’s Rebuke**”, we now see...]

III. THE PROPER ATTITUDE IN REPENTANCE

A. DAVID PROVIDES THE PROPER EXAMPLE...

1. He made it **personal** - “***I have sinned...***” - **2 Sam 12:13**
 - a. He didn’t try to place the blame on Bathsheba or the circumstances
 - b. He didn’t try to spread the guilt to others (e.g., Joab’s involvement in the death of Uriah)

-- He accepted the full responsibility of his own sin!
2. He saw the true nature of his guilt: it was “***...against the LORD***” - **2 Sam 12:13**
 - a. It is true that he also sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, his own wife, etc.
 - 1) But true penitence comes from an understanding that sin is more just a violation of human relationships
 - 2) It is an affront against the GOD who created us in His image!
 - b. Notice, then, what David wrote in **Psa 51:3-4** as he confesses his sin...
 - 1) “Against You, You only, have I sinned...”
 - 2) With poetic hyperbole, he confesses his sin against God as well!

B. MUCH REPENTANCE TODAY FALLS SHORT IN THIS REGARD...

1. We often don’t make our sins **personal** enough
 - a. We may be quick to admit “We have sinned”
 - b. But will we also be quick to admit “I have sinned”?
2. We often don’t think of how our sins are **against the Lord**
 - a. Unless we do, our repentance is likely to be shallow
 - b. I.e., our conduct will change just enough to satisfy the approval of man

- c. E.g., someone who needs to repent for forsaking the assembly...
 - 1) We often say they have “sinned against the church”; while true, they need to appreciate that in fact they have “sinned against the Lord”!
 - 2) If they view themselves as only having sinned against the church...
 - a) They may only be concerned about being faithful in the eyes of the church
 - b) Thus correcting only their conduct as the church sees them
 - 3) But if they view themselves as having sinned against the Lord...
 - a) They will be concerned with being faithful in His eyes
 - b) Thus correcting any conduct visible only to the Lord!

[Our next observation may be the most encouraging one gleaned from “**Nathan’s Rebuke**”...]

IV. THE PARDON PROVIDED BY GOD

A. THE EXAMPLE OF DAVID’S FORGIVENESS...

- 1. His forgiveness was **immediate** - cf. **2 Sam 12:13**
 - a. That is, when the proper conditions were met
 - b. In his case, the confession of his sin
- 2. His forgiveness was **complete** - cf. **2 Sam 12:13**
 - a. Nathan said “The LORD also has put away your sin”
 - b. The phrase “put away” is similar to other terms suggesting a complete forgiveness of sin: “covered”, blotted out”, “remembered no more”

B. GOD’S PARDON IS SIMILAR TODAY...

- 1. It is both **immediate** and **complete**
- 2. But there are conditions that must be met
 - a. For the non-Christian - cf. **Jn 8:24; Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - b. For the Christian - cf. **1 Jn 1:9; Ac 8:22**
- 3. Such wonderful pardon is made possible only through the blood of Christ! - **Ep 1:7**

[Our final observation may be the most sobering one to contemplate...]

V. CONSEQUENCES OF SIN OFTEN FOLLOW DESPITE PARDON

A. DAVID LEARNED THIS FROM NATHAN...

- 1. Though he was forgiven of his sin, there would still be consequences of his sin
- 2. Nathan listed them in **2 Sam 12:10-12,14**; all of which came to pass:
 - a. The baby died
 - b. David’s daughter (Tamar) raped by her half-brother (Amnon)
 - c. One son (Amnon) killed by another (Absalom)
 - d. One son (Absalom) leads a conspiracy, takes over the kingdom, lays with his father’s concubines, and is finally killed

B. THE SAME IS OFTEN TRUE TODAY...

- 1. An alcoholic may quit drinking and be forgiven, but still suffer the physical consequences of alcoholism
- 2. A parent may obey the gospel, but do so too late to have a positive affect on the spiritual development of the children
- 3. A young person may “sow their wild oats” before settling down and becoming a Christian...

- a. While forgiven, they may still have to “reap what they have sown”
 - b. E.g., the rest of their lives being adversely affected by such things as:
 - 1) An unexpected pregnancy (an early or unwanted marriage)
 - 2) An unscriptural divorce (not free to remarry)
 - 3) A moment of passion (suffering with incurable STDs)
 - 4) Experimenting with drugs (irreversible brain damage)
- **God’s pardon is wonderful, but we must not forget the consequences of sin!**

CONCLUSION

1. Such are the lessons we learn from **“Nathan’s Rebuke”**...
 - a. We are often blind to our own faults
 - b. The best way to bring about repentance
 - c. The proper attitude in repentance
 - d. The pardon provided by God
 - e. Consequences of sin often follow despite pardon
2. As with much of the events recorded in the Scriptures...
 - a. There are lessons to help us in our own relationship with God
 - b. There are lessons to help us be of service to others regarding their relationship with God

May we be wise enough to heed the counsel of **“Nathan’s Rebuke”**!

Prove Yourself A Man

1 Kings 2:1-3

INTRODUCTION

1. As David was about to die, he charged his son Solomon...
 - a. To be strong
 - b. To prove himself to be a man
 - c. To keep the commandments of the Lord - cf. **1 Kin 2:1-3**
2. Solomon was blessed to have a godly father...
 - a. A man after God's own heart
 - b. About whom he could later fondly reminisce
 - c. Who gave him counsel on how to be a man - cf. **Pro 4:3-9**
3. Many men today are not so blessed...
 - a. Some are without fathers, either through death or divorce
 - b. Some have fathers who fail to provide spiritual leadership

[Where can they go to learn what it means to “**Prove Yourself A Man**”? One source is Solomon himself, who has provided wisdom and guidance for all men in the Bible. For example, if you were his son, he would say...]

I. TAKE HEED TO YOUR COUNSELORS

A. FEAR GOD...

1. Such is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom- **Pro 1:7; 9:10**
 2. It will prolong one's days, being a fountain of life - **Pro 10:27; 14:26-27**
 3. It is the whole meaning of one's existence - **Ecc 8:12; 12:13**
- **Therefore let the Word of God be your primary counselor in life**

B. LISTEN TO YOUR PARENTS...

1. Their advice will be like graceful ornaments around your neck - **Pro 1:8-9**
 2. Their advice can guide you through life - **Pro 6:20-22**
- **Benefit from the wisdom of those more experienced who love you**

C. BEWARE OF EVIL COMPANIONS...

1. They will entice you to do evil - **Pro 1:10-14**
 2. They will only destroy you along with themselves - **Pro 1:15-19; 13:20**
- **Choose your friends carefully, for evil company can corrupt - cf. 1 Co 15:33**

[If you were Solomon's son, he would also counsel you to...]

II. TAKE HEED TO YOUR GOALS

A. SEEK WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING...

1. Seek for wisdom as you would seek for silver - **Pro 2:1-9**

2. It will protect you from the evil man and woman - **Pro 2:10-22**
 3. It will be a tree of life, a source of wonderful blessings - **Pro 3:13-24**
 4. As his own father told Solomon, wisdom is the principle thing - **Pro 4:3-13**
- **Thus the acquisition of godly wisdom should be a priority in life**

B. ACKNOWLEDGE GOD’S ROLE IN YOUR LIFE...

1. Trust in Him and let Him direct your paths - **Pro 3:5-6**
 2. Fear Him, and honor Him with your possessions - **Pro 3:7-10**
 3. Accept His chastisement in your life - **Pro 3:11-12**
 4. Let the Lord be your confidence, and He will bless you - **Pro 3:25-35**
- **As Jesus said, seek first His kingdom and righteousness - cf. Mt 6:33**

[Such are the things involved in proving oneself to be a real man (cf. **1 Kin 2:2-3**). If Solomon were your father, he would also counsel you to regarding the opposite sex...]

III. TAKE HEED TO YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

A. AVOID THE HARLOT...

1. The woman who would entice you, but destroy you in the end - **Pro 5:1-14**
 2. The adulteress who would destroy your reputation and friendships - **Pro 6:23-35**
 3. Who destroys even strong men through her seductions - **Pro 7:1-27**
- **A single act of passion can alter and destroy one’s life!**

B. LOVE YOUR WIFE...

1. Rejoice and be enraptured with the wife of your youth - **Pro 5:15-19**
 2. The Lord will know those who look elsewhere for love - **Pro 5:20-23**
 3. The Lord would have you live joyfully with your wife - **Ecc 9:9**
- **God loves marriage, and will bring to judgment those who defile it - cf. He 13:4**

[Finally, if Solomon were your father, he would have you “**Prove Yourself A Man**” by counseling you to...]

IV. TAKE HEED TO YOUR CHARACTER

A. AVOID DEBT AND SLOTH...

1. Debt enslaves, especially when cosigning for another - **Pro 6:1-5; 17:18**
 2. Laziness will bring poverty - **Pro 6:6-11; 10:4; 13:4**
- **So Christians are to be industrious, and avoid indebtedness - cf. Ro 12:11; 13:8**

B. KNOW WHAT IS AN ABOMINATION...

1. There are things that God hates - **Pro 6:16-19; 8:13**
 2. Even our worship can be an abomination - **Pro 15:8; 28:9**
- **Thus we need to know what is the Father’s will that pleases Him - cf. Mt 7:21-23**

CONCLUSION

1. Other points could be made, but these go a long way to proving one to be a man...
 - a. **Taking heed to one’s counselors** (who will you listen to?)
 - b. **Taking heed to one’s goals** (what will you do?)

- c. **Taking heed to one's relationships** (who will you love?)
 - d. **Taking heed to your character** (whom will you become?)
2. If we have earthly fathers who offer spiritual guidance in becoming men...
- b. Thank God for such a wonderful blessing!
 - b. Benefit from the counsel and instruction they offer!
3. But if we do not have such fathers...
- a. Remember that you have a Heavenly Father - **Psa 68:5**
 - b. One who has provided much guidance and counsel in His Word - cf. **Josh 1:8**

Let the Word of God, passed down, preserved, and proven by generations of fathers and sons, be your guide to **“Prove Yourself A Man”**...

Elijah The Tishbite

1 Kings 17-21, 2 Kings 1-2

INTRODUCTION

1. A remarkable event in the ministry of Jesus was His transfiguration...
 - a. Transfigured before Peter, James and John - **Mt 17:1-2**
 - b. Joined by Moses and Elijah, then exalted by the Father - **Mt 17:3-8**
 - c. Followed by questions related to Elijah - **Mt 17:9-13**
2. We might also ask questions about Elijah...
 - a. Why did he appear with Moses and Jesus?
 - b. Of all the prophets of the OT who could have appeared, why him?
3. Elijah was certainly a remarkable individual...
 - a. “the grandest and the most romantic character that Israel ever produced.” - **Smith**
 - b. “mightiest of all the prophets” - **Keil & Delitzsch**
 - c. “the most eminent of the prophets” - **Wesley**
4. Yet he is described as...
 - a. “a man with a nature like ours” - **Ja 5:17**
 - b. “of the same constitution, a human being just as ourselves are.” - **Clarke**
 - c. “a mere man, subject to the same weaknesses and infirmities as other men.” - **Barnes**

-- **He appears to have suffered from discouragement and depression**

[How did such a man become the greatest of prophets? What lessons might he offer us in our service to God? Let's take a closer look, beginning with...]

I. ELIJAH, THE MAN

A. HIS NAME...

1. The name Elijah means “Yahweh is my God.” - **Barnes**
2. In the NT, some translations render his name as “Elias” - **Mt 17:3 (KJV)**

B. HIS ORIGIN...

1. “This prophet is introduced as abruptly as Melchisedek--his birth, parents, and call to the prophetic office being alike unrecorded.” - **JFB**
2. He is called “the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead” - **1 Kin 17:1**
3. His origin is uncertain
 - a. Some think “Tishbeh” was a city in Galilee; others, in Gilead
 - b. Some have even supposed that he was an Ishmaelite, not an Israelite, sent to rebuke and shame the apostate Israel - **JFB**
 - c. Some have even opined that he was an angel of God, though this can be countered by James' statement (**Ja 5:17**) - **Clarke**

C. HIS APPEARANCE...

1. “A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.” - **2 Kin 1:7-8**; cf. John, **Mt 3:4**

2. “That is, he wore a rough garment, either made of camels’ hair, as his successor John Baptist’s was, or he wore a skin dressed with the hair on. Some think that the meaning is, he had very long hair and a long beard. The ancient prophets all wore rough garments, or upper coats made of the skins of beasts: They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, says the apostle, **He 11:37.**” - **Clarke**
3. “His costume was that of a thorough ascetic. Generally the Jews wore girdles of linen or cotton stuff, soft and comfortable. Under the girdle they wore one or two long linen gowns or shirts, and over these they had sometimes a large shawl. Elijah had only his leather girdle and his sheepskin cape or ‘mantle.’” - **Barnes**

[Even in his day, Elijah would have been considered “strange”. Yet we can’t help but be impressed by this remarkable man as we consider...]

II. ELIJAH, HIS MINISTRY

A. THE JUDGMENT OF DROUGHT...

1. The proclamation to Ahab - **1 Kin 17:1**
 - a. Note the wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel - **1 Kin 16:29-33**
 - b. The prophecy sworn by “the Lord God of Israel...before whom I stand”
 - c. By his word there will be neither dew nor rain for three years
2. God’s care of Elijah
 - a. By the Brook Cherith - **1 Kin 17:2-7**
 - b. At the widow of Zarephath - **1 Kin 17:8-24**
 - 1) The miracle of the bin of flour and jar of oil
 - 2) The raising of the widow’s son
3. His reappearance before Ahab
 - a. Commanded by the Lord - **1 Kin 18:1-2**
 - b. Arranged by Obadiah - **1 Kin 18:3-16**
 - c. Falsely accused of being a “troubler of Israel” - **1 Kin 18:17-18**

B. THE CHALLENGE ON MOUNT CARMEL...

1. Challenging Israel and her false prophets - **1 Kin 18:19-20**
 - a. The 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah
 - b. Supported by Jezebel, Ahab’s wife
2. The challenge to Israel - **1 Kin 18:21**
 - a. “How long will you falter between two opinions?”
 - b. “If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”
3. The test between Elijah and the prophets of Baal
 - a. The test explained - **1 Kin 18:22-24**
 - b. The prophets of Baal go first, and fail - **1 Kin 18:25-29**
 - c. Elijah’s remarkable victory - **1 Kin 18:31-39**
 - d. The prophets of Baal executed at the Brook Kishon - **1 Kin 18:40**
4. The drought comes to an end as Elijah prays - **1 Kin 18:41-46**

C. THE FLIGHT FOR HIS LIFE...

1. His life threatened by Jezebel
 - a. Forced to flee to Beersheba in Judah - **1 Kin 19:1-3**
 - b. His despondency and desire for death - **1 Kin 19:4**
2. His journey to Horeb

- a. The provisions by an angel - **1 Kin 19:5-7**
- b. Strengthened for 40 days and nights - **1 Kin 19:8**
- 3. His discouragement and the Lord's response
 - a. Despite his success, he feels all is lost - **1 Kin 19:9-10**
 - b. The lesson from the Lord - **1 Kin 19:11-12**
 - c. Elijah's despondency remains - **1 Kin 19:13-14**
 - d. The Lord's new duties for Elijah - **1 Kin 19:15-17**
 - 1) Anoint Hazael as king over Syria
 - 2) Anoint Jehu as king over Israel
 - 3) Anoint Elisha as prophet in his place
 - e. He is not alone, there are many others! - **1 Kin 19:18**
- 4. Elisha becomes Elijah's servant - **1 Kin 19:19-21**

D. HIS MESSAGES TO AHAB AND AHAZIAH...

- 1. Elijah rebukes Ahab regarding Naboth
 - a. Jezebel has Naboth killed so Ahab can have his vineyard - **1 Kin 21:1-16**
 - b. Elijah announces shameful deaths for Ahab and Jezebel - **1 Kin 21:17-26**
 - c. Ahab's humility delays judgment - **1 Kin 21:27-29**
- 2. Elijah rebukes Ahaziah for inquiring of Baal
 - a. Injured, Ahaziah son of Ahab, sends an inquiry to Baal-Zebub - **2 Kin 1:1-2**
 - b. Elijah is sent to turn the messengers back to Ahaziah with a rebuke and a prophecy concerning his death - **2 Kin 1:3-8**
 - c. Three companies of soldiers are sent to bring Elijah to the king
 - 1) Two are consumed by fire from heaven - **2 Kin 1:9-12**
 - 2) The third is spared by the plea of its captain - **2 Kin 1:13-15**
 - d. In person, Elijah again rebukes Ahaziah and foretells his death - **2 Kin 1:16-17**

F. HIS JOURNEY TO HEAVEN...

- 1. Elisha accompanies Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, and on to Jericho - **2 Kin 2:1-5**
 - a. The 'sons of the prophets' at Bethel tell Elisha that Elijah is about to be taken away
 - b. The 'sons of the prophets' at Jericho tell Elisha the same thing
- 2. Elisha accompanies Elijah across the Jordan River - **2 Kin 2:6-10**
 - a. Elisha refuses to stay in Jericho
 - b. Fifty 'sons of the prophets' follow them down to the Jordan
 - c. Elijah strikes the river with his mantle; he and Elisha cross on dry ground
 - d. Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit
- 3. Elijah is transported to heaven - **2 Kin 2:11-18**
 - a. A chariot of fire with horses of fire appears
 - b. Elijah is taken by a whirlwind to heaven, witnessed by Elisha
 - c. Elisha returns, the 'sons of the prophets' fail to find Elijah

[A remarkable end for a remarkable man! And yet we recall that he was "a man with a nature like ours" (**Ja 5:17**). What can we learn from a man like Elijah...?]

III. ELIJAH, HIS MESSAGE

A. THE POWER OF PRAYER...

- 1. This is the application made by James - **Ja 5:16-18**
 - a. Encouraging us to pray for one another
 - b. Extolling the value of prayer by a righteous man

- c. Referring to the example of Elijah and the three and half year drought
- d. Whose prayer was answer providentially, not supernaturally - cf. **1 Kin 18:41-45**
- 2. Do we believe in the power of prayer?
 - a. When God is One who hears prayer? - **Psa 65:2**
 - b. When Jesus taught the power of believing prayer? - **Mk 11:24**
 - c. When James wrote concerning the prayer of faith? - **Ja 5:15**
 - d. When John wrote the value of prayer according to God's will? - **1 Jn 5:14-15**

B. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD...

- 1. God provided time and again for the needs of Elijah
 - a. By the Brook Cherith, through the ravens that brought him food
 - b. At the house of the widow at Zarephath
 - c. Fleeing from Jezebel, when an angel brought him bread and water
- 2. Do we believe in the providential care of God?
 - a. Promised by Jesus to those who seek first God's kingdom? - **Mt 6:31-34**
 - b. Proclaimed by Jesus to those who leave all to follow Him? - **Mk 10:29-30**
 - c. Promised by Paul in his writings? - **Ph 4:19; 2 Co 9:8**

C. THE NEED FOR COMMITMENT...

- 1. Elijah was the prophet of commitment
 - a. He was willing to 'stand' for the Lord in the face of adversaries - **1 Kin 17:1**
 - b. He called on Israel to make the right choice - **1 Kin 18:21**
- 2. Are we willing to make a commitment for the Lord?
 - a. To choose the right Master? - **Mt 6:24**
 - b. To serve the One who has the power to free us from sin? - **Ro 6:16-18**
 - c. To love the Father instead of the world? - **1 Jn 2:15-17**
 - d. To serve the Lord with zeal? - **Re 3:15-16**

D. THE CHALLENGE OF DISCOURAGEMENT...

- 1. Elijah was not beyond becoming discouraged and depressed
 - a. He wanted to die, feeling that he had failed - **1 Kin 19:4**
 - b. He had been zealous for the Lord, but thought none had listened - **1 Kin 19:14**
 - c. The Lord's response was to put Elijah to work, and reveal that he was not alone - **1 Kin 19:15-18**
- 2. Do we find ourselves getting discouraged and depressed?
 - a. Even the apostles were not immune to such emotions - **2 Co 7:5**
 - b. Yet God, who comforts the downcast, is the God of all comfort - **2 Co 7:6; 1:3-4**
 - c. The solution remains the same: remember you are not alone, and get busy in service to the Lord!

E. THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN...

- 1. The terrible consequences of sin are illustrated time and again
 - a. The drought on Israel
 - b. The judgment on the prophets of Baal
 - c. The deaths of Jezebel and Ahab
- 2. Do we truly appreciate the consequences of sin?
 - a. The physical toll that is often experienced even in this life?
 - 1) The absence of God's providential care in our lives
 - 2) The effects of immorality and worldliness on our bodies and our minds?

- b. The spiritual toll that will be experienced in this life and the one to come?
 - 1) Separation from God now so that He will not hear our prayers - cf. **Isa 59:1-2**
 - 2) Eternal separation from God if we remain in our sins - cf. **Ro 6:23; Re 21:8**

F. THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS...

- 1. Elijah illustrates the hope of the righteous who persevere to the end
 - a. He was translated to heaven, so death had no power over him
 - b. He appeared in glory when Jesus was transfigured, conversing with Him - **Lk 9:28-32**
- 2. What is the hope of the righteous today who persevere to the end?
 - a. The dead will be raised incorruptible, the living changed, so death no longer has any power - **1 Co 15:50-54**
 - b. They shall receive rest, and be glorified together with Christ! - **2 Th 1:7-12**

CONCLUSION

- 1. The life and lessons of Elijah the Tishbite is a wonderful story...
 - a. Written for our admonition - cf. **1 Co 10:11**
 - b. Written for our learning, that we might have patience, comfort and hope - cf. **Ro 15:4**
- 2. May his life inspire us to heed his lessons...
 - a. The power of prayer
 - b. The providence of God
 - c. The need for commitment
 - d. The challenge of discouragement
 - e. The consequence of sin
 - f. The hope of the righteous

For just as Elijah consumed the soldiers with fire from heaven, so the day will come...

“...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” - 2Th 1:7-8

Are you ready for that day? Hear again the words of Elijah...

“How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him...”

This Day Is A Day Of Good News

2 Kings 7:9

INTRODUCTION

1. In the period of Israel's history known as "**The Divided Kingdom**" (ca. **931-722 B.C.**)...
 - a. The nation was divided into two parts
 - 1) The kingdom of Israel in the north with Samaria as its capitol
 - 2) The kingdom of Judah in the south with Jerusalem for its capitol
 - b. The weakened condition of both kingdoms left it open to attacks by other countries
 - 1) Some near by (e.g., Syria Moab, Ammon)
 - 2) Others from afar (e.g., Assyria, Babylon)
2. We read of one siege of Samaria in **2 Kin 6:24-29**
 - a. Orchestrated by Ben-Hadad, king of Syria
 - b. Which brought a terrible famine upon the city of Samaria
3. Among those suffering in the famine were four lepers...
 - a. They discuss their plight - **2 Kin 7:3-4a**
 - b. In desperation they decide to surrender to the Syrians - **2 Kin 7:4b**
 - c. To their surprise, they find the Syrian camp abandoned - **2 Kin 7:5-7**
 - d. At first, they splurge in their newfound riches - **2 Kin 7:8**
 - e. Upon reflection, they knew they should tell others what they found, and did so - **2 Kin 7:9-11**
 - There is a valuable lesson we learn from the four lepers, especially when they said:

"This day is a day of good news..."

4. In our study, we shall notice...
 - a. Some parallels between the lepers then, and ourselves now
 - b. The consequences of keeping silent when we have good news to share
 - c. Why some people may be keeping silent today

[We begin, then, with some...]

I. PARALLELS THEN AND NOW

A. IN EACH CASE, THERE IS A FAMINE...

1. Then, it was a famine for food
2. Now, it is a famine for the blessings only God can provide!
 - a. Our famine is related to the problem of sin - **Ro 3:23**
 - b. Yet God provides the free gift of salvation - **Ro 6:23**

B. IN EACH CASE, THERE IS AN ABUNDANCE FREELY AVAILABLE...

1. Then, there was plenty of food in the Syrian camp
2. Now, there is an abundance of spiritual blessings in Christ! - **Ep 1:3; Re 22:17**

C. IN EACH CASE, THERE ARE THOSE WHO FOUND WHAT THEY NEEDED...

1. Then, it was the four lepers
2. Now, it is the Christians who have experienced the joys of salvation!

D. BUT HERE IS WHERE THE SIMILARITY OFTEN ENDS...

1. The lepers knew what was right, and did it
 - a. They knew they would be wrong by keeping silent
 - b. They knew punishment would befall them if they kept the good news to themselves
-- So they went back to the city and told the good news!
2. Many Christians are not like these lepers...
 - a. Despite it being “a day of good news”, they remain silent!
 - b. While many die of spiritual starvation, they feast on the gospel!
-- Do they not consider that what they do may be wrong?

E. WE DO WELL TO LEARN FROM THESE LEPERS...

1. What they said of themselves at first, may be true of us: “We are not doing what is right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent.”
2. What else they said may also be true of us: “If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us.”

[In their reasoning among themselves, they considered the consequences of keeping silent in a day of good news. Have we considered the consequences of keeping silent with the good news of the gospel? Consider...]

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF KEEPING SILENT

A. WE FAIL TO KEEP THE GREAT COMMISSION...

1. Jesus wanted His disciples to observe ALL that He commanded - **Mt 28:18-20**
2. Included is the command to “Go and make disciples...”
-- **Keeping silent is not what Jesus commanded!**

B. WE FAIL OUR MISSION AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD...

1. As the privileged people of God, we are to proclaim the praises of God - **1 Pe 2:9-10**
2. Especially in regards to:
 - a. How God “called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”
 - b. How we “who had not obtained mercy...now have obtained mercy”
-- **How can God’s “own special people” do this while keeping silent?**

C. WE WILL ANSWER TO GOD FOR FAILING OUR MISSION...

1. Just as God told Ezekiel, whom He made to be “a watchman for the house of Israel”
 - a. Ezekiel was to warn the wicked - **Ezek 3:17**
 - b. If Ezekiel failed to warn the wicked, the wicked would die for his own sin, but Ezekiel would also be held accountable! - **Ezek 3:18-21**
2. Today, the church is God’s “watchman” to the world!
 - a. We are to take the gospel to every person! - **Mk 16:15**
 - b. Those who have not heard will die in their own sin, but we will be held accountable if we gave them no warning!

[Despite the consequences of keeping silent, many Christians do not tell others about the good news of Jesus Christ. Why is this so? Here are some possibilities...]

III. REASONS WHY MANY KEEP SILENT

A. FOR SOME, IT MAY BE THEY ARE STARVING THEMSELVES...

1. They may have experienced the joy of salvation in the past...
 - a. But through negligence they have failed to grow, and have forgotten the blessings of salvation - cf. **2 Pe 1:8-9**
 - b. In a real sense, they have returned to a state of spiritual famine!
 - c. Therefore, they have little or nothing to share with others
 2. Those who are enjoying the blessings of salvation will want to tell others
 - a. Even as David did in his psalm - cf. **Psa 32:1-11**
 - b. And as Philip did when he found Jesus - cf. **Jn 1:43-46**
- **Don't you have any "good news" worth sharing?**

B. FOR SOME, IT MAY BE OUT OF FEAR OR DISCOURAGEMENT...

1. If **fear** keeps us silent, remember that:
 - a. First place in the list of those consigned to the lake of fire are the "cowardly" - **Re 21:8**
 - b. God does not want us to be fearful - cf. **2 Ti 1:7-8**
 - c. Boldness can come through prayer - cf. **Ac 4:29,31; Ep 6:19-20**
 2. If **discouragement** keeps us silent, then remember:
 - a. The principle of sowing and reaping - cf. **Ga 6:9**
 - b. The example of our Lord Jesus - cf. **He 12:1-3**
- **Fear and discouragement, as problematic as they may be, come be overcome with faith and perseverance!**

C. FOR MANY, IT MAY BE THE IDEA THAT IT IS TOO COMPLICATED...

1. As though in order to teach someone, one needed:
 - a. A master's degree in interpersonal communication
 - b. Fours of Bible in college, or some other specialized training
2. In reality, our task is really quite simple...
 - a. To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ - **Mk 16:15**
 - 1) Which can be presented in the simplest of terms - cf. **1 Co 15:1-4; 2:2**
 - 2) Note that in the book of Acts, the gospel was normally presented in just one lesson!
 - b. We are not obligated to teach the non-Christian beyond the "first principles"
 - 1) Only if they accept the "first principles", will they ready to receive the "second principles"
 - 2) E.g., why teach people about "Christ's church" (its organization, work, worship, etc.), if they are not willing to obey Christ elementary commands pertaining to faith, repentance, confession and baptism?
 - 3) Such "second principles" can be left to those "pastors and teachers" who are especially gifted in that area - cf. **Ep 4:11; Ro 12:7; 1 Co 12:29; Ja 3:1**
3. Sharing the "gospel" is easy, provided we:
 - a. Follow the words of Peter - **1 Pe 3:15**
 - 1) Give the Lord a special place in your heart
 - 2) Prepare yourselves to be ready to give a reason for the hope that you have
 - a) E.g., that Christ died for your sins and rose again - **1 Co 15:1-4**
 - b) E.g., that you responded to the gospel as proclaimed by Peter and the apostles - **Ac 2:36-38**
 - b. Follow the words of Paul - **Co 4:2-6; Ep 6:19-20**

- 1) Pray for opportunity - cf. **1 Co 3:5**
 - a) It is the Lord who provides the opportunity
 - b) And He gives it to those who are prepared and praying
- 2) Pray for wisdom - cf. **Ja 1:5**
 - a) To make the most of the opportunity
 - b) To say the right thing in the right way at the right time
- 3) Pray for boldness
 - a) To have the courage to speak when given the opportunity
 - b) To say what people need to hear, not necessarily what they want to hear

CONCLUSION

1. Brethren, if we are silent with regards to the “good news” (the gospel), then the words of the four lepers is true of us:

“We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell...” - 2 Kin 7:9

2. Yes, “let us go and tell” a world that is spiritually starved about the feast God offers through His Son Jesus Christ...!
 - a. Let us share with others what we ourselves have found!
 - b. Let them experience the joy, the peace, and the love that only God can give!
3. Indeed, **“This Day Is A Day Of Good News”** because it is the “day of salvation”, and no one should receive the grace of God in vain! - **2 Co 6:1-2**

Will we who have been so richly blessed accept the responsibility Christ has placed on us? If our fervor has died down, then we should remember the words of Jesus:

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lamp stand from its place; unless you repent.” - Re 2:4-5

Are you in need of repentance?

The Samaritans' Religion

2 Kings 17:24-41

INTRODUCTION

1. Following the conquest by the nation of Assyria, most of Israel were deported to Assyria
2. In their place, Assyria imported captives from other countries to live in Samaria, the main province of Israel at that time - **2 Kin 17:24**
3. In our text, the religion of those who were imported is described at length... - **2 Kin 17:24-41**
 - a. There are several characteristics of their religion we would do well to take note of, so let's begin reading the passage itself
 - b. With this passage fresh in our minds, how might the Samaritans' religion compare with our service to God today?

[In some cases, the comparisons may be a little too close for comfort! To begin with, note that their religion was...]

I. A RELIGION OF "FEAR"

A. THIS IS EVIDENT BY THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS...

1. "So they feared the Lord..." - **2 Kin 17:32**
 2. "They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods..." - **2 Kin 17:33**
 3. "So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images..." - **2 Kin 17:41**
 4. That they had the wrong kind of fear is implied in **vs. 34**: "...they do not fear the Lord"
- **Is this a contradiction? No, for remember that...**

B. THERE IS A PROPER FEAR OF THE LORD...

1. As taught by Jesus and His apostles - **Mt 10:28; Ac 10:34-35; Ph 2:12**
2. As taught by Solomon in the Old Testament - **Pro 1:7; 14:26-27; Ecc 8:12-13; 12:13-14**
3. This "fear of the Lord"...
 - a. Is the kind of awesome reverence towards God that motivates us to turn away from evil and serve God faithfully at all times
 - b. Is **not** the kind that never thinks of God when things are going well, and then trembles at the prospect of facing God

C. SO THE SAMARITANS HAD THE WRONG KIND OF "FEAR"...

1. They would have never thought of God, had it not been for **the lions** - **2 Kin 17:25-26**
2. When they did think of Him, it was only to tremble before Him
3. This is like so many people today
 - a. Who think of God only...
 - 1) When they are ill, forgetting Him when they are well
 - 2) During their calamities, but not during their joys
 - 3) When faced with problems, but not when enjoying prosperity
 - b. Like some sailors...
 - 1) Who in a storm pray fervently to God for deliverance, making promises

- 2) But then get drunk or engage in immorality as soon as they get to land

[If we turn to God only when things go wrong, our religion is no different than the Samaritans'! But with the proper kind of fear (awesome reverence), we will draw close to God through obedience; and when we do so, we will find Him to be so gracious and loving that we will serve Him out of love and not just a fear of judgment - cf. **1 Jn 4:16-18** We also notice that the Samaritans' religion was...]

II. A RELIGION OF "FORM"

A. THEIR HEARTS WERE NOT IN THEIR SERVICE TO THE LORD...

1. As evident by the fact they continued to serve their "carved images" - **2 Kin 17:33-34**
2. What service they rendered to the Lord possessed "form", but not "substance"

B. SUCH WORSHIP IS OFTEN COMMON TODAY...

1. Where there is "form", but not "substance"
2. Now, there is a need for "form" in religion...
 - a. Possessing both a physical and spiritual nature, man needs physical ways to express his spiritual devotion
 - b. Thus God has provided physical expressions even in New Testament worship, even though it is much more spiritual than that found in the Old Testament
 - c. The Lord's Supper, singing, prayer, giving, etc., they all have "form"
3. But to go through the "form" without the "substance" (i.e., the right spirit, attitude) is "hypocritical" - cf. **Mt 15:7-8**
4. Christians are guilty of such worship if they...
 - a. Sing "Give Me The Bible", but they never read it
 - b. Sing "Here Am I, Send Me", but are not willing to go or do
 - c. Sing "Wonderful Story Of Love" with bored expressions on their faces (cf. **Pro 15:13**)
5. Worship that is both "form" and "substance" will emulate the example of David...
 - a. "I will praise You with my whole heart..." - **Psa 138:1**
 - b. "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being." - **Psa 146:1-2**
 - c. "Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant and praise is beautiful." - **Psa 147:1**

[Is our religion one of simply going through the "form"? Or does it have "substance" as well? If not, then our religion is no more pleasing to God than that of the Samaritans! One final point to be made about their religion, it was...]

III. A RELIGION OF "COMPROMISE"

A. IN THE CASE OF THE SAMARITANS...

1. They had God and they had "gods"; they liked the latter best - **2 Kin 17:41a**
2. They gave God lip service, but they gave the "gods" their true service

B. SUCH CAN HAPPEN TO CHRISTIANS TODAY...

1. When they seek to serve God, while also try to serve the world
2. But this is impossible according to Jesus - cf. **Mt 6:24**
3. When people try to serve both, the world always wins...
 - a. It shows up in how their jobs, their recreation, etc., takes precedence over their service

to God

- b. It shows up in how they seek to rationalize their conduct

C. BUT GOD CANNOT TOLERATE “COMPROMISE”....

1. He requires total commitment to Him, no matter the price
 - a. As taught in the Old Testament - **De 6:5,14-15**
 - b. As taught by Jesus Himself - **Lk 14:26,33**
2. To compromise with the world is to commit “spiritual adultery”! - **Ja 4:4**
3. Thus we need to heed Jesus’ admonition: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” - **Mt 6:33**

CONCLUSION

1. I believe it is easy to see the error of the Samaritans’ religion...
 - a. They had a religion of “fear, form, and compromise”
 - b. But unless we are careful, our religion can easily become like theirs!
2. If with honest introspection we must confess that our religion is closer to the Samaritans’ than it should be...
 - a. Let **Elijah** challenge us to give up “a religion of compromise” - cf. **1 Kin 18:21**
 - b. Let **Paul** challenge us to give up “a religion of form” - cf. **Ro 2:28-29**
 - c. Let **John** challenge us to give up “a religion of fear” - cf. **1 Jn 3:18-19**

Have you accepted the Savior’s tender invitation (**Mt 11:28-30**), which is received today by obedience to His gospel? - cf. **Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:36-39**

David's Charge To Solomon

1 Chronicles 28:9

INTRODUCTION

1. Near the end of his life, King David gave a solemn charge to his son Solomon...
 - a. Pertaining to the building of the temple - **1 Chr 28:1-10**
 - b. Of particular note are David's words in **verse 9**
2. In **verse 9**, David's charge included three things...
 - a. Solomon's **duty** toward God
 - b. **Motivation** for Solomon to fulfill his duty
 - c. **Promises** regarding whether or not Solomon fulfilled his duty

[What David charged Solomon in **1 Chr 28:9** has application for us today, in regards to our service to God. Using the verse as our text, consider first what is...]

I. OUR DUTY

A. TO KNOW GOD...

1. David tells Solomon to "...know the God of your father"
 2. Nothing is more important in life than to truly know God - **Jer 9:23-24**
 3. God is displeased when people do not know Him
 - a. As was the case in Hosea's day - **Hos 4:1,6**
 - b. As was the case in Paul's day - **Ro 1:18-28**
 4. Yet God has made Himself known
 - a. Through creation - **Psa 19:1-3**
 - b. Through revelation, and the sending of His Son - **He 1:1-2; Jn 1:14,18; 14:7; 17:1-4**
- **Have we made a serious effort to know God?**

B. TO SERVE GOD...

1. With a loyal heart (NKJV)
 - a. With a whole heart (NASB, ESV)
 - b. With wholehearted devotion (NIV)
 - c. What Jesus described as the greatest commandment - **Mt 22:36-38**
 2. With a willing mind (NKJV)
 - a. "cordially and sincerely, cheerfully and freely," - **Gill**
 - b. "neither in an hypocritical manner, nor through force and constraint, nor with loathing and weariness" - **ibid.**
 3. This is the kind of service God expects today
 - a. Of all Christians in their giving - **2 Co 8:12; 9:7**
 - b. Of elders in their shepherding - **1 Pe 5:1-2**
- **Are we committed to serving God completely and willingly?**

[To know God and serve Him with sincerity and zeal, such is our duty! From "David's Charge To Solomon" we can also learn what can serve as...]

II. OUR MOTIVATION

A. GOD SEARCHES THE HEARTS...

1. David tells Solomon "...for the Lord searches all hearts"
 2. Solomon later confesses "...You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men" - **1 Kin 8:39**
 3. Today it is still the same
 - a. Jesus knew the hearts of men during His earthly ministry - **Jn 2:24-25**
 - b. Jesus continues to search the minds and hearts of all - **Re 2:23**
 - c. There is no way we can hide our hearts from God - cf. **Psa 139:1-12; He 4:12-13**
- **Since we cannot hide, why not serve Him willingly?**

B. GOD UNDERSTANDS THE INTENTS...

1. The Lord "understand all the intents of the thoughts"
 2. He understands "every motive behind the thoughts" (NIV)
 3. "not only the thoughts of the heart, when regularly formed and ranged in order, but even the very beginning of them, the first motions of the mind, and before they are well formed"
- Gill
- **There is no way that we can hide our motives from God!**

[Reinforcing our motivation to know God and serve Him with a loyal heart and willing mind, is the two-sided promise found in "**David's Charge To Solomon**"...]

III. OUR PROMISE

A. IF WE SEEK HIM...

1. He will be found by us - cf. **2 Chr 15:2**
 2. For the Lord is seeking those whose heart is loyal to Him - cf. **2 Chr 16:9a**
 3. The key is to seek Him with all our heart - **Jer 29:13**; cf. **Mt 7:7-8; Ja 4:8-10**
- **Are we making a diligent effort to find God, to learn and do His will?**

B. IF WE FORSAKE HIM...

1. He will cast us off forever - cf. **Isa 1:28**
 2. Even as the Lord promised to do to Israel - cf. **1 Kin 9:6-9**
 3. Even as Jesus warned His disciples if they did not bear fruit - **Jn 15:1-2,6**
- **How sad and terrible to go through life and death without God at our side!**

CONCLUSION

1. How much better to go through life and face death with God! - cf. **Isa 41:10**
2. Just as David later encouraged Solomon - cf. **1 Chr 28:20**

If we want the encouraging **promise** spoken of by David, accept the **duty** spoken of by David...!

The Hand Of The Lord My God Was Upon Me

Ezra 7:28

INTRODUCTION

1. The Bible is filled with stories of people who lived their lives under the influence of God...
 - a. Through deep faith and a willingness to serve, God used them to fulfill His purposes
 - b. **Ezra** is one such example of what can happen:
 - 1) When a person determines to seek God
 - 2) And allows the Lord to use him
2. In 457 B.C., Ezra led a group of Jews from Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem...
 - a. About eighty years after a group led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple
 - b. The mission of Ezra's group was to restore the people of God
3. In the book of Ezra...
 - a. The first six chapters describe the work of Zerubbabel
 - b. The final four chapters relate Ezra's arrival and the great restoration he brought about

[The theme of Ezra's life and work could be stated as "**The Hand Of The Lord My God Was Upon Me,**" for six times in two chapters he thus attributes his success. In our lesson, let's first notice...]

I. HOW THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS UPON EZRA

A. IN RECEIVING REQUESTS FROM THE KING...

1. Notice **Ezra 7:6**
2. Because the hand of the Lord was upon Ezra, Artaxerxes allowed him:
 - a. To go to Jerusalem - **Ezra 7:12-13**
 - b. To take silver and gold to buy animals for sacrifice - **Ezra 7:14-17**
 - c. To buy what is needed for the service of the house of God - **Ezra 7:18-23**
 - d. To be free from taxation - **Ezra 7:24**
 - e. To set up magistrates and judges - **Ezra 7:25-26**
- **Ezra recognized the hand of God was at work in his behalf! - Ezra 7:27-28**

B. IN FINDING SERVANTS FOR THE TEMPLE...

1. Prepared to leave, Ezra noted none of sons of Levi - **Ezra 8:15**
2. He sends men to find some who will go with them - **Ezra 8:16-17**
- **By the good hand of God upon them, they find 38 Levites and 220 Nethinim to assist them! - Ezra 8:18-20**

C. IN PROVIDING SAFE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM...

1. Ezra proclaimed a fast to seek from God the right way to travel - **Ezra 8:21-23**
2. Having told the king that God's hand would be them, he was ashamed to ask for a military escort - **Ezra 8:22**
- **God's hand was upon them, and they safely arrived in Jerusalem! - Ezra 8:31-32**

[From beginning to end the hand of the Lord was upon Ezra. Why did Ezra enjoy the blessing of God's provision in his life? Is there anything we can glean from Ezra's story that might ensure the hand of God in our own lives? I believe there is! Let me suggest some reasons...]

II. WHY THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS UPON EZRA

A. EZRA HAD PREPARED HIMSELF...

1. In a summary passage, we learn why God was with him - **Ezra 7:9-10**
2. God was with him "For (because) Ezra had prepared his heart..."
 - a. "to seek the Law of the Lord" (to learn what God wanted him to do)
 - b. "to do it" (to apply it to himself first)
 - c. "to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (and then teach others)
- **Ezra had first made himself "useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" - cf. 2 Ti 2:21**

B. EZRA HAD SOUGHT THE LORD...

1. He believed that God would be with those who seek Him - **Ezra 8:22**
2. Thus he entreated God's protection through fasting and prayer - **Ezra 8:21-23**
- **Ezra believed that God rewarded those who diligently seek Him; such faith undoubtedly pleased God - cf. He 11:6**

C. EZRA WAS WILLING TO STEP OUT IN FAITH...

1. Trusting the Lord would protect them, they began their perilous journey - **Ezra 8:31**
2. It was not easy, for there were enemies and potential for ambush along the way!
- But Ezra illustrated that he had a living, working faith! - cf. **Ja 2:17,26; Ga 5:6**

D. EZRA WAS WILLING TO FACE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS...

1. Upon his arrival, Ezra was faced with a difficult situation - **Ezra 9:1-2**
 - a. Many of the Israelites had intermarried with Gentile women
 - b. The rulers and leaders of Israel were the worst violators
2. He was moved to fasting and prayer - **Ezra 9:3-15**
 - a. Others joined him ("everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel")
 - b. He offered prayer confessing the sins of Israel
3. He accepted the responsibility that was his - **Ezra 10:1-8**
 - a. Encouraged by those willing to repent
 - b. Leading the people to a great restoration!
- **It would have been so easy to rationalize away any need for the people to change; but Ezra did not let the emotionally charged issue deter him from doing God's will!**

CONCLUSION

1. The hand of the Lord was upon Ezra because he...
 - a. Had prepared himself
 - b. Sought the Lord
 - c. Was willing to step out in faith
 - d. Was willing to face difficult situations
2. Ezra was not the only person who experienced the hand of the Lord upon him...

- a. The Lord was also with a contemporary, Nehemiah - cf. **Neh 2:18**
 - b. Sometimes the hand of the Lord was for the purpose of judgment - cf. **1 Sam 5:6**
 - c. But here we have considered the working of God for good in the life of his servant
3. How will the hand of the Lord be for us? For our good, if we emulate Ezra by...
- a. Preparing ourselves to be useful to the Master!
 - b. Seeking the Lord with diligence and faith!
 - c. Stepping out in faith against the odds
 - d. Facing difficult issues and situations head on

Let the example of Ezra encourage us to so live in Christ, that one day we can look back at the events in our lives and say:

“The Hand Of The Lord My God Was Upon Me”!

Paragon Of Beauty And Virtue

Esther 1:1-10:3

INTRODUCTION

1. A much loved story in the Bible is that of **Esther** (Hadassa)...
 - a. A Jewish girl who becomes Queen of Persia
 - b. Who at great risk to her life intercedes for and saves her people
2. I like to think of her as a paragon of beauty and virtue, long noted for...
 - a. Being lovely and beautiful
 - b. Her faith and courage

[She certainly serves as a role model for young women today. To see how, let's first review...]

I. THE STORY OF ESTHER

A. THE EXPULSION OF VASHTI...

1. King Ahasuerus (Xerxes, 486 to 465 BC) of Persia has a six month celebration, followed by a seven day feast, also one hosted by his wife, Queen Vashti, for the women - **Es 1:1-9**
2. Ahasuerus decides to show off his wife, but she refuses to cooperate - **Es 1:10-12**
3. In anger, Ahasuerus has Vashti banished, as a warning to all wives - **Es 1:13-22**

B. THE ELEVATION OF ESTHER...

1. A search to replace Vashti was begun - **Es 2:1-4**
2. In Shusan there was Mordecai, a Jew raising his lovely and beautiful cousin Hadassah (Esther) - **Es 2:5-7**
3. Together with other beautiful virgins, she underwent 12 months of preparation, and ultimately was selected to replace Vashti - **Es 2:8-19**
4. But she did not reveal that she was a Jew - **Es 2:20**
5. Meanwhile, Mordecai thwarted a plot against Ahasuerus - **Es 2:21-23**

C. THE EXTERMINATION OF THE JEWS PLANNED...

1. Haman the Agagite, is promoted, but Mordecai as a Jew refuses to bow before him, which infuriates Haman - **Es 3:1-5**
2. Haman receives permission from Ahasuerus to kill the Jews, the 13th of Adar - **Es 3:6-15**
3. Mordecai mourns in sackcloth and ashes at the king's gate - **Es 4:1-3**
4. Esther hears of her cousin, and learns of Haman's plan to kill the Jews - **Es 4:4-9**
5. Mordecai convinces Esther to approach the king, at great risk to her own life - **Es 4:10-17**

D. THE EXTERMINATION OF THE JEWS THWARTED...

1. Esther is granted an audience, invites the king and Haman to a banquet - **Es 5:1-5**
2. She invites them to another banquet the following night, to make her petition - **Es 5:6-8**
3. As Haman leaves he is angered when Mordecai refuses to bow to him; his wife and friends persuade him to build a gallows for Mordecai - **Es 5:9-14**
4. That night the king can't sleep; reading through the archives he learns how Mordecai thwarted the plot against him, yet nothing had been done to honor him - **Es 6:1-3**

5. The king asks Haman what should be done to honor a good man; Haman assumes the king intends to honor him and answers accordingly - **Es 6:4-9**
6. The king has Haman bestow honor on Mordecai, Haman returns home ashamed - **Es 6:10-14**
7. The next day, the king and Haman dine again with Esther; she tells of the plot to kill the Jews (her own people) and accuses Haman - **Es 7:1-6**
8. In anger the king leaves, soon returning to find Haman assaulting Esther - **Es 7:7-8**
9. Informed of the gallows Haman built for Mordecai, the king hangs Haman on it - **Es 7:9-10**
10. Esther given Haman's house, Mordecai promoted, plan to save the Jews is made - **Es 8:1-17**
11. The Jews are spared, their enemies destroyed, Esther and Mordecai institute the feast of Purim to commemorate the Jews' deliverance - **Es 9:1-32**

E. THE EXALTATION OF MORDECAI...

1. Mordecai the Jews becomes second to King Ahasuerus of Persia - **Es 10:1-3**
2. Mordecai becomes great and well received among the Jews, seeking their good and speaking peace to them - **Es 10:3**

[The story of Esther is indeed an exciting one. Let's now review...]

II. ESTHER'S BEAUTY AND VIRTUE

A. WOMAN OF GREAT BEAUTY...

1. She was lovely and beautiful - **Es 2:7**
2. She was taken along with many other young women - **Es 2:8**
3. She pleased Hegai the custodian, who advanced her to the best place - **Es 2:8-9**
4. She underwent 12 months of preparation for beautifying women - **Es 2:12**
5. She obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her - **Es 2:15**
6. She was loved by Ahasuerus above all other women - **Es 2:16-17**

B. WOMAN OF GREAT VIRTUE...

1. She was a virgin up to her selection by the king - **Es 2:2-3**
2. She honored Mordecai as her surrogate father - **Exo 20:12**
 - a. She followed his advice not to reveal her ethnicity - **Es 2:10,20**
 - b. She remained in contact with him - **Es 4:4-5**
3. She manifested faith in God's providence
 - a. Accepting Mordecai's view that her position might be providential - **Es 4:14**
 - a. Calling upon others to fast with her - **Es 4:15-16**
 - b. Being willing to risk everything (position, life) if necessary - **Es 4:16**

CONCLUSION

1. Esther proved she was more than just a pretty face...
 - a. **A model adult daughter:** free to act as she chose, but carefully weighed Mordecai's advice
 - b. **A model person of faith:** devoted to God and His people
2. Esther proved herself to be **a true daughter of Sarah...**
 - a. Beautiful on the outside perhaps, as was Sarah - cf. **Gen 12:10-20**
 - b. But more so on the inside, as all women of God should be - cf. **1Pe 3:3-6**

May this "**Paragon Of Beauty And Virtue**" be a role model for women and daughters everywhere...

Expatriate Extraordinaire

Esther 2:5-7

INTRODUCTION

1. A much loved story in the Bible is that of **Esther** (Hadassa)...
 - a. A young beautiful Jewish girl who becomes Queen of Persia - **Est 2:16-17**
 - b. Who at great risk to her life intercedes for and saves her people - **Est 4:15-16**
 - **Which led to the establishment of the days of Purim for the Jews - Est 9:26-32**
2. Integral to the story of Esther is the involvement of Mordecai the Jew...
 - a. The first cousin of Esther, who also lived in Shushan of Persia - **Est 2:5-7**
 - b. Whose greatness is described in the last verse - **Est 10:3**
 - **In fact, the Feast of Purim is called “the day of Mordecai” in 2 Mac 15:36**

[Mordecai was truly an “**Expatriate Extraordinaire**”. As such, he provides an example in many respects for Christians today...]

I. MORDECAI AS AN EXPATRIATE EXTRAORDINAIRE

A. HE WAS AN EXPATRIATE...

1. **Expatriate** - One who has taken up residence in a foreign country
2. His great-grandfather Kish had been taken away into Babylonian captivity - **Est 2:5-6**
3. The Jews had begun to return to Jerusalem nearly fifty years earlier - cf. **Ezr 1:1-5**
- **Mordecai, like many other Jews, remained in the country of exile**

B. HE WAS EXTRAORDINAIRE...

1. **Extraordinaire** - Extraordinary; beyond what is ordinary or usual; highly unusual or exceptional; remarkable
2. He raised his orphan cousin Esther - **Est 2:7**
3. He served as her mentor and protector - **Est 2:10-11,20**
4. He displayed patriotic loyalty by saving the king from assassination - **Est 2:21-23**
5. He refused to give Haman homage due only to God - **Est 3:1-4**
 - a. The Jews all think that Mordecai refused this prostration because it implied idolatrous adoration. - **Clarke**
 - b. Hence, in the Apocryphal additions to this book, Mordecai is represented praying thus: “Thou knowest that if I have not adored Haman, it was not through pride, nor contempt, nor secret desire of glory; for I felt disposed to kiss the footsteps of his feet (gladly) for the salvation of Israel: but I feared to give to a man that honor which I know belongs only to my God.” - **ibid.**
6. He did what he could to save his people, the Jews
 - a. Tearing his clothes, mourning in sackcloth and ashes before the king’s gate - **Est 4:1-2**
 - b. Sending word to Esther that she must be willing to risk her own life - **Est 4:13-14**
 - c. Heeding her plea for him and all the Jews to fast and pray for her - **Est 4:15-17**
7. Together with Esther he wrote a decree that countered the one by Haman - **Est 8:7-12**
8. He wrote the letters establishing the Feast of Purim for the Jews - **Est 9:20-28**
- **Mordecai was truly an extraordinary person, his greatness extolled in the book of**

Esther - cf. Est 9:4; 10:2-3

[With the example of Mordecai fresh on our minds, what parallels or applications might we draw related to our service as Christians...?]

II. CHRISTIANS AS EXPATRIATES EXTRAORDINAIRE**A. WE ARE CALLED TO BE EXPATRIATES...**

1. Like the Jews in exile, we are ‘pilgrims of the Dispersion’ - **1 Pe 1:1**
 2. We are ‘sojourners and pilgrims’ in this world - **1 Pe 2:11**
 3. Our citizenship is in heaven - **Ph 3:20**
- **During our earthly sojourn, we are truly expatriates, residing in a world not our own**

B. WE ARE CALLED TO BE EXTRAORDINAIRE...

1. With honorable conduct among the Gentiles - **1 Pe 2:12**
 2. Children of God without fault, shining as lights in the world - **Ph 2:14-15**
 3. Practicing pure religion, as did Mordecai raising Esther - cf. **Ja 1:27**
 4. Encouraging one another to do what’s right, as Mordecai exhorted Esther - cf. **He 3:12-14**
 5. Fulfilling our duties to the governments in which we live
 - a. Obeying the laws, paying taxes, showing respect - **Ro 13:1-7; 1 Pe 2:13-17**
 - b. Praying for those in authority - **1 Ti 2:1-2**
 6. Obeying God rather than man, should there be a conflict - **Ac 5:29**
 7. Devoted to the people of God, the church, as Mordecai was to the Jews - **1 Th 4:9-10**
- **Such conduct would certainly be extraordinary; beyond what is ordinary or usual; highly unusual or exceptional; remarkable**

CONCLUSION

1. Do you know anyone like that...?
 - a. How about the apostle Paul? Other faithful Christians in the New Testament?
 - b. How about faithful Christians today?

-- **If so, mark them well and follow their example - Ph 3:17**
2. Add to your role models other Old Testament examples...
 - a. Men like Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego
 - b. Women like Ruth, and of course Esther

-- **Who histories were written for our learning - cf. Ro 15:4**

These were “expatriates extraordinaires” like Mordecai. So we can be, if we follow in their footsteps of faith fighting against our enemy (Satan, not Haman). Are you willing to accept the challenge...?

*“...Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” -
Est 4:14b*

The Truly Happy Man

Psalms 1:1-6

INTRODUCTION

1. Wherein lies the key to true happiness...?
 - a. We live in a time where boredom, depression and other forms of unhappiness are rampant
 - b. Is there some basic principle which determines success in finding happiness?
2. The Book of Psalms with its very first psalm shares with us a key principle that can ensure true happiness...
 - a. Notice the very first word of the first psalm - "Blessed..."
 - 1) The word in Hebrew denotes the idea of "happiness"
 - 2) The actual force of the Hebrew could be translated "O how very happy is the man..."
 - b. Therefore this psalm describes "**The Truly Happy Man**"
3. In this lesson, we shall...
 - a. Take a close look at the first psalm
 - b. Seek to glean the principles necessary for one to truly be happy

[The psalm itself can be divided into three sections. The first section describes...]

I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN

A. WE ARE TOLD OF HIS CHARACTER... (1-2)

1. Described first from a **negative** point of view - **Psa 1:1**
 - a. There is value in negative commands or statements
 - 1) For so much that destroys happiness is the fruit of sinful activity
 - 2) We ought to appreciate the value of negative commands
 - a) They keep us from going astray
 - b) They protect from harm and misery
 - Like restraining walls along a cliff, they keep us from getting hurt
 - b. Therefore it is said that the truly happy man:
 - 1) "**Walks not in the counsel of the ungodly**"
 - a) He does not take their counsel as to how to live
 - b) He does not follow the advice of those who are sinful
 - 2) "**Nor stands in the path of sinners**"
 - a) He does not linger where sinners are known to go
 - b) For the temptation to go with them would be great
 - 3) "**Nor sits in the seat of the scornful**"
 - a) He does not join himself with those who ridicule and mock those trying to do right
 - b) Which sinners often do to fortify their conduct and defend their actions
 - c. Notice the example of Hebrew poetry in this verse
 - 1) Hebrew poetry stressed "thought rhyme" rather than "word rhyme"
 - a) Where the thoughts are somehow related rather than just the words

- b) Such thought rhyme was often expressed in various forms of “parallelism” (e.g., synonymous, **1:2**; antithetical, **1:6**)
- 3) Here we find an example of “progressive parallelism” (walk, stand, sit)
- d. This verse may be taken to describe the journey one takes into sin...
 - 1) First, one going along with a crowd
 - 2) Then, taking a stand with the crowd
 - 3) Finally, reaching a point where sinning is not enough, mockery is added
- 2. His character from a **positive** perspective - **Psa 1:2**
 - a. **“His delight is in the law of the Lord”**
 - 1) The source of his joy and happiness is the Word of God!
 - 2) It is truly his “delight” - cf. **Psa 119:16,24,35,47,70,77,92,174; Jer 15:16-17**
 - 3) He preferred it over the counsel of the ungodly!
 - b. Therefore, **“in His law he meditates day and night”**
 - 1) The word meditate means to “moan, hum, utter, speak, muse”
 - a) The picture is one of a man reading and rereading half aloud to himself
 - b) Another word might be “ponder”
 - 2) This he does with God’s word “day and night”
 - a) Not implying a monk-like existence
 - b) But a concerted interest which goes beyond a casual acquaintance
 - 3) What it means is that this is something...
 - a) He does habitually
 - b) He takes time to do - setting apart portions of each day
 - c) He does both day and night

B. WE ARE TOLD OF HIS PROSPERITY... (3)

- 1. **“He shall be like a tree”**
 - a. This figure of speech is often used in Scripture to describe the righteous - e.g., **Psa 92:12-15; Jer 17:5-8**
 - b. It had special significance to those living in arid climates (like Palestine)
- 2. **“Planted by rivers of water”**
 - a. A picture describing a person whose life is rooted in God’s word
 - b. From which one receives constant nourishment
- 3. **“That brings forth fruit in its season”**
 - a. Depicting a life which yields something worthwhile
 - b. Providing blessings to himself and others
- 4. **“Whose leaf also shall not wither”**
 - a. A tree with roots near a river is not likely to be affected in times of drought
 - b. So adverse conditions do not affect the fruitfulness of one whose strength comes from God’s word!
- 5. **“Whatever he does shall prosper”**
 - a. The figure of the tree is now left behind
 - b. This is a general rule, exceptions may occur for reasons which only God knows
 - c. But a life of piety will generally be followed by prosperity
 - 1) For piety will heed God’s directions for success in life
 - 2) And piety will heed God’s warnings concerning things that waste life

[Such is the character and prosperity of the righteous man; he is truly happy and a blessing to others because he abides in the Word of God. He also becomes a monument to God’s faithfulness and the

value of living by His word. What of those who do not delight in the Word of God, who do not receive the nourishment found in it? In the next two verses we are shown...]

II. THE CONDITION OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS

A. THEY ARE NOTHING LIKE THE RIGHTEOUS... (4)

1. The phrase **“The ungodly are not so”** is more emphatic in the Hebrew
 - a. Literally, “Not so, are the ungodly!”
 - b. Emphasizing that the wicked are not like the righteous
2. The contrast as illustrated by the Psalmist
 - a. He does not even describe them as withering trees
 - 1) But rather as **“chaff which the wind drives away”**
 - 2) Alluding to chaff blown away from wheat as it is tossed into the air
 - d. The illustration describes a bleak existence
 - 1) Their life is one of futility (ending in eternal separation from God)
 - 2) Their life is no substantial value, either to be blown away and not found, or to be burned (cf. **Mt 3:12**)

B. THEIR SORRY CONDITION PORTENDS NO GOOD END... (5)

1. **“The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment”**
 - a. I understand this may be a Hebraism (Hebrew idiom)
 - 1) Meaning that the wicked “shall not be able to maintain himself”
 - 2) I.e., obliged to sit or fall down in shame when convicted of their guilt
 - b. The Final Judgment appears to be under consideration
2. **“Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous”**
 - a. I.e., in all places where the righteous are assembled, they will have no place:
 - 1) E.g., where they assemble to worship God
 - 2) E.g., where they meet as His friends
 - 3) E.g., where they together participate in His favor
 - b. But especially, in the last day, when the righteous...
 - 1) ...shall be gathered together to receive their reward
 - 2) ...shall be assembled together in heaven
 ...the sinner has no place!

[The psalm concerning **“The Truly Happy Man”** ends with...]

III. A FINAL CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO “WAYS”

A. THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS... (6a)

1. The Lord **“knows”** the way of the righteous
2. The word “knows” suggests interest in, and care for, the person known
- **One could say: “God himself goes with such a person throughout his or her life”**

B. THE WAY OF THE UNGODLY (6b)

1. The way of the ungodly person **“shall perish”**
2. I.e., shall tend toward ruin
- **His path becomes less defined until it loses itself (like a trail that leads into a swamp)**

CONCLUSION

1. Is not the end described for the ungodly a true description of those who go through life bored, depressed, or otherwise unhappy...?
 - a. Their lives are listless
 - b. With no sense of purpose or direction, gradually unraveling
2. Why is this so? Because they...
 - a. Heed the counsel of the ungodly!
 - b. Do not meditate upon the Word of the Lord!
3. If we desire to be **“The Truly Happy Man”**...
 - a. Standing strong like well-nourished tree, bearing fruit at all times
 - b. With the Lord always at our side

-- **Then the key is to delight and meditate in the Word of the Lord, and not heed the counsel of sinners!**

In whose counsel do you delight? That found in God’s word, or that provided by the ungodly in this world? If you seek true happiness, let the Lord be your counselor, and His word your guide!

I Have Set The Lord Always Before Me

Psalms 16:8

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Psa 16:11** we are reminded that in the presence of God there is fullness of joy and true happiness...

“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

2. I am sure that all Christians would agree; but even so, there are times...
 - a. We all find ourselves not as close to God as we would like
 - b. We find ourselves spiritually weak, filled with depression and anxiety
3. In such times, what can we do in order to become close to God again?
 - a. The answer is found in **Psa 16:8**
 - b. “I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.”
-- **It is when we “set the Lord before us” that we receive the benefits of His Presence...**

[In this lesson, I wish to review ways that you can draw closer to God, or to “set the Lord before you”, anytime you find ourselves drifting away from God. Perhaps a good place to start is to...]

I. SET THE LORD BEFORE YOU THROUGH GOD’S CREATION

A. LET NATURE HELP YOU DRAW CLOSE TO GOD...

1. For the Creation speaks to us of God
 - a. It tells of His glory and His knowledge - **Psa 19:1-2**
 - b. It impresses us with His eternal power and His deity - **Ro 1:20**
 - c. In their own way, such inanimate objects worship God - **Psa 68:8,11-13**
2. When we take time to contemplate God’s creation...
 - a. We understand more of His power and of His person
 - b. This understanding enables us to come closer to God
 - 1) Just as increasing understanding between friends enhances friendship
 - 2) As it does any relationship (e.g., marriages)

B. OTHERS USED NATURAL SETTINGS IN DRAWING CLOSER TO GOD...

1. Isaac would go out into the fields to meditate - **Gen 24:63**
 2. Jesus would often go to the mountains to pray - **Mt 14:23**
- **It may be easier to draw closer to God in the midst of God’s creation (nature), and away from man’s creation (cities)**

Walking alone at eve and viewing the skies afar,
Bidding the darkness come to welcome each silver star;
I have a great delight in the wonderful scenes above,
God in His power and might is showing His truth and Love.
-- **Alone At Eve, verse 1, Will W. Slater**

[But God's creation can tell you only so much about Him. To draw closer, you need to...]

II. SET THE LORD BEFORE YOU THROUGH GOD'S REVELATION

A. GOD'S WORD PROVIDES THE FULL REVELATION OF GOD...

1. Through nature we are limited in what we can learn God
 - a. We can see His power, divinity, glory, and knowledge
 - b. But we learn nothing of His will and purpose for us
2. It is only through Divine revelation that God has made His full will known
 - a. He has revealed many things through His Spirit, who in turn revealed them through the apostles - **1 Co 2:9-12**
 - b. Such things were written for our benefit and understanding - **Ep 3:3-5**

B. OTHERS DEPENDED UPON THE WORD TO REMAIN CLOSE TO GOD...

1. David used it in many ways to stay close to God - **Psa 119:92-93,105,147-148**
 2. Jesus used it to ward off the Tempter - **Mt 4:4,7,10**
- **Let God's Word help you draw near to Him who is the source of peace and strength**

Sitting alone at eve and dreaming the hours away,
Watching the shadows falling now at the close of day;
God in His mercy comes with His word He is drawing near,
Spreading His love and truth around me and everywhere.
-- **Alone At Eve, verse 2, Will W. Slater**

[But do not stop with listening to God through His Word. To really draw close to God, you need to...]

III. SET THE LORD BEFORE YOU THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS

A. A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP MUST BE A TWO-WAY STREET...

1. God has revealed Himself to us through His creation and revelation
2. We must reveal ourselves to Him, which we do through prayer
 - a. By which to express every concern, receive appropriate blessings - **Ph 4:6-7**
 - b. By which to draw boldly to God, to obtain mercy and grace to help - **He 4:14-16**

B. OTHERS FOUND PRAYER THE MEANS TO RECEIVE HELP FROM GOD...

1. David found that confessing sins to God brought forgiveness - **Psa 32:3-6**
 2. Jesus found prayer to be a source of strength in times of trial - **Mt 26:36-44**
- **Draw near to God's throne through prayer, let Him know of your deepest needs**

Closing my eyes at eve and thinking of heaven's grace,
Longing to see my Lord, yes, meeting Him face to face;
Trusting Him as my all wheresoever my footsteps roam,
Pleading with Him to guide me on to the spirit's home.
-- **Alone At Eve, verse 3, Will W. Slater**

[Finally, allow me to suggest that you...]

IV. SET THE LORD BEFORE YOU THROUGH YOUR FELLOWSHIP

A. STRENGTH COMES FROM ASSEMBLING TOGETHER...

1. **Just as there is strength in numbers - cf. Ecc 4:9-12**
 2. In view of the very real danger of falling away...
 - a. We need to exhort one another daily - **He 3:12-13**
 - b. We need to admonish one another through our frequent assemblies - **He 10:24-25**
- **Like coals in a fire keeping each other hot, assembling together is designed to keep the “spark” alive in our relationship with God**

B. THE EARLY CHURCH FOUND STRENGTH BY ASSEMBLING TOGETHER...

1. As when Peter and John were released after being arrested - **Ac 4:23-31**
2. As when Peter was imprisoned - **Ac 12:12**

C. OUR ASSEMBLIES CAN BE A FORETASTE OF GOD’S PRESENCE...

1. In which we draw near to God together through song, prayer, and His word
2. In which we enjoy the fellowship of God and His servants even now - cf. **Re 7:9-17**

Oh! for a home with God, a place in His courts to rest,
Sure in a safe abode with Jesus and the blest;
Rest for a weary soul once redeemed by the Savior’s love,
Where I will be pure and whole and live with my God above!
-- **Alone At Eve, chorus, Will W. Slater**

CONCLUSION

1. Do you desire to draw closer to God?
2. Then “set the Lord before you” through these avenues:
 - a. Contemplating nature
 - b. Meditating on God’s word
 - c. Spending time in prayer
 - d. Having fellowship with other Christians

Do this, and we can draw closer to God, and sing with David:

*“...In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psa 16:11)*

The Art Of Confessing Our Sins

Psalms 51:1-19

INTRODUCTION

1. Do you remember the joy and the relief you experienced when you were baptized...?
 - a. Knowing that your sins had been washed away by the blood of Christ?
 - b. Knowing that you then stood before God holy and without blame?
 - **Wouldn't it be great to experience that same joy and relief, time and again?**
2. There is no reason why you cannot...!
 - a. Even though you may have sinned terribly after your baptism
 - b. For God has made provision whereby we can enjoy the continual cleansing of the blood of Christ!
3. Not by being baptized again and again...
 - a. But by confessing our sins to God - cf. **1 Jn 1:9**
 - b. For God who is faithful and just has promised to forgive our sins!
 - **Just as we were raised from the grave of baptism cleansed by Jesus' blood, so we can rise from our prayers knowing that we have been cleansed from all unrighteousness!**
4. The key is to confess our sins...
 - a. But how does one do that effectively?
 - b. Are there some things to keep in mind as we confess our sins?
5. In **Psalms 51**, we have what David wrote after he was guilty of adultery with Bathsheba...
 - a. He provides an example of how one should confess their sins to God
 - b. He provides what I like to call **"The Art Of Confessing Our Sins"**

[How should one go about confessing their sins to God? From the example of David, a good place to begin is...]

I. APPEAL TO GOD'S MERCY AND LOVINGKINDNESS (1-2)

A. NOTE THE BASIS OF DAVID'S PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS...

1. "according to Your lovingkindness"
2. "according to the multitude of Your tender mercies"
- **David sought forgiveness based upon God's lovingkindness and tender mercies**

B. THE PARDON WE SEEK SHOULD HAVE AS ITS BASIS...

1. Not in the merit or worthiness of man
2. But in the goodness and grace of God!

C. AS WE SEEK "WASHING" AND "CLEANSING" FROM OUR SINS...

1. Don't base our appeal on our past accomplishments
 - a. E.g., how much we have done for the Lord
 - b. E.g., how long we have been a member of His church

2. But upon the goodness and mercy of God!
 - a. Appeal to His mercy and grace!
 - b. Knowing that He is slow to anger and abounding in mercy! - cf. **Psa 103:8-10**
- **Remember the parable of the Pharisee and the publican! - Lk 18:9-14**

[As we seek forgiveness, we must of course...]

II. ACKNOWLEDGE OUR SINS TO GOD (3-4)

A. NOTE HOW DAVID ACKNOWLEDGED HIS SIN...

1. He did not try to hide it: “my sin is ever before me”
2. He admitted that it was a sin against God Himself: “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight”
 - a. While it is true he had sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, his own wife...
 - b. ...David knew that it was ultimately against God Himself!
3. He accepted the condemnation of God against him
 - a. That God was both “just” and blameless” in judging him
 - b. As God did when He sent Nathan to condemn him

B. AS WE CONFESS OUR SINS...

1. Appreciate that this is key to receiving God’s grace - cf. **1 Jn 1:9**
2. Acknowledge the sin; while we may at times simply confess to be sinners, it never hurts to actually mention the sin for which we seek forgiveness
3. Understand that all sin is ultimately a sin against God Himself!
4. Don’t fault God (His Word or His messengers) when we are exposed and condemned for our sins!

[As we confess our sins, there is more that we should bear in mind. From David we learn that we should also...]

III. UNDERSTAND WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE GOD WANTS US (5-6)

A. UNTIL FORGIVEN, ONE IS DEEP IN SIN...

1. Using hyperbole so common in poetic language, David describes the depravity in which he finds himself
2. He is not trying to escape responsibility by saying he was born that way; only that he knows he is utterly sinful

B. BUT GOD DESIRES MUCH MORE...

1. David knew that God wanted:
 - a. “*truth in the inward parts*”
 - b. “*wisdom in the hidden parts*”-- Again, figurative hyperbole illustrating that truth and wisdom are to be as pervasive as sin had been!
2. David knew that God desired to provide more than just forgiveness, He also desires:
 - a. Total restoration, with understanding and wisdom on our part
 - b. That we be equipped for faithful service

[Understanding what God wants of us helps us to appreciate what David goes on to say. Indeed, confession of sins should also mean that we...]

IV. PRAY FOR RENEWAL AND RESTORATION (7-12)

A. DAVID DESIRED MORE THAN JUST FORGIVENESS OF SIN...

1. He does pray for forgiveness, using figurative language in asking God...
 - a. To purge him with hyssop - **Psa 51:7**
 - b. To wash him whiter than snow - **Psa 51:7**
 - c. To hide His face from his sins - **Psa 51:9**
 - d. To blot out all his iniquities - **Psa 51:9**
2. But he also sought for more; he desired...
 - a. Joy and gladness - **Psa 51:8**
 - b. A new heart, and renewal of a steadfast spirit - **Psa 51:10**
 - c. Continuation of God's presence and Spirit - **Psa 51:11**
 - As summarized in **verse 12**: "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit."

B. AS WE CONFESS OUR SINS...

1. We should look to God for more than just forgiveness!
2. We should also ask for:
 - a. A complete renewal and total restoration!
 - b. A return of "the joy of salvation" (that joy experienced when we first obeyed the gospel! - e.g., **Ac 8:35-39**)

[As we consider further David's confession of sin, we find it proper to...]

V. RESOLVE TO OFFER GRATEFUL SERVICE (13-17)

A. DAVID RESOLVES...

1. To teach other sinners and transgressors - **Psa 51:13**
2. To praise God for His righteousness in delivering him from sin - **Psa 51:14-15**
 - a. Knowing that God delights in something more than animal sacrifices - **Psa 51:16**
 - b. A broken spirit and contrite heart is what really pleases God - **Psa 51:17**; cf. **Isa 66:1-2; 57:15**

B. SUCH RESOLUTION IS IN KEEPING WITH TRUE REPENTANCE...

1. For God desires more than just forgiveness, but total restoration - cf. **Psa 51:6**
2. And zealous service is indicative of true repentance, as taught in **2 Co 7:10-11**

C. AS WE CONFESS OUR SINS...

1. We should look beyond obtaining forgiveness for **past** sin
2. We should look beyond obtaining **present** joy and gladness of heart
- We should be making commitments regarding **future** service!

[Finally, as we come to the end of David's psalm, we find that "The Art Of Confessing Our Sins" includes that we...]

VI. PRAY FOR GOD'S PURPOSES (18-19)

A. DAVID OFFERED A PRAYER REGARDING GOD’S PURPOSES...

1. That God would fulfill His purpose for Zion - **Psa 51:18**
2. That God would be pleased with Israel’s sacrifices - **Psa 51:19**
- **Thus his confession of sin ends with a desire for that which pleases God**

B. AS WE CONFESS OUR SINS...

1. We should not be selfish, praying for only our needs
2. What about God’s desires? His purposes?
- **As Jesus taught us in “The Lord’s Prayer”, it is important to pray for God’s will as**

we

CONCLUSION

1. I hope I have not made the practice of confessing sins sound complicated...
 - a. Certainly there are occasions where a simple “I have sinned...” may suffice
 - b. As illustrated in the prayer of the tax collector - **Lk 18:13-14**
2. Yet if we desire to be less self-centered in confessing our sins, we can follow David’s example...
 - a. Appeal to God’s mercy and lovingkindness
 - b. Acknowledge our sins to God
 - c. Understand where we are and where God wants us
 - d. Pray for renewal and restoration
 - e. Resolve to offer grateful service
 - f. Pray for God’s purposes
3. By praying as David did, we are to sure to experience two things:
 - a. Forgiveness itself
 - b. The joy of forgiveness
 - **As David expressed in Psa 32:1-5, written after receiving forgiveness for his sins**

The Christian who confesses his sins is the truly happy individual (“***Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven...***”), for they have the assurance of salvation (cf. **1 Jn 1:9**).

Have you confessed your sins to God today?

They Shall Still Bear Fruit In Old Age

Psalms 92:12-15

INTRODUCTION

1. A goal for many people in life is a happy retirement...
 - a. They spend years saving and planning for the time in which they retire
 - b. They look forward to the free time to do what interests them

2. But is the concept of **retirement** applicable to the kingdom of God?
 - a. We may rightly retire from secular jobs, what about our service in the church?
 - b. Granted, physical infirmities may sometimes be a hindrance, but is such a valid reason for “retiring” from the work of the church?

3. In **Psalms 92:12-15**, we find a description of the righteous...
 - a. In which they are described as palm trees and cedar trees
 - b. Flourishing in the house and courts of God

-- **Note vs. 14: “They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing”**

[This passage certainly suggests that there is a place of service for the elderly in work of God. They are able to “**bear fruit**” and remain “**fresh and flourishing**”, despite their old age. That God can and does use the elderly should be rather apparent, especially when we take a few moments to consider...]

I. GOD’S USE OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE

A. MOSES AND AARON...

1. They were chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage
2. At the ages of 80 and 83 - cf. **Exo 7:7**
3. When they were already past the normal life span - cf. **Psa 90:10** (written by Moses)

B. JOSHUA AND CALEB...

1. Joshua was given the charge of leading the conquest of Canaan, during the last thirty years of his life (he lived until he was 110, **Josh 24:29**)
2. Caleb was also very much involved in the conquest while in his eighties - cf. **Josh 14:6-11**

C. DANIEL...

1. He served God from the days of his youth, for over 70 years! - cf. **Dan 1:21**
2. He was well over eighty when he:
 - a. Served as one of three governors over the kingdom of Babylon - **Dan 6:1-3**
 - b. Thrown into the lions’ den - **Dan 6:4-27**
 - c. Prospered in the reigns of Darius and Cyrus the Persian - **Dan 6:28**
 - d. Received a series of visions - **Dan 8-12**

D. ZACHARIAS AND ELIZABETH...

1. These were the parents of John the Baptist
2. They were “both well advanced in years” - **Lk 1:7**
3. Yet he was serving in the temple, and she gave birth to John!

E. SIMEON AND ANNA...

1. Two elderly people who bore witness to the Christ child when presented to the temple to be circumcised - **Lk 2:25-38**
2. Anna was at least 84, and had been serving God “with fastings and prayers night and day”

F. PAUL, THE AGED...

1. As he refers to himself in **Phile 9**
2. Yet we know at this time in his life, he was:
 - a. Busy writing letters (Eph, Col, Phi, Phe), even while in prison
 - b. Traveling, visiting, encouraging churches, when he was released from prison

[There are many other examples of how God used those in their “golden years” to serve Him. These we have considered certainly illustrate how the elderly can “still bear fruit in old age”. But what about today? Well consider...]

II. GOD’S USE OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH TODAY

A. THERE IS ALWAYS A NEED FOR “ELDERS”...

1. Did God not design the local church to be overseen by elders? - **Ac 14:23; Ti 1:5-9**
 - a. Men who were older, capable of teaching and leading the flock?
 - b. Men who were to serve as overseers and examples of God’s flock? - **1 Pe 5:1-4**
2. Yet many male members seem to retire from active service in the church about the same time they retire from secular work!
 - a. Around age 65, which is rather young compared to the examples we saw!
 - b. Just when they might be useful to the Lord, they are retiring!
 - c. If unqualified to serve, why not spend a few years growing and developing the necessary qualifications (if possible), and then serve?
 - d. Many young men who want to preach prepare themselves in just a couple of years, why can’t older men do the same?

B. THERE IS ALWAYS A NEED FOR OLDER WOMEN...

1. Who will do what Paul commanded in **Ti 2:3-5**
2. To be “teachers of good things”, especially to teach the younger women how to love their husbands, love their children, be good wives and homemakers
3. Sadly, many women stop teaching when they reach the age they are commanded to teach!
 - a. Don’t feel qualified to teach? Then prepare yourself!
 - b. Commit yourselves to learn God’s word, and in a short time you will be prepared!

C. THERE IS ALWAYS A NEED FOR SERVICE THE ELDERLY CAN PROVIDE...

1. Some examples:
 - a. **Hospitality and benevolence** - many elderly are financially secure, able to do what many younger families cannot
 - b. **Edification and evangelism** - with so much time on their hands, why not use it to study with others?
2. Even the most infirm can do things like:
 - a. Send cards, make phone calls
 - b. Spend time in prayer and fasting - cf. **Lk 2:37; 1 Ti 5:5**
 - I heard of one invalid who spent her time praying for the sick, for those involved

3. From our text we see what else the elderly can and should do:
 - a. “To declare the that the Lord is upright; He is my rock...” - **Psa 92:15**
 - b. To proclaim God’s strength to the next generation - cf. **Psa 71:17-18**
 - c. To recount God’s mighty works to the next generation - cf. **Psa 78:1-8**

CONCLUSION

1. God can certainly use people of all ages...
 - a. Who are willing to **prepare themselves** to be of service to Him
 - b. Who are willing to **present themselves** in service to Him
2. We may retire from secular jobs, but not from our service to the Lord...!
 - a. Certainly physical infirmities may limit what we can do
 - b. But only death can stop us from doing what we can!
3. Is the problem really one of physical infirmities, or spiritual laziness...?
 - a. We can’t stop the aging process
 - b. But we can be renewed inwardly daily! - cf. **2 Co 4:16**
4. Our problem may be related to our youth-oriented culture...
 - a. Where the wisdom and experience of the elderly is not respected
 - b. Where our society is too quick to put the elderly “out to pasture”
5. Other cultures reflect the scriptural norm...
 - a. Where the elderly are revered, their wisdom and experience appreciated
 - b. Where the elderly continue in roles of influence and leadership, even to death

I believe the righteous can and should “still bear fruit in old age”. I hope that this lesson will encourage the elderly to reexamine their usefulness to the Lord and His church. Let the attitude of “**Paul, the aged**” be your attitude as well:

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.”

(Philippians 3:12-15)

The Labor That Fails

Psalms 127:1-2

INTRODUCTION

1. There are things in life that most people desire...
 - a. A good family life
 - b. Protection from violence
 - c. Success in their work
 - d. Victory when there is war
 - e. Worship that pleases God
 - f. Churches that flourish and grow-- **For such things people expend much time and energy to attain**

2. Yet our effort alone will not ensure that we obtain such things...
 - a. Consider what is written in **Psa 127:1-2**
 - b. Where the keynote is the word “vain” (used three times)
 - c. Solomon’s theme is “that human enterprises only succeed by the divine blessing” (**JFB**)-- **Not all labor succeeds; there is “the labor that fails”**

[In the Psalm, several examples are provided; elsewhere in the Scriptures we have other examples when not all labor is successful. Let’s first consider the examples in the Psalm, such as...]

I. IN OUR FAMILIES

A. GOOD HOMES ARE CERTAINLY DESIRABLE...

1. There are blessings to being part of a large family
2. There is nothing wrong with desiring such

B. GOOD HOMES REQUIRE GOD’S BLESSINGS...

1. In **Psa 127:1**, the word “house” may refer to the temple, but the context suggests it refers to the home or family
2. A large family is indeed a blessing from God - cf. **Psa 127:3-5**
 - a. Not to imply that a small family or no family is a curse
 - b. For there may be times when it is God’s will that one be single or have a small family - cf. **1 Co 7:7,32-35**
3. Yet without God’s involvement, our effort will fail
 - a. It is necessary that we invoke God’s blessings our efforts
 - b. This also involves not putting family over God! - cf. **Mt 10:37; 22:37**

[If we put family before God, then our labor regarding our family will ultimately fail! The principle also applies...]

II. IN OUR SECURITY

A. PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE IS DESIRABLE...

1. Which is why cities had walls, with watchmen standing guard

2. Providing security is part of providing for one's family - cf. **1 Ti 5:8**

B. TRUE SECURITY REQUIRES GOD'S PROTECTION...

1. Unless God is our guard, efforts to protect are vain - **Psa 127:1b**
2. While providing locked doors and security systems, don't leave out God! - cf. **Psa 121:1-8**

[Any labor to provide security without looking to God for help will fail. Solomon then applies the principle...]

III. IN OUR WORK

A. GOD WOULD HAVE US WORK WITH OUR HANDS...

1. To walk properly toward those who are outside - **1 Th 4:11,12**
2. To provide for those less fortunate than us - **Ep 4:28**

B. TRUE SUCCESS REQUIRES GOD'S FAVOR...

1. Despite efforts to work long and hard - **Psa 127:2**
2. Our efforts will be little more than gathering and collecting for others - **Ecc 2:26**
3. We must therefore not put our jobs before God! - cf. **Mt 6:33**

[If we want to succeed in business (where we can enjoy the fruits of our labor), then seek to succeed with God first! Otherwise our labor is in vain. Now let's see how the principle of this Psalm is applied elsewhere...]

IV. IN OUR BATTLES

A. WHEN WAR IS INEVITABLE, VICTORY IS DESIRABLE...

1. Especially when attacked by evil aggressors
2. Governments therefore build armies and weapons to defend themselves

B. VICTORY DOES NOT DEPEND UPON MIGHT ALONE...

1. Preparation alone does not guarantee success in battle - cf. **Pro 21:31**
2. Armies and weapons are not sufficient to ensure victory - cf. **Psa 33:16-17**
3. We must also look to the Lord as our help and our shield - cf. **Psa 33:18-22**

[Many greater nations have fallen in the day of battle because of their arrogance and pride. A nation cannot hope for victory unless God wills it. Now let's apply the principle to more spiritual themes...]

V. IN OUR WORSHIP

A. GOD DESIRES THAT WE WORSHIP HIM...

1. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well - **Jn 4:23**
2. It is our duty that proclaim His praises - cf. **1 Pe 2:9**

B. BUT NOT ALL WORSHIP IS ACCEPTABLE...

1. There is worship that is an abomination - **Pro 15:8**
2. There is vain worship, based on commandments of men - **Mt 15:9**

[Such worship is labor that fails to please God. Finally, consider the principle as it applies...]

VI. IN OUR CONGREGATION

A. WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO LABOR FOR THE LORD...

1. A labor that is not in vain - **1 Co 15:58**
2. A labor that God will not forget - **He 6:10**

B. SUCCESS DOES NOT COME FROM LABOR ALONE...

1. God is the one who gives the increase - **1 Co 3:6-7**
2. He is the source of any sufficiency that we may have - cf. **2 Co 3:5**
3. While we work as though it depends on us, we must pray as though it depends on God (for it does!)

CONCLUSION

1. Whatever our endeavor (labor), it will fail unless God is involved...
 - a. Will we look to God to build our families?
 - b. Will we look to God to deliver us from evil?
 - c. Will we look to God to bless our work?
 - d. Will we look to God as our shield and protector?
 - e. Will we look to God to guide our worship of Him?
 - f. Will we look to God to give us the increase in His Vineyard, the church?
2. Remember the words of Solomon...
 - a. "Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it;"
 - b. "Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain."
 - c. "It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep."

To ensure that our labor not be in vain, this prayer by Moses should be our attitude:

"And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands." - Psa 90:17

Are you looking to God to establish you in all your labors...?

The Price And Prevention Of Adultery

Proverbs 5:1-23

INTRODUCTION

1. Occasionally I hear very disturbing news: **someone I know has committed adultery...**
 - a. Who I thought was devoted to their spouse and their Lord
 - b. In some cases, it is a preacher, elder, deacon, or Bible class teacher
 - c. Sometimes leaving spouse and children to live with their adulterous partner
2. My reaction is usually, **“What are they thinking...?”**
 - a. How can they do such a thing to their spouse and children?
 - b. How can they turn their back on the Lord who died for them?
 - c. Do they not know the terrible consequences of adultery?
3. Though not a pleasant subject, it is necessary to be frequently reminded of...
 - a. The terrible **price** of the sin of adultery
 - b. How one can **prevent** the sin of adultery

[One of the best places to turn to is the book of Proverbs. In **Pro 5:1-6**, we find a warning against the bitter end of adultery (please **read**). Continuing with **Pro 5:7-14** we are told of...]

I. THE PRICE OF ADULTERY

A. IT CAN COST YOUR WEALTH...

1. Solomon pleads with his children to stay away from the immoral woman - **Pro 5:7-8**
 2. His first reason: “Lest you give your honor to others...” - **Pro 5:9a**
 3. He reiterates: “Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, And your labors go to the house of a foreigner.” - **Pro 5:10**
- **Alimony and child support can eat away at your finances**

B. IT CAN COST YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH...

1. Solomon’s second reason: “...and your years to the cruel one.” - **Pro 5:9b**
 2. He adds: “And you mourn at last, when your flesh and body are consumed.” - **Pro 5:11**
 3. Bacterial STDs (e.g., Chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea) are often brought on by immorality;
 4. Viral STDs (e.g., genital herpes, Hepatitis B, AIDS) are incurable
- **Sexually transmitted diseases can eat away at your body**

C. IT CAN COST YOUR MENTAL HEALTH...

1. You will be filled with self-recrimination: “How I hated instruction, and my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!” - **Pro 5:12-13**
 2. You will not forget what your parents, teachers, preachers, and true friends told you
 3. As you recall the violent affects of divorce on your spouse (and on your children who will likely suffer the worst), you will berate your stupidity! - cf. **Mal 2:16**
- **Your conscience can eat away at your peace of mind**

D. IT CAN COST YOUR REPUTATION...

1. As suggested by these words: "I was on the verge of total ruin, in the midst of the assembly and congregation." - **Pro 5:14**
2. People do not take lightly the sin of adultery - cf. **Pro 6:27-35**
3. Can a person be trusted who would lie to their spouse?
-- **Your unfaithfulness can eat away at your reputation**

[Adultery destroys one's wealth, body, soul, and reputation. Forgiveness is possible (**1 Co 6:9-11**), but many affects of adultery continue throughout one's life. Much better for one to take to heart...]

II. THE PREVENTION OF ADULTERY

A. LOVE YOUR SPOUSE...

1. Rejoice with the wife of your youth; be enraptured by her love - **Pro 5:15-19**; cf. **Ecc 9:9**
 - a. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church - **Ep 5:25,28**
 - b. Wives, learn to love your husbands - **Ti 2:3-4**
 2. Why be enraptured by an adulteress (adulterer) and seductress (seducer)? - **Pro 5:20**
 - a. One's true character is revealed by their immorality
 - b. If they commit adultery **with you**, they are likely to commit adultery **against you!**
- **Enraptured love is commanded, which means it can be learned (and relearned)**

B. LOVE YOUR LORD...

1. The Lord is omniscient, and sins will have their effect - **Pro 5:21-23**
 - a. He sees all - **Pro 15:3**
 - b. God will judge fornicators and adulterers - **He 13:4**
 - c. When one sins against the Lord, their sins will be exposed - **Num 32:23**
 2. How much better to love the Lord, and be loyal to Him
 - a. He looks for those loyal to Him - cf. **2 Chr 16:9; Mt 22:37**
 - b. Joseph's devotion to God prevented him from being tempted - cf. **Gen 39:7-10**
 - c. The Lord blessed Joseph because of his faithfulness - cf. **Gen 39:21; 41:50-52**
- **Those who love the Lord foremost, love their spouses forever!**

CONCLUSION

1. The **price of adultery** is terrible...
 - a. Which too many learn by sad experience
 - b. Which all can avoid by heeding God's Word
2. The **prevention of adultery** is possible when our love is in the right place...
 - a. Loving the Lord with all our heart
 - b. Loving our spouses with God's blessing

Do not destroy the lives of so many with misdirected affection...!

Finding Joy In The Vanity Of Life

Ecclesiastes 2:22-24

INTRODUCTION

1. An intriguing book of the Bible is **Ecclesiastes**...
 - a. Attributed by many to Solomon - cf. **Ecc 1:1,12**
 - b. Describing his search for meaning in life - cf. **Ecc 1:13**
2. His search pertains to life “**under the sun**”...
 - a. A phrase used 29 times in 27 verses
 - b. Suggesting a look at life from mostly a worldly point of view - cf. **Ecc 1:3**
3. His message may seem to be rather negative...
 - a. A major theme is **the vanity of life** (vanity used 35 times in 29 verses) - cf. **Ecc 1:2,14**
 - b. Yet he mentions such words as **joy** (3), **enjoy** (3), **enjoyment** (2), **rejoice** (4), **joyfully** (1)

[In fact, this book provides counsel on how to get the most out of life...to find joy in a life that is vanity! (cf. **Ecc 2:22-24**) To find such joy, one must first face the reality of...]

I. THE VANITY OF LIFE

A. THE PREACHER’S EXPERIENCE...

- a. The vanity of pleasure - **Ecc 2:1**
- b. The vanity of industry (labor) - **Ecc 2:11,22-23; 4:4**
- c. The vanity of human wisdom - **Ecc 2:15**
- d. The vanity of all life - **Ecc 2:17**
- e. The vanity of leaving an inheritance - **Ecc 2:18-21**

B. THE PREACHER’S OBSERVATIONS...

- a. The vanity of earthly existence - **Ecc 3:19-21**
- b. The vanity of acquiring riches over family - **Ecc 4:7-8**
- c. The vanity of political popularity - **Ecc 4:16**
- d. The vanity of many dreams and many words - **Ecc 5:7**
- e. The vanity of loving abundance - **Ecc 5:10**
- f. The vanity of wealth without the gift of God to enjoy it - **Ecc 6:2**
- g. The vanity of wandering desire - **Ecc 6:9**
- h. The vanity of foolish laughter - **Ecc 7:6**
- i. The vanity of injustice in this life - **Ecc 8:14**
- j. The vanity of the days of darkness - **Ecc 11:8**
- k. The vanity of childhood and youth - **Ecc 11:10**

C. THE PREACHER’S CONCLUSION...

1. As stated in the Prologue - **Ecc 1:2**
2. Prior to describing his search for meaning - **Ecc 1:14**

[Many people have come to the same conclusion and fallen into despair and despondency. Yet the Preacher would have us learn and know how to find true joy in life...]

II. THE JOY IN LIFE

A. THE PREACHER'S EXPERIENCE...

1. His heart rejoiced in labor - **Ecc 2:10**
2. The reward of his labor was the joy in doing it - **Ecc 2:10**

B. THE PREACHER'S OBSERVATIONS...

1. Nothing is better than to enjoy simple things and what you do - **Ecc 2:24**
2. The ability to enjoy what you have and what you do comes from God - **Ecc 2:24-25**
3. God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to the man good in His sight - **Ecc 2:26**
4. The wicked may acquire many things, but it will eventually be given to the good - **Ecc 2:26**
5. Man should rejoice and do good - **Ecc 3:12**
6. Every man should enjoy the good in their labor, which is a gift from God - **Ecc 3:13**
7. The joy in one's work is his heritage, not what may happen after he is gone - **Ecc 3:22**
8. Again, this is one's heritage, and it is a gift from God - **Ecc 5:18-20**
9. So in the day of prosperity rejoice, and in the day of adversity contemplate - **Ecc 7:14**
10. Thus he commends enjoyment of the fruit of one's labor - **Ecc 8:15**

C. THE PREACHER'S CONCLUSION...

1. Eat and drink with a merry heart - **Ecc 9:7**
2. Express your joy in how you live - **Ecc 9:8**
3. Live joyfully with your wife whom you love - **Ecc 9:9**
4. Enjoy your youth, yet remember you will be accountable - **Ecc 11:9**
5. Therefore remove sorrow and put away evil, for youth is short-lived - **Ecc 11:10**
6. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth - **Ecc 12:1**
7. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is your reason for living - **Ecc 12:13**

CONCLUSION

1. Life "under the sun" is vanity...
 - a. Without God, there is no meaning in life
 - b. Without God, you will not be able to truly enjoy your time on earth
2. Life "under the sun" can be filled with joyful experiences and joyful memories...
 - a. With God to guide us in keeping our priorities in life straight
 - b. With God to bless us with the wisdom and ability to enjoy what good there is in life

To find joy in the vanity of life, remember your Creator, fear God, and keep His commandments. Today, that especially means to pay heed to His Son and our Savior... - cf. **He 1:1-4**

Remember God In The Days Of Your Youth

Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1

INTRODUCTION

1. In Ecclesiastes we find the perspective of one who searched for the meaning of life...
 - a. The "Preacher" (Solomon) examined wisdom, riches, and pleasure
 - b. He shared the fruits of his search: what he saw as vanity, and what was good
2. To those who are young, he offered the following exhortations...
 - a. **Rejoice** in your youth - **Ecc 11:9**
 - b. **Remove** sorrow and evil from your youth - **Ecc 11:10**
 - c. **Remember** God in your youth - **Ecc 12:1**
 - d. **Reflect** upon what is coming - **Ecc 12:1**
3. I doubt that many young people would take issue with the first exhortation...
 - a. They gladly rejoice in their youth
 - b. They are happy to let their hearts cheer them, to walk in the ways of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes
4. But the remaining exhortations...?
 - a. To remove sorrow and evil, remember God, reflect upon what is to come?
 - b. Doesn't that take the joy out of youth?

[Not really, and there are several good reasons why we need to “**Remember God In The Days Of Your Youth**”...]

I. YOUTH HAS NO GUARANTEE OF THE FUTURE

A. DEATH IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS...

1. Death frequently strikes those who believe they are invincible
 - a. Accidents
 - b. Disease
 - c. War
 2. In the course of my youth, I saw it happen time and again
 - a. Terry King (17) died of liver cancer
 - b. Tim Heffer (15) dropped dead of a heart attack
 - c. Karen Shower's college roommate did not wake up one morning; her bodily functions simply stopped!
 - d. Two college classmates (20) were killed in car wrecks
 3. Not to be morbid, nor to scare, but to face reality
 - a. No one is promised the future
 - b. Life is truly just a vapor - **Ja 4:14-17**
- **As a recent bumper sticker put it: “Many who plan to repent at the 11th hour, die at 10:30”**

B. THE LORD IS COMING...

1. He is coming in judgment - **2 Pe 3:7,9-11; 2 Th 1:7-9**
2. There will be youths at that time
 - a. Who will not have the benefit of a long life
 - b. Who will not have the time to change
- **Therefore, we ought to prepare for the future (which is a sign of maturity)**

[Even if one is blessed to live a long life, with plenty of time to change, there is another reason to **“Remember God In The Days Of Your Youth”...**]

II. MISSPENT YOUTH CAN CURSE YOUR FUTURE

A. YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW...

1. An important principle of life to remember - **Ga 6:7-8**
2. What you do while young can permanently affect your future
3. Not just your future in eternity, but your future in this life!

B. THE DANGER OF SOWING “WILD OATS”...

1. Sowing the seeds of **rebellion**
 - a. Young people are often inclined to rebel against all forms of authority (parents, teachers, police, etc.)
 - b. Yet God has ordained that we submit to authority - **Ro 13:1-2; 1 Pe 2:13-14**
 - c. Rebellion against authority has caused many young people to spend years in prison
2. Sowing the seeds of **lying**
 - a. Many young people think nothing of lying
 - b. Once you are caught in a lie, your credibility is shattered
 - c. Your word means nothing, you can no longer be trusted
 - d. This has adverse affects on your relationships and your employment
3. Sowing the seeds of **stealing**
 - a. Shoplifting and other such crimes are rampant among many young people
 - b. If caught, others will be suspicious and you will not be given positions of fiscal responsibility
4. Sowing the seeds of **fornication**
 - a. Sex among young people is very popular
 - b. Yet many do not consider the "high price":
 - 1) Sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis, AIDS
 - 2) Unwanted pregnancy (often compounded by abortion)
 - 3) Forced marriages, which often lead to divorce
5. Sowing the seeds of **drugs**
 - a. Drugs have great potential for ruining our lives
 - b. What so bad about drugs?
 - 1) Some are illegal, and their use violates **Ro 13:1**
 - 2) Many are addictive, and their use violates **1 Co 6:12**
 - 3) Others are destructive to the body, and their use violates **1 Co 6:19-20**

[It has been said that “Most men spend the first half of their lives making the second half miserable.” (La Bruyere) That is why you need to **“Remember God In The Days Of Your Youth.”** When you do, then the following can be true...]

III. WELL SPENT YOUTH CAN BLESS YOUR FUTURE

A. COMPARE THE FOOLISH AND WISE CHILD...

1. The foolish child

- a. Doesn't remember God in his youth
- b. Won't listen to the advice of others
- c. Has to learn for himself
- d. Invariably makes a mess out of his life (in health, marriage, or career)
- e. Spends good portion of life undoing foolish actions of youth
- f. Suffers from the consequences of his actions

2. The wise child

- a. Remembers God in his youth
- b. Follows God's advice, and that of others
- c. Learns from the mistakes of others
- d. Begins life with a solid foundation and good head start
- e. Able to accomplish more good in life
- f. Will enjoy pleasurable memories, not bemoan his past

-- **What a difference in the quality of life there can be when one makes the right choices while young!**

B. THE WISE CHILD WILL SHOW HIS WISDOM...

- 1. By learning to respect authority now (beginning with parents) - **Ep 6:1-3**
- 2. By learning to control your body (as did Paul) - **1 Co 9:27**
- 3. By obeying the gospel - **Ga 3:26-27**
- 4. By growing spiritually, bearing the fruit of the Spirit - **Ga 5:22-24**
- 5. Thus becoming an example of the believers - **1 Ti 4:12**
- **This is what is involved in remembering God while young**

CONCLUSION

- 1. No one can be "forced" to remember God in their youth...
 - a. We can only point out the dangers when one does not
 - b. We can remind you of the benefits when one does
 - **I hope this lesson will encourage the young person to make the right choice**
- 2. But one thing is certain: **God will remember...!**
 - a. God will bring you into judgment for all that you do - **Ecc 11:9**
 - b. Which is why one should "Fear God and keep His commandments" - **Ecc 12:13-14**

You only live once...will you make the right choice to "**Remember God In The Days Of Your Youth**"?

The Stability Of Your Times

Isaiah 33:5-6

INTRODUCTION

1. In the days of Isaiah (ca. 700 B.C.), the kingdom of Judah was facing perilous times...
 - a. Assyria was advancing from the north, conquering kingdom after kingdom
 - b. Even the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity
2. As Assyria drew near to Jerusalem, the people were undecided as to where to turn...
 - a. Some advocated they give themselves up to the Assyrians
 - b. Others looked to the south, believing an alliance with Egypt would save them
3. Isaiah was sent by God to warn the people to do neither...
 - a. The key to their salvation was to trust in the Lord, not men
 - b. The Lord would provide the stability they needed, when all seemed lost
4. In **Isa 33:5-6** we find one such exhortation to put their trust in the Lord...
 - a. The NKJV speaks of wisdom and knowledge as “the stability of your times”; of course it is the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord spoken of here
 - b. Note other translations:
 - 1) “He shall be the stability of your times” (NASB)
 - 2) “He shall be the sure foundation of your times” (NIV)
5. Though removed from the days of Isaiah by thousands of years...
 - a. The counsel given by him still rings true!
 - b. In troubled times, the Lord provides “the stability of your times”!

[To illustrate how this is true even today, let’s begin by noticing the unstable condition of our times and the effect such instability can have on people...]

I. THE UNSTABLE CONDITIONS OF TODAY

A. WE FACE MANY DISTURBING THINGS IN LIFE...

1. Many are common in every age - cf. **Job 14:1**
 - a. Sickness
 - b. Death
 - c. Natural disasters
2. Some may be peculiar to our day and age
 - a. Threat of nuclear holocaust, environmental pollution
 - b. Inflation, recession, unemployment
 - c. AIDS, cancer, heart disease
 - d. Road rage, drive-by shootings

B. THE AFFECT SUCH THINGS CAN HAVE...

1. For some, there is anxiety and fear
2. Others react with depression (our age has been called the “age of anxiety” and the “age of

- the neurosis”)
3. Even Christians can be affected
 - a. They may murmur or complain
 - b. They may simply exist in a state of “joylessness”

C. YET SOME ARE NOT DISTURBED BY SUCH THINGS...

1. Even though they experience the same things which devastate others
 2. The same financial crises, diseases, uncertainties, etc.
- Somehow they still find cause for great joy and stability in their lives!

[Why the different reaction? Is there some source of strength that some have found that others have not? I believe there is; it is the LORD who provides stability for troubled times! From our text (**Isa 33:6**) we learn how the Lord provides stability...]

II. THE STABILITY PROVIDED BY THE LORD

A. COMES THROUGH WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE...

1. “Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times” (NKJV)
 2. Such wisdom and knowledge can help us face **life**
 - a. By guiding and protecting one from the pitfalls of life - **Pro 2:6-22**
 - b. By providing comfort and confidence in times of turmoil - **Pro 3:21-26**
- **God is willing to provide such wisdom to those willing to look to Him! - Ja 1:5-8**

B. COMES THROUGH SALVATION...

1. “the strength of salvation” (NKJV)
2. The salvation of the Lord can help us face **death**
 - a. If we know the Lord will save us in eternity, we can better face the adverse circumstances of this life
 - b. Consider the example of Paul:
 - 1) He had a strong hope - cf. **2 Co 5:1,5-8**
 - 2) His attitude as a result of that hope - cf. **2 Co 4:16-18; Ro 8:31-39**

[Yes, the wisdom, knowledge, and salvation found only in the Lord provides the stability we need for our times! **Wisdom** and **knowledge** providing stability in facing life, **salvation** providing stability to face death. Together they provide great “wealth” (NASB), a “rich store” (NIV). But what is the key to this treasure of wisdom, knowledge and salvation from the Lord which is “the stability of your times”? In our text (**Isa 33:6**) we find...]

III. THE KEY TO THIS STABILITY

A. IT IS “THE FEAR OF THE LORD”...

1. Note the NIV: “the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure”
2. As noted elsewhere, the fear of the Lord is essential:
 - a. To having wisdom and knowledge
 - 1) It is “the beginning of knowledge” - **Pro 1:7**
 - 2) It is “the beginning of wisdom” - **Pro 9:10**
 - b. To receiving salvation
 - 1) It is necessary to be accepted by God - **Ac 10:34-35**
 - 2) The message of salvation is given to those who have it - **Ac 13:26**

3) It is necessary for spiritual growth - **Ph 2:12**

B. WHY THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS NECESSARY...

1. "...by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil" - **Pro 16:6**
 - a. A reverence for God and His righteous judgments is an effective motivation
 - b. By departing from evil, we turn to God!
2. "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence...a place of refuge" - **Pro 14:26**
 - a. When we turn to God, the fear of the Lord becomes a source of great blessings!
 - b. Such as wisdom, knowledge, salvation, confidence, refuge; indeed "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life"! - **Pro 14:27**

CONCLUSION

1. The essence of our study is this...
 - a. Those who lack stability in troubled times do so because they lack the wisdom, knowledge, and salvation of the Lord
 - b. They lack these things because they do not have the fear of the Lord!
2. A proper fear of the Lord would prompt them to turn from evil and turn to God...
 - a. Where they would find His knowledge, wisdom, and salvation
 - b. Which in turn would provide "**The Stability Of Your Times**"!
3. With such stability, we can rightly say along with the writer to the Hebrews:

"The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (He 13:6)

Won't you let the Lord provide you with the stability you need for these troubled times?

God has not promised,
Skies always blue
Flower-strewn pathways,
All our lives through;

But God has promised,
Strength for the day,
Rest for the labor,
Light for the way;

God has not promised,
Sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow,
Peace without pain.

Yes, God has promised,
Grace for the trials,
Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

-- Annie Johnson Flint

Two Great Evils

Jeremiah 2:13

INTRODUCTION

1. About 600 years before Christ, the nation of Judah was facing difficult times...
 - a. The northern kingdom of Israel was history, taken into Assyrian captivity
 - b. **Manasseh** and his son **Amnon**, very wicked kings, had led the nation into idolatry
 - c. Young **Josiah**, son and grandson of such kings, struggled to do what was right

2. In the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, God called a young priest to be His prophet...
 - a. His name was **Jeremiah** - **Jer 1:1-2,4-5**
 - b. A young man himself (about 20), he was hesitant to speak - **Jer 1:6**
 - c. God did not accept his youth as an excuse - **Jer 1:7-8**

3. In his first assignment as God's prophet, Jeremiah was sent with a message to...
 - a. Jerusalem, recalling their past faithfulness - **Jer 2:1-3**
 - b. The house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel, bemoaning their apostasy into idolatry - **Jer 2:4-11**

4. Calling for the heavens to look on in astonishment and great fear, as God accused His people of committing two great evils... - **Jer 2:12-13**
 - a. **Forsaking their God, the fountain of living waters**
 - 1) "living water" was used to denote springs, fountains, running streams
 - 2) As opposed to stale and stagnant water
 - b. **Hewing for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water**
 - 1) Cisterns were tanks for rain water, hewn (cut) out of stone
 - 2) At best, they could only offer stagnant water
 - 3) Broken with cracks, they could not even retain water

[Could we be guilty of similar evils today? To God's dismay and our own peril, very much so! To see how, let's examine closer the "Two Great Evils" spoken of in **Jer 2:13...**]

I. FORSAKING THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS

A. ISRAEL FORSOOK HER FOUNTAIN...

1. God was Israel's fountain of living waters
 - a. Who delivered her from Egyptian bondage - **Jer 2:6**
 - b. Who led her through the wilderness wanderings - **Jer 2:6**
 - c. Who brought her into the land of milk and honey - **Jer 2:7**
 2. Israel forgot her God
 - a. Beginning with her own priests and rulers - **Jer 2:8**
 - b. From one generation to the next - **Jer 2:9**
 - c. Unlike other nations that were true to their gods - **Jer 2:10-11a**
- **Israel had changed their Glory (God) into that which did not profit! - Jer 2:11b**

B. DARE WE FORSAKE OUR FOUNTAIN...?

1. We have our fountain of living waters
 - a. Of which Jesus promised during His ministry
 - 1) To the Samaritan woman - **Jn 4:13-14**
 - 2) To all who believe in Him - **Jn 7:37-39**
 - c. Of which Jesus later revealed to the apostle John
 - 1) Regarding our state between death and the resurrection - **Re 7:13-17**
 - 2) Regarding our eternal destiny in the New Jerusalem - **Re 22:1**
2. Dare we forget our God?
 - a. Who through Jesus and His Spirit offers to us **in this life**:
 - 1) A fountain springing up into everlasting life? - **Jn 4:14**
 - 2) Rivers of living water flowing from our hearts? - **Jn 7:38**
 - b. Who through Jesus and His Spirit promises to us **after this life**:
 - 1) To lead us to living fountains of water? - **Re 7:17**
 - 2) A pure river of water of life, proceeding from the throne of God? - **Re 22:1**

-- **We face a very real possibility of departing from the living God! - He 3:12-14**

[Forsaking our fountain of living water occurs when we substitute with it “**broken cisterns**” that promise but do not deliver. Consider what Judah had done...]

II. HEWING CISTERNS THAT HOLD NO WATER

A. ISRAEL HAD HER BROKEN CISTERNS...

1. False gods like Baal - **Jer 2:8**
 2. False prophets who spoke in the name of Baal - **Jer 2:8**
 3. False sense of prosperity, of which God forewarned - **Deu 8:11-17**; cf. **Jer 2:6**
- **Israel foolishly left God for what were poor substitutes!**

B. ARE WE HEWING BROKEN CISTERNS...?

1. We can be guilty of going after false gods today - cf. **Ep 5:5**; **Co 3:5**
 - a. Such as materialism and immorality
 - b. Which is a form of idolatry
 2. We can be guilty of heeding false prophets (teachers) - cf. **2 Pe 2:1-3**
 - a. Who lead us into denominationalism or sectarianism
 - b. Contrary to Jesus' prayer and the unity of the Spirit - cf. **Jn 17:20-21**; **Ep 4:3-6**
 - c. Others who offer false hopes: e.g., new agers, false religions, get rich quick schemers
 3. We can be guilty of a false sense of prosperity - cf. **Re 3:17-18**
 - a. Believing we are spiritually secure
 - b. When we are in grave danger of falling - cf. **1 Co 10:12**
- **We can be guilty of leaving God for a poor substitute of true religion!**

CONCLUSION

1. **Adam Clarke**, in his commentary, describes the two evils committed by Israel...
 - a. “First, they forsook God, the Fountain of life, light, prosperity, and happiness.”
 - b. “Secondly, they hewed out broken cisterns; they joined themselves to idols, from whom they could receive neither temporal nor spiritual good! Their conduct was the excess of folly and blindness.”
2. How much more would it be an excess of folly and blindness for us today...

- a. To forsake God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, by neglecting our devotion and obedience to the Word of God!
- b. To spend more time drinking from “broken cisterns” (teachings and traditions of men), than from the fountain of living water (the living Word of God)

May the unfortunate example of Judah serve as a warning as to where get our “water”, and may we ever be open to the wonderful invitation extended at the end of the book of Revelation:

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” (Re 22:17)

Are you drinking from “the water of life”, or from “broken cisterns that can hold no water”...?

Ask For The Old Paths

Jeremiah 6:16

INTRODUCTION

1. The Old Testament is filled with many lessons for the Christians...
 - a. It was written for our learning - **Ro 15:4**
 - b. It was written for our admonition - **1 Co 10:11**
2. One such lesson is that found in the days of Jeremiah...
 - a. A time of religious and social turmoil
 - b. The nation of Israel was being pulled in many directions

[The Lord wanted to offer them rest for their souls (**Jer 6:16**). Using the imagery of travelers who have lost their way, the Lord calls for them to...]

I. ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS

A. THE LORD MAKES HIS PLEA...

1. "Stand in the ways and see" - **Jer 6:16**
 - a. There is not just one path
 - b. There are many directions one might follow
2. "Ask for the old paths" - **Jer 6:16**
 - a. The 'old way' is often the best way
 - b. Such is certainly the case here
3. "Where the good way is" - **Jer 6:16**
 - a. Not all paths lead to the 'good way'
 - b. In this case, the old paths led back to the Law of Moses - cf. **Jer 7:22-24**

B. JESUS MAKES A SIMILAR PLEA TODAY...

1. To strive to enter the right path - **Lk 13:24**
 - a. With a gate that is narrow, and not easily entered
 - b. Where there is only one way to the Father - cf. **Jn 14:6; Ac 4:12**
2. For there are other, broad, ways that one might follow - **Mt 7:13**
 - a. A way that many follow
 - b. A way that leads to destruction
3. Yet the way Jesus offers is a 'good way'
 - a. One that likewise offers rest for our souls - **Mt 11:28**
 - b. In this case, the way leads back to words of Jesus - **Mt 11:29**

[The words of Jesus are relatively "old" by today's standards. What happened to Israel appears to be the case with many today. As described in **Jer 18:15**, they had stumbled...]

II. FROM THE ANCIENT PATHS, TO WALK IN PATHWAYS

A. ISRAEL HAD STUMBLERD...

1. Why? Because they had forgotten God - **Jer 18:15**

2. Though God had revealed Himself and His will long before
3. He had established a “highway” for them to follow
4. Instead, they had turned to many of the side “pathways”

B. GOD’S PEOPLE FACE SIMILAR DANGERS TODAY...

1. Jesus established a “highway” for us to follow
 - a. His words, doctrine, commandments - cf. **Mt 11:29** (‘learn from Me’)
 - b. Communicated through His apostles - cf. **Mt 28:20**
 - c. Aided by the Holy Spirit - **Jn 16:12-13**
 - d. Which the early disciples were careful to follow - **Ac 2:42**
 - e. Which the Christians were commanded to follow - **2 Th 2:15; 3:6**
2. Yet there are man “pathways” that would lead us astray
 - a. Such as doctrines of men - **Mt 15:9**
 - b. Such as philosophies of men - **Co 2:8**

[Often packaged as “new!” and “improved!”, such doctrines and philosophies fail to deliver what only the Lord truly offers (“rest for your souls”). To ensure that we are not led astray, we need to...]

III. SET UP SIGNPOSTS, MAKE LANDMARKS

A. THIS WAS THE SOLUTION FOR ISRAEL...

1. To set up road marks which would direct them back to the right way - **Jer 31:21**
2. For them, these ‘signposts’ and ‘landmarks’ was the Law of Moses
 - a. To which they were not to add or take away - **Deu 4:1-2**
 - b. Which they were to teach every generation - **Deu 4:9**

B. THIS IS THE SOLUTION FOR US TODAY...

1. To set up road marks which lead us to the right way
2. For us, these ‘signposts’ and ‘landmarks’ are found in:
 - a. The apostles’ doctrine, received as God’s Word - **Ac 2:42; 1 Co 14:37; 1 Th 2:13**
 - b. For they contain the doctrine of Christ, without which we cannot have God - **2 Jn 9**

CONCLUSION

1. Do you desire to have rest for your soul...?
 - a. Freedom from sin, freedom from guilt?
 - b. With inner peace and tranquility in the midst of outward turmoil?
2. The path to such rest is an old path...
 - a. Found only in Him who lived and died for our sins nearly 2000 years ago
 - b. Whose doctrine has been faithfully preserved by His apostles in the New Testament

If you are stumbling around in life, then “ask for the old paths” that will lead you back to God...!

Remember Shiloh!

Jeremiah 7:1-15

INTRODUCTION

1. In the days of Jeremiah (ca. 600 B.C.), the people of Judah faced difficult times...
 - a. The northern kingdom of Israel was history, taken into Assyrian captivity
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had defeated Assyria, and was making his way into Judah
2. The people of Judah had developed a false trust...
 - a. One condemned by the Lord through His prophet Jeremiah
 - b. One which we do well to remember and avoid today

[We read of that false trust and how the LORD responded to it in **Jer 7:1-15...**]

I. THE FALSE TRUST OF JUDAH

A. TRUSTING IN THE TEMPLE...

1. To excuse their failure to fully serve the Lord - **Jer 7:1-7**
 - a. Jeremiah commission to preach in the temple - **Jer 7:1-2**
 - b. Calling for repentance when the city was in danger of being destroyed by Babylonian forces - **Jer 7:3**
 - c. Their trust was in the fact the temple was in Jerusalem
 - 1) Their attitude: “We are safe; surely the Lord will not allow His temple to be destroyed!”
 - 2) As implied by the threefold statement “The temple of the Lord...!” - **Jer 7:4**
 - d. The Lord required more than rituals involving temple worship and outward piety
 - 1) Repentance and service was to be done “thoroughly” (truly, NASB) - **Jer 7:5a**
 - 2) Affecting their individual and daily dealings with people - **Jer 7:5b-6**
 - e. Such true service would spare them from Babylonian captivity - **Jer 7:7**
2. To excuse their obvious sins - **Jer 7:8-11**
 - a. Again, theirs was a false trust - **Jer 7:8**
 - b. Blatantly transgressing the Law - **Jer 7:9**
 - c. Then going to the temple, believing that such excused their conduct - **Jer 7:10**
 - d. Yet the Lord could see through their hypocrisy - **Jer 7:11**

B. THE LORD’S RESPONSE...

1. To the folly of such a false trust: “**Remember Shiloh!**” - **Jer 7:12**
 - a. Where the tabernacle had once been - **Josh 18:1**
 - b. Where the ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines - **1 Sam 4:10-11**
2. God would do likewise with Jerusalem and the temple - **Jer 7:13-15**
 - a. Because of their failure to heed His prophets - **Jer 7:13**
 - b. What happened at Shiloh would happen at Jerusalem - **Jer 7:14**
 - c. They would be taken into captivity, just like Ephraim (Israel) - **Jer 7:15; cf. 52:12-30**

[In **1 Co 10:11-12**, we're told that God's dealings with Israel were written for our admonition. With the very real danger of falling, what application can we draw from our text in Jeremiah? Perhaps one about...]

II. THE FALSE TRUST OF CHRISTIANS

A. TRUSTING IN THE CHURCH...

1. Could we have a false trust as "members" of the church which Christ built?
 - a. Like the Jews who cried "The Temple of the Lord..."
 - b. There may be those who cry "The Church of Christ..."
2. Acting (and perhaps believing) that membership excuses:
 - a. Negligence and inactive service?
 - 1) With an attitude based on faulty reasoning?
 - a) E.g., The church will be saved, I am a "member", so I will be saved
 - b) E.g., As long as I am a "member", I can get by
 - 2) Yet remember the parable of the tares - **Mt 13:41-43**
 - a) One may be in the kingdom (church) now
 - b) But cast out of the kingdom (church) at the last day
 - 3) Salvation is dependent on individual allegiance, not group association! - **Jn 15:2**
 - b. Sinful actions?
 - 1) Like the Jews who disobeyed God, then claimed exemption?
 - a) E.g., living in the world, then going to "church"?
 - b) E.g., engaging in immorality, worldliness, but being a "faithful member"?
 - 2) God has not changed!
 - a) His grace demands holy living - **Ti 2:11-12**
 - b) Despise His grace, expect His wrath! - cf. **He 10:26-31**
 - 3) Salvation is dependent upon God's grace, not church ritual!

B. THE LORD'S RESPONSE...

1. To the folly of such a false trust: **"Remember Sardis!"** - **Re 3:1-6**
 - a. They had "a living name", but that did not free them from the threat of condemnation - **Re 3:1-3**
 - b. As always, salvation was based on individual consecration - **Re 3:4-6**
2. To the folly of such a false trust: **"Remember Laodicea!"** - **Re 3:14-22**
 - a. They had become "lukewarm" - **Re 3:14-15**
 - b. They were in danger of expulsion because of worldliness - **Re 3:16-17**
 - c. They were in need of rebuke and chastening - **Re 3:18-22**

CONCLUSION

1. Like the Jews whose salvation from destruction depended upon wholehearted service to God, so our salvation depends on complete and faithful obedience to the will of Christ!
2. We must avoid the fallacy of "virtue by association", and remember that God has promised to do to us just as He did to Israel if we are not faithful - cf. **Ro 11:20-22**

Dare To Be A Daniel

Daniel 1:8-21; 6:1-10

INTRODUCTION

1. The Bible is filled with accounts of many godly men and women who are worthy of our emulation
2. One such person is Daniel, a man who obtained preeminence and power in his lifetime:
 - a. He started out preeminent among the children of Israel - **Dan 1:3-6**
 - b. He gained preeminence among the wise of men of Babylon - **Dan 1:17-20**
 - c. He was given power over all of Babylon - **Dan 2:48-49; 5:29**
 - d. He received similar power over the Medo-Persian empire - **Dan 6:1-3,28**
3. How was Daniel able to reach these positions of power and influence without compromising his position as a godly man?
4. A close look at the book of Daniel reveals his secret, and shows how we too can be successful without selling our souls

[First, we notice that even as a young teen-ager...]

I. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PURPOSE

A. “DANIEL PURPOSED IN HIS HEART...” - Dan 1:8

1. A young boy in a strange land, Daniel was immediately faced with a challenge to violate God’s law by eating the king’s food
2. Despite his youth and the obvious pressures to conform, Daniel “purposed in his heart” to uphold the law of God, no matter the cost
3. Because of his willingness to put God first, God granted Daniel favor in the sight of others - **Dan 1:9**
 - a. How God did this is not explained, but it happened in the case of Joseph also - cf. **Gen 39:1-4; 21-23**
 - b. By putting God first, God blessed Joseph in such a way that favorably impressed others

B. EVERY CHILD OF GOD NEEDS TO BE A PERSON OF PURPOSE...

1. No one respects a “wishy-washy” person, someone with no direction in their lives
2. Whereas a strong sense of purpose often breeds respect and admiration in others
3. What should be the “purpose” of the Christian?
 - a. Jesus makes it clear in **Mt 6:33**
 - b. I.e., to seek the will of God and fulfill it in our lives, no matter the circumstances
4. As Jesus promised, this will guarantee God’s favor toward us and in turn likely gain us favor in the eyes of those around us

[Will you “**dare to be a Daniel**” and be a person with a purpose like he had? No matter how young one may be, it is never too early to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”! Throughout his life, Daniel not only had a strong sense of purpose, but...]

II. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

A. HE REFUSED TO COMPROMISE HIS CONVICTIONS...

1. As a young man, by refusing to eat the king's meat or drink his wine - **Dan 1:8**
2. As an old man, by refusing the gifts of Belshazzar - **Dan 5:13-17**
3. Under the threat of persecution, by refusing to obey the decree of Darius - **Dan 6:10**

B. PEOPLE ADMIRE PERSONS OF PRINCIPLE...

1. Outwardly they may ridicule them, but inwardly they wish they had the same intestinal fortitude
2. And when they need someone that can be trusted, and depended upon to carry through with an assigned task, who do you think they will turn to?
3. God also admires individuals who will stand by their principles, and by their words - **Psa 15:1-5**

[Our society is in great need of people with principle. Those who “**Dare To Be A Daniel**”, and demonstrate by example the value of being led by “principle” rather than by “price”, are not only highly valued by God but also by their fellow man. But having purpose and principle is not all...another element for true success is needed. What that element is can be seen when we observe that...]

III. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PURITY

A. HIS OPPONENTS COULD NOT FIND ANY FAULT...

1. He was faultless when it came to management of his business affairs - **Dan 6:1-4**
2. This would help to explain his rise to positions of great responsibility and power
3. Of course, his purity in business affairs was related to...
 - a. His overall purpose to please God first
 - b. And the fact that as a man of principle he could be trusted

B. THE CHRISTIAN IS ALSO TO MAINTAIN PURITY OF CONDUCT

1. Whether young or old - cf. **1 Ti 4:12; Ti 2:6-8**
2. Whether slave or free - cf. **Ti 2:9-10**
3. People who maintain purity in their dealings with others are often given positions of great responsibility and privilege, because they can be trusted to use them wisely

[Yes, Daniel was a man of **purpose**, **principle**, and **purity** (and how the world needs more like him!). But the element that likely tied all these together in such a way to receive blessings from God and favor from man is the fact that...]

IV. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PRAYER

A. A GLIMPSE OF HIS “PRAYER LIFE”... - Dan 6:10

1. He knelt in prayer, a demonstration of his humility
 2. He prayed three times daily, a demonstration of his continual dependence upon God
 3. He gave thanks in the midst of persecution, a demonstration of his gratitude and the fact that he had not lost sight of God's blessings
 4. His prayers were a “custom since early days”, demonstrating his persistence and faithfulness in his service to God
- **Is it not likely that his “custom” to pray so diligently helped him to remain a man of**

purpos

B. CHRISTIANS WOULD DO WELL TO FOLLOW DANIEL’S EXAMPLE...

1. “Let us learn the lesson that the finest of God’s servants must maintain regular and fixed prayer habits in order to continue steadfast in devotion to the Lord.” (**Strauss**)
2. As Christians, we too are to pray often - **1 Th 5:17-18; Co 4:2**
3. If our efforts to live purposeful, principled, and pure lives are not what they should be, could an undisciplined “prayer life” be the reason?
3. Are we willing to **“Dare To Be A Daniel”** in regards to prayer?

CONCLUSION

1. There is a false assumption that to “get ahead” in this world one must conform to the sinful practices of the world
2. But even today there are many Christians who demonstrate that when one “dares to be a Daniel” they can succeed in the affairs of men without selling their souls to the world
3. How about you? Will you **“Dare To Be A Daniel”** by becoming a person of...
 - a. **Purpose?**
 - b. **Principle?**
 - c. **Purity?**
 - d. **Prayer?**

A Famine For The Word

Amos 8:11-14

INTRODUCTION

1. About 750 B.C., an obscure farmer and shepherd was called by God to be a prophet...
 - a. The man's name was **Amos**
 - b. His mission: to warn Israel of God's coming judgment if they did not repent!

2. Sadly, the nation did not heed the call to repent...
 - a. As a result, they were led into Assyrian captivity
 - b. Part of Amos' prophecy that was fulfilled concerned an unusual famine that would come upon the people: **A Famine For The Word Of God!** - cf. **Amo 8:11-14**

3. Today, there is also a famine for the Word of God...
 - a. Different in some ways
 - b. Yet similar in other ways, and producing similar results!

[In our study today, we will compare the present-day famine with the one foretold by Amos...]

I. THE PRESENT DAY FAMINE

A. HOW IT IS DIFFERENT...

1. The present famine for the Word of God was not sent by God
2. On the contrary, it is evident God has provided for a "feast", not a "famine"!
 - a. We enjoy an abundance of Bibles
 - b. Never before in the history of mankind has the world enjoyed such free access to
3. Indeed, today's famine for the Word of God is **self-imposed!**
4. Despite such access to the Bible, the following "**Diary Of The Bible**" illustrates what is often so true:
 - a. January: A busy time for me. Most of the family decided to read me through this year. They
 - b. February: My owner used me for a few minutes last week. He had an argument and was checking references.
 - c. March: Grandpa visited us. He kept me on his lap for an hour, reading 1 Cor 13
 - d. April: I had a busy day. My owner was appointed a leader of something and used me. I got
 - e. May: I have a few grass stains on my pages. Had some early spring flowers pressed in me.
 - f. June: I look like a scrap book. They have stuffed me full of clippings. One of the girls got
 - g. July: They put me in a suitcase today. I guess we're off on a vacation. I wish I could stay
 - h. August: Still in the suitcase.
 - i. September: Back home again, and in my old place. I have lots of company. Two "True Stories"
 - j. October: They used me a little today. One of them is sick. Right now I'm all shined up and in
 - k. November: Back in my old place.
 - l. December: They are getting ready for Christmas. I'll be covered under wrapping papers and packages.

[Why is there this present-day famine for the Word of God? The answer may be found as we compare this famine with the one foretold by Amos and notice...]

B. HOW IT IS SIMILAR...

1. The present famine is **the result of similar causes**
 - a. E.g., material luxury
 - 1) In Amos' day, this became the cause of pride which God hated - **Amo 6:1-8**
 - a) Their luxury prompted them to "put far off the day of doom" in their minds (i.e., they did not want to think about the future)
 - b) God had warned Israel that it might cause some to forget God - **Deu 8:11-14, 17**
 - 2) Likewise, Jesus warned that riches could choke those who had received the Word - cf. **Lk 8:14**
 - a) Today, many in their search for wealth forget about God
 - b) Others have so filled their time enjoying their luxuries, they have no time for the Word of God
 - b. E.g., moral corruption
 - 1) Consider how corrupt the people had become in the days of Amos - **Amo 2:6-7**
 - 2) Who can deny that immorality is having its effect on the church today?
 - a) The world's standards often become the standards of those in the church
 - b) When this happens, people will not want to feed upon the Word of God
 - 1/ If they did, it would make them very uncomfortable
 - 2/ Because of its ability to reveal our true selves - cf. **He 4:12-13**
 - c. E.g., religious corruption
 - 1) The people of Israel couldn't wait for religious days to be over - **Amo 8:4-10**
 - 2) Today, many people can't wait for services to be over so they can work or play
 - a) If they are unwilling to spend time in sincere worship...
 - b) ...it is easy to see why they won't take time to feed daily on God's word!
2. The present famine also **produces similar results!**
 - a. Amos described a sad picture in **Am 8:13-14**
 - 1) Young people fainting from "thirst"
 - 2) Others falling and not rising again
 - b. Doesn't this describe the daily lives of many Christians today?
 - 1) Suffering from a lack of "spiritual food"...
 - a) They are easily overcome by temptation!
 - b) Even the common trials of life overwhelm them!
 - 2) This may help us understand why...
 - a) Some new Christians fall away
 - b) Young people often lose interest
 - c) The behavior of some elders, preachers, and teachers is what it is!
 - c. There are two things that are necessary to resist trials and temptations...
 - 1) **Faith in God:** believing that He will provide a way of escape - **1 Co 10:13**
 - 2) **Fear of God:** awesome reverence that motivates us to turn from evil - **Pro 16:6**

-- The Word of God is designed to impart both! - **Ro 10:17; Deu 17:18-19; 31:10-13**

[The condition of many churches today is one of "spiritual malnutrition"! Influenced by materialism, immorality, and a lack of true spirituality, by **choice** many people have imposed a famine on themselves for the Word of God! This helps to explain the discouragement and defeat in the lives of so many Christians today! What can be done about it? How can we end this self-imposed famine for the Word of God?]

II. ENDING THE FAMINE

A. FIRST, WE MUST APPRECIATE THE POWER OF GOD’S WORD...

1. It possesses the power of **creation**
 - a. Demonstrated with the creation of the physical realm - **He 11:3; Gen 1:3**
 - b. It has similar power in the spiritual realm, producing true regeneration! - **Jn 6:63; 1 Pe 1:23; Ja 1:18**
 2. It possesses the power of **sanctification**
 - a. As praised by David in his psalm - **Ps 19:7-11**
 - b. As mentioned by Jesus in His prayer - **Jn 17:17**
 3. It possesses the power of **preservation**
 - a. The young are instructed to keep their ways pure by it - **Psa 119:9**
 - b. The elders are exhorted to keep the church pure by it - **Ac 20:28-32**
 - c. A lack of knowledge has always destroyed God’s people - e.g., **Hos 4:6**
 4. It possesses the power of **salvation** and **condemnation**
 - a. It can save our souls when properly received - **Ja 1:21**
 - b. It will be the standard by which we will judged - **Jn 12:48**
- **Should this not motivate us to learn the Word of God? Would it not be foolish to**

B. BUT THEN, WE MUST FEED UPON IT...

1. Like newborn babies longing for their mothers’ milk, so we need to long for the word of God! - **1 Pe 2:2**
2. I contend that nothing less than daily reading of God’s Word is necessary!
 - a. We appreciate the value of daily nourishment for our bodies
 - b. Do our souls deserve any less?
 - 1) They were created in the image of God!
 - 2) They redeemed by the blood of the Lamb!
 - 3) One soul is more valuable than the whole world put together! - **Mt 16:26**
3. A simple practice of **Daily Bible Reading** will go a long way to ending this famine for the Word of God!
 - a. A reasonable goal at first is to read a chapter a day
 - 1) I recommend reading through the New Testament first
 - 2) At the rate of one chapter a day, one will easily read the NT in a year
 - b. Once the habit of daily Bible reading has been established, reading three chapters a day will enable one to read through the entire Bible once a year
 - 1) That is really not too much to do, yet many Christians have never read the Bible through once!
 - 2) It takes the average reader only 20-30 minutes a day
 - 3) The use of some Bible reading chart or checklist may be helpful
4. As you read, make it a time for meditation and prayer
 - a. Meditating upon the Word - cf. **Psa 1:1-3**
 - b. Praying for wisdom and help to obey God’s word - cf. **Psa 119:18,33-37**

CONCLUSION

1. It must have been terrible for the Israelites...
 - a. Taken away as captives to a strange land
 - b. Unable to feed on the wonderful Word of God!
2. But how tragic for those who impose a famine for the Word upon themselves today...!

- a. By their own neglect they languish from spiritual malnutrition
 - b. By their own neglect they remain captives to sin
3. Their tragedy is increased when we realize...
- a. Their neglect is not just one related to the Word of God has it existed in Amos' day
 - b. But they are neglecting the full and final revelation of God's Word given through Jesus and His apostles!
 - By God's grace they have so much more to enjoy, yet they turn aside from this spiritual feast!
4. I challenge everyone to...
- a. Make the commitment not to neglect the all-powerful Word of God!
 - b. Feast daily upon that Word which can save your souls!

As Paul told the Ephesian elders as he bid them farewell:

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” - Ac 20:32

Neither Shall They Learn War Anymore

Micah 4:1-3

INTRODUCTION

1. One of many Messianic prophecies is found in **Mic 4:1-3**, in which we read that...
 - a. The mountain of the Lord's house will be established
 - b. The Word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem
 - **Fulfillment of this wonderful age began with the spread of the gospel and establishment of the Lord's church, or kingdom - cf. Lk 24:44-47; He 12:18-24,28**
2. Those willing to come to the mountain of the Lord's house...
 - a. Will be taught concerning the Lord's ways and walk in His paths - **Mic 4:2**
 - b. Among the things they will learn, is not to use war anymore - **Mic 4:3**
3. While the ancient kingdom of Israel often resorted to war, such would not be the case with the kingdom of the Messiah...
 - a. Its kingdom would be spiritual, not advanced or defended by the use of force - **Jn 18:36**
 - b. Its citizens would learn a new way to respond to evil and handle conflict

[In the words of Micah (and Isaiah, cf. **Isa 2:1-4**), “**Neither Shall They Learn War Anymore.**” In what way do we see this fulfilled? One way is in the teaching of Jesus concerning...]

I. REACTING TO CONFLICT AND EVIL

A. WAYS PEOPLE ARE KNOWN TO REACT...

1. **The Avenger:** retaliates with force with the objective to punish
2. **The Defender:** uses force only for the sake of self-preservation
3. **The Passive Resister:** resists without the use of force, daring the evil person to harm an unarmed person (e.g., Ghandi, Martin Luther King, et al)
4. **The Runner:** flees from abuse, seeking to escape
5. **The Helpless:** unable to flee or defend, passively allows others to mistreat them

B. HOW JESUS TAUGHT US TO REACT...

1. Consider the words of Jesus and His apostles - **Lk 6:27-31; Ro 12:17-21**
2. When we examine these verses carefully, we note the following...
 - a. We are not being taught to:
 - 1) Be a Passive Resister (contrary to Ghandi, King, et al)
 - 2) Be a Runner (though Jesus taught the principle of fleeing elsewhere - cf. **Mt 10:23**)
 - 3) Stand Helpless
 - b. We are being taught to:
 - 1) React to evil in a positive way
 - 2) To overcome evil with good
3. Jesus taught the principle of “responding to active evil will with active good will”
 - a. Someone does us evil, we are to react with good
 - b. Note the examples used by Jesus: when someone...
 - 1) Curses you, bless them

- 2) Spitefully uses you, pray for them
 - 3) Strikes you, offer the other cheek
 - 4) Takes your cloak, give them your tunic
 - 5) Ask for something, give it to them
 - 6) Take something from you, don't ask it back
- **In each case, one reacts to evil with active good will (i.e., love)**

[Thus Jesus teaches us another way to deal with conflict and respond to evil abuse: not by using instruments of war, nor by simply remaining passive or necessarily fleeing, but by reacting to evil with positive expressions of good will towards the offender! Why does Jesus teach us to do this...?]

II. REASONS TO REACT WITH ACTIVE GOOD WILL

A. TO BE DIFFERENT FROM SINNERS... - Lk 6:32-34

1. It is human nature...
 - a. To show good will only to friends
 - b. To react to enemies as:
 - 1) Avenger
 - 2) Defender
 - 3) Passive Resister
 - 4) Runner
 - 5) Helpless
 2. We are called to be partakers of the divine nature - cf. **2 Pe 1:2-4**
 - a. Putting off the old man, with its typical reaction to abuse - **Co 3:5-9**
 - b. Putting on the new man, reacting to abuse in a new way - **Co 3:10-14**
- **As we do so, we become more like Christ, which leads to the second reason...**

B. TO BE LIKE GOD... - Lk 6:35-36

1. God is described as:
 - a. Kind, even to unthankful and evil men - cf. **Ro 5:8**
 - b. Just, as will be manifest one day - cf. **Ro 2:5-6**
2. God expects His spiritual kingdom to demonstrate His mercy
 - a. By proclaiming the gospel of mercy - **1 Pe 2:9-10**
 - b. By demonstrating mercy in our lives - **Lk 6:36**
3. God expects earthly governments to exercise His vengeance
 - a. They are His ministers to which we are to submit - **Ro 13:1-3**
 - b. They are to execute wrath on the evil doer - **Ro 13:4**
4. Unless we are proper representatives of the government, it is not our place to administer justice to evildoers
 - a. We must leave vengeance (justice) to God - **Ro 12:19**
 - b. We must let His governmental agents execute wrath - **Ro 13:4**

-- With the exception of "church discipline" - cf. **1 Co 5:1-13; 2 Th 3:6-15**
5. As "sons of the Highest", our duty is to show mercy, or active good will
 - a. Showing kindness to our enemies - **Ro 12:20**
 - b. Refusing to be overcome by evil (i.e., brought down to their level) - **Ro 12:21**

-- **As we respond to evil with mercy and goodness, we are more likely to obtain our third reason for reacting to evil in this way...**

C. TO OVERCOME EVIL... - Ro 12:21

1. How can we best hope to overcome evil and change the evil person?
 - a. If we react as:
 - 1) Avenger, defender or passive resister
 - 2) We only convince the opposition that might makes right
 - b. If we react as:
 - 1) Runner or helpless
 - 2) We may only confirm the opposition's view that we are cowardly or weak
2. The most likely way to both overcome evil and change the evil person is by reacting with active good will!
 - a. Is this not how God sought to change the world? - **Ro 5:8; Jn 3:16; Ro 2:4**
 - b. Is this not how Jesus sought to change the world? - **1 Pe 2:21-25**
3. Certainly Jesus' example demonstrates a better way to handle conflict and evil...
 - a. His humility and sacrificial love has motivated many to turn from sin
 - b. And we are called to walk in His steps!
4. Those who do often follow Jesus' example make a powerful impact on others:

Kim Joon-gon has seen 2,000 out 20,000 people on Chunnam Island murdered by the Communists. They dragged his family to a spot where 160 people from two villages had gathered to beat the Christians. There Kim's father and wife were beaten to death and Kim was left for dead. When he revived and sought safety at an acquaintance's house, he was turned over to the Communists. Only the sudden appearance of an American ship off the island coast saved him this time, for the Communist soldiers hurried away to battle.

He hid out in the countryside until the South Korean army captured the island. The Communists who had killed his wife and father were arrested. Because it was wartime, the police chief had authority to execute without trial. But as the chief prepared to kill the men, Kim pleaded, 'Spare them. They were forced to kill.'

The police chief showed great surprise. 'It was your family they killed! Why do you now ask for their lives?'

Kim replied quietly, 'Because the Lord, whose I am and whom I serve, would have me show mercy to them.'

The Communists were spared execution because of Kim's plea. News of his action spread among other Communist supporters in the area. When Kim later ascended a mountain to preach to Communists hiding out, he was not killed. Many of the Communists became Christians, and when Kim finally left the island there was a flourishing church of 108 members.

- **Dictionary Of Illustrations, p. 188**

CONCLUSION

1. We may never be called upon to manifest the power of responding to evil with good in such a remarkable way...
 - a. We can begin by how we respond to personal abuses we often receive from others
 - b. We can react to evil treatment even on a small scale with active good will

- 1) Showing that we are different from sinners
 - 2) Demonstrating that we are trying to be sons of the Highest
 - 3) More likely to overcome evil and convert the sinner
2. Reacting to evil with good will does not always convert the evildoer...
- a. Jesus was crucified on the cross, enduring hostility by sinners - **He 12:2-3**
 - b. In such cases we must commit our cause to God, as did Jesus - **1 Pe 2:21-23; 4:19**
3. While physical government may step in and exercise the judgment of God, our duty as citizens of the spiritual kingdom is to show mercy:

“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful”

Whenever we show mercy (or active good will) in response to evil, we fulfill one of the many promises of the Messianic age:

“Neither shall they learn war any more.”

Speaking of mercy, have you accepted the invitation of God to respond to His loving mercy through obedience to the gospel...?

What Does The Lord Require Of You?

Micah 6:6-8

INTRODUCTION

1. The text for our study is **Mic 6:6-8**...
 - a. A passage considered by many to be one of the most comprehensive and all-embracing statements in the Old Testament
 - b. In which Micah raises the question: **“What does the Lord require of you?”**
2. Micah answers his own question, and makes some important points...
 - a. Not only for the sake of Israel of his day
 - b. But for the benefit of the Lord's church today
 - **For as with all of the Old Testament, it was written for our learning - cf. Ro 15:4**

[As we seek to learn from this passage, let's first consider the question...]

I. WHAT DID THE LORD REQUIRE OF ISRAEL?

A. WHAT ISRAEL MAY HAVE THOUGHT...

1. Some possibilities, even some absurdities:
 - a. Year-old calves as burnt offerings?
 - b. Thousands of rams?
 - c. Ten thousands rivers of oil?
 - d. Offering of the firstborn child?
2. Some observations:
 - a. God did indeed speak of some of these things
 - 1) Like the offering calves and rams - cf. **Lev 1:1-13**
 - 2) But the absurd amount of oil and offering of the firstborn are examples of hyperbole for the sake of emphasis
 - b. From the context, it appears ritualistic sacrifices alone did not please God
 - 1) One could not please God by simply offering innumerable sacrifices, even things precious to the worshipper
 - 2) For religious rituals properly ordained of God to be accepted, they must be accompanied by other things just as essential (see below)

B. WHAT GOD REQUIRED OF ISRAEL...

1. **To do justly**
 - a. This means “to act toward God and man according to the divine standard of righteousness revealed in His law.” (**Hailey**)
 - b. This did involve the offering of sacrifices commanded by God
 - c. But it also involved treating their fellow man in a way that was right and fair
 - Failure to do "justly" was one of the main reasons Israel went into captivity - cf. **Zec 7: 8-14; 8:16-17**
2. **To love mercy**
 - a. This means “to show a compassionate warm-heartedness toward man.” (**Hailey**)
 - b. Not only treat others fairly, but to show mercy when mistreated themselves

- One reason they were to love mercy was because God Himself delighted in showing mercy - cf. **Mic 7:18-19**
- 3. **To walk humbly with your God**
 - a. This means living “in humble and submissive obedience to His desire and will.” (**Hailey**)
 - b. It can only happen when we “recognize the absolute holiness and righteousness of God.” (**Hailey**)
 - It is the humble of heart and spirit that greatly pleases God - cf. **Isa 57:15; 66:1-2**

[These three things God required of those who would come before Him. Not instead of the ritual observances, but in conjunction with them (cf. **Mt 23:23**). Now for an application of our text to those who are Christians today...]

II. WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF US?

A. WHAT WE MIGHT THINK...

1. Some might think all the Lord requires is the observance of certain rituals
 - a. Like attending church on Sunday
 - b. As though if one does this, they have done all that is required
 - c. I sometimes wonder if people really believe this
 - 1) That’s the impression one receives by their example
 - 2) That’s the answer often received from some
 2. Certainly attending the services of the church is important
 - a. It is essential to obeying God - **He 10:25**
 - b. It is required if we expect to grow spiritually - cf. **He 10:24-25**
 - c. In fact, I am persuaded that failure to attend every service...
 - 1) Can be displeasing to God - cf. **Ep 5:15-17**
 - a) When absent, are we making the most of our time?
 - b) Do we really believe our absence is the Lord’s will for us?
 - 2) Can explain the lack of several things
 - a) The lack of spiritual growth
 - b) The lack of commitment in the work of the church
 - c) The lack of close fellowship with God and other Christians
- **Yes, I am convinced that it is essential that we observe what “rituals” God has ordained for us; but the Lord requires more than just “attending church”**

B. WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US...

1. **To do justly**
 - a. To act toward God according to His divine law - e.g., **Mt 7:21**
 - b. To act toward man according to His divine law - e.g., **Ep 4:25-29**
2. **To love mercy**
 - a. To show a compassionate warm-heartedness toward man
 - b. Toward widows and the fatherless - **Ja 1:27**
 - c. Even toward our enemies - **Lk 6:35-36**
3. **To walk humbly with our God**
 - a. The only way to enjoy His fellowship and continual cleansing by the blood of Jesus - cf. **Ja 4:8; 1 Jn 1:7-9**
 - b. Such close communion and fellowship with God requires daily...
 - 1) Listening to God - studying His Word to learn His will - **Ja 1:21; 1 Pe 2:2**
 - 2) Talking to God - praying for strength and forgiveness, praising Him for blessings

received - **He 4:14-16; Ph 4:6-7**

3) Walking with God - by doing His will in humble submission - **Ep 5:2,8,15**

-- **By walking humbly with God, we are more likely to keep in proper balance the demands to do justly and love mercy**

CONCLUSION

1. Even though we live under a different covenant, the Lord still requires us...
 - a. To do justly
 - b. To love mercy
 - c. To walk humbly with our God-- **Our “rituals” may be different (with respect to worship), but the basics are still the same!**

2. Are you doing what the Lord requires of you? Consider this...
 - a. Have you done justly (by obeying the gospel of Christ)?
 - b. Do you love mercy (demonstrated by accepting God's mercy offered in Christ)?
 - c. Are you walking humbly with your God (by living a dedicated and obedient Christian life)?-- **If not, then all the church services you may attended, all the sermons you may have heard, all the prayers you may have offered, will benefit you nothing!**

May we in all earnestness do what the Lord requires of us!

Does The Lord's House Lie In Ruins?

Haggai 1:1-15

INTRODUCTION

1. About 600 years before Christ, Judah was taken captive to Babylon...
 - a. Jerusalem with its temple was plundered and burned
 - b. Seventy years later, the Jews were allowed to return
2. It was the Lord's intention that the Jews rebuild the temple...
 - a. He stirred up Cyrus of Persia to let them do this - **Ezr 1:1-5**
 - b. But once the people returned to Jerusalem, other things began to take precedence
3. God then sent **Haggai** to the Jews with a simple message...
 - a. The message was "Build the temple!"
 - b. The message has an application for the church today

[Turning in our Bibles to **Hag 1:1**, let's take a closer look at...]

I. HAGGAI'S MESSAGE TO ISRAEL

A. THE ATTITUDE OF THE JEWS...

1. "The time has not come for the Lord's house to be built" - **Hag 1:2**
2. Their reasoning can be inferred from **Hag 1:3-4**
 - a. They were too busy building their own homes!
 - b. They put building their own homes before the Lord's house!
3. Their attitude is made clear in **Hag 1:9b**
 - a. While the Lord's house lay in ruins...
 - b. ...every one was concerned with their own home!

B. THE MESSAGE OF HAGGAI...

1. "Is it time to dwell in paneled homes while the temple lies in ruins?" - **Hag 1:4**
2. The Lord's challenge: "Consider your ways!" - **Hag 1:5**
 - a. Things had not been going well - **Hag 1:6**
 - b. They should have been building the temple - **Hag 1:7-8**
3. Because they had put building their homes before the Lord's house...
 - a. They prospered little; what little they had the Lord blew away - **Hag 1:9**
 - b. The Lord even called for a drought in judgment upon them - **Hag 1:10-11**

[The preaching of Haggai proved successful; in reverence the people obeyed and completed the construction of the temple (**Hag 1:12-15**). Since this was written for our admonition (**1 Co 10:11**), let's now consider...]

II. HAGGAI'S APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH

A. WE FACE A SIMILAR TASK...

1. Not the building of a physical structure

- a. For God does not dwell in temples made with hands - **Ac 17:24**
- b. The temple of God is now the church - cf. **1 Co 1:2; 3:16-17**
- 2. Though a spiritual structure, God's temple is still undergoing construction
 - a. The foundation is the work of Jesus, apostles and prophets - **Ep 2:19-22**
 - b. It grows as people are converted by the preaching of the gospel - **1 Co 3:5-9**
 - c. It grows internally as those converted do their part - **Ep 4:15-16**
- **So we have a similar task to "Build the temple!" (a never-ending task)**

B. HAGGAI'S MESSAGE IS VERY APPLICABLE...

1. Does the Lord's house lie in ruins, while we run to our own homes?
 - a. The Lord's house (the church) does lie in ruins if we...
 - 1) Allow other things to keep us from doing our part to evangelize the lost
 - 2) Neglect to do our part in edifying the body of Christ
 - b. Whatever our abilities and opportunities, we have a responsibility in the building of the Lord's house today
 - 1) It may involve teaching or serving - **Ro 12:3-8; 1 Pe 4:10-11**
 - 2) It may involve going or sending - **Ro 10:14-15**
 - c. Through exercising our abilities we can build the temple of God today; otherwise the Lord's house will lie in ruins!
2. Is it time to dwell in paneled homes, and let the Lord's house lie in ruin?
 - a. Evidently some think so, if they say: "I will serve the Lord as soon as I..."
 - 1) "...finish my schooling"
 - 2) "...get on top of the responsibilities of my job"
 - 3) "...raise my children"
 - b. In each case, is not the bottom line the same?
 - 1) The Lord's house lies in ruin
 - 2) While we go about our own way with our own lives
 - c. In Haggai's day, it was not time to put other things before the Lord's house; nor is it time to do so today!
 - 1) We must put the kingdom of God first - **Mt 6:33**
 - 2) We must put the Lord first - **Mt 10:37-39**
3. Might we need to "consider our ways"?
 - a. Are things not going the way they should?
 - 1) Perhaps there is a divine reason for the "drought" in our lives?
 - 2) Perhaps the Lord in His providence is telling us something!
 - b. If we will put the Lord and His kingdom (house) first...
 - 1) God will provide our necessities - **Mt 6:31-33**
 - 2) God will multiply our seed for sowing - **2 Co 9:6-11**
 - c. If we neglect the Lord's work...
 - 1) We won't have God's providence helping us
 - 2) We may even experience God's loving discipline - cf. **Hag 1:9-11; 1 Co 11:31-32; He 12:5-11**

CONCLUSION

1. We saw that the Jews took to heart the message of Haggai - **Hag 1:12**
2. What we did not stress was the Lord's response: "I am with you, says the LORD." (**Hag 1:13**)
 - a. The phrase "I am with you" is interesting

- b. It is similar to the promise made by Jesus in the Great Commission - **Mt 28:18-20**
3. Thus we have the assurance that if we observe all that Christ commanded...
- a. He will be with us always
 - b. Even as God was with Israel

Yet this blessed assurance is for those who do not let the Lord's house lie in ruins while they dwell in paneled homes. Are you doing your part to build the Lord's house?

Sins Of God's Grandchildren

Malachi 1:1-3:18

INTRODUCTION

1. The title of our study is actually a misnomer...
 - a. For God does not have 'grandchildren' per se
 - b. He has only 'children', who become such through faith in Christ - cf. **Ga 3:26-27**

-- **Yet I seek to stimulate your thinking with this title**
2. True children of God do have children, physical offspring...
 - a. Who often appear to follow in the footsteps of their parents' faith
 - b. Yet it is not uncommon for them to lack the same conviction

-- **It is these 'grandchildren' to which I have reference in this study**
3. In the book of Malachi, we find a similar situation...
 - a. The restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah occurred several generations earlier
 - b. The descendants of those restored Jews did not have the same zeal and focus in their faith

-- **Malachi was sent to rebuke the sins of this later generation**

[There are parallels today, when children are blessed to have Christian parents or grandparents. The sins of the 'grandchildren' of Malachi's day often appear in the 'grandchildren' of today. To see how, let's first review...]

I. THE SINS OF GOD'S 'GRANDCHILDREN' IN MALACHI'S DAY

A. THEY DOUBTED GOD'S LOVE...

1. They evidently questioned His love for them - **Mal 1:2**
2. God reasserted His love for Israel - **Mal 1:2**

B. THEY DISHONORED GOD'S NAME...

1. By offering blemished sacrifices - **Mal 1:6-11**
 - a. They offered to God what they would be embarrassed to offer men
 - b. The Lord even wished someone would shut the doors so they could not sacrifice
2. By offering halfhearted worship - **Mal 1:12-14**
 - a. Profaning God's name by saying His service was contemptible and a weariness
 - b. Those who continued to bring blemished sacrifices would fall under God's curse

C. THEY DESECRATED GOD'S COVENANT...

1. By marrying heathen women - **Mal 2:10-12**
 - a. They dealt treacherously and profaned the covenant made with their fathers by marrying pagan women ("the daughter of a foreign God")
 - b. This problem is described more fully in **Ezra 9-10; Neh 13:23-24**
 - c. Malachi prayed that the Lord would cut off from Jacob those who did this - **Mal 2:12; cf. Ezr 10:7-8; Neh 13:23-28**
2. By divorcing their Jewish wives - **Mal 2:13-16**
 - a. Despite their weeping, God was no longer regarding their sacrifices

- b. For they had dealt treacherously with the wives of their youth (i.e., Jewish wives) by divorcing them
 - 1) Even though they had entered into a covenant (e.g., “Till death do us part”)
 - 2) Even though God had made them one (cf. **Gen 2:24**)
- c. Therefore God hated divorce - **Mal 2:16**
 - 1) For it covered one’s garment with violence (e.g., against the wife and children)
 - 2) It was treacherous to so deal with one’s spouse in that way!

D. THEY DISPARAGED GOD’S PATIENCE...

- 1. They tried God’s patience, wearying Him with their words - **Mal 2:17**
- 2. Especially by questioning His justice
 - a. They said that those who do evil is good in God's sight, that He even delights in them
 - b. They asked, “Where is the God of justice?”
- 3. God’s response was to send His Messenger(s) - **Mal 3:1-5**
 - a. First, the ‘messenger’ (John the Baptist) who would prepare the way
 - b. Then, the ‘Messenger of the covenant’ (Jesus) who would purge His people

E. THEY DESERTED GOD’S ORDINANCES...

- 1. God charged them with deserting His ordinances - **Mal 3:7**
- 2. Their tithes (the lack thereof) as a case in point - **Mal 3:8-12**
 - a. They had robbed God by their failure to offer their tithes - **Mal 3:8**
 - b. For this reason the whole nation had been accursed - **Mal 3:9**
 - c. They were challenged to bring the tithes, and to see the blessings that would follow - **Mal 3:10-12**

F. THEY DESPISED GOD’S SERVICE...

- 1. They said it was vain to serve God - **Mal 3:13-15**
- 2. Their words were harsh against God - **Mal 3:13**
- 3. They questioned what profit there was in keeping His ordinances - **Mal 3:14**
- 4. Calling the proud blessed, saying the wicked are raised up, and those who tempt God go free - **Mal 3:15**

[Such were the circumstances in the generation or two that followed the restoration of Israel. Today, many of us are a generation or two removed from a similar restoration by our ancestors. Might we be guilty of similar sins...?]

II. THE SINS OF GOD’S ‘GRANDCHILDREN’ TODAY

A. DO WE DOUBT GOD’S LOVE...?

- 1. It is not uncommon for some to question God’s existence, let alone His love!
 - 2. Especially if their faith is not a biblical faith
 - a. One that requires a firm conviction in the existence of God - **He 11:1,6**
 - b. One that comes from the Word of God - **Ro 10:17; Jn 20:30-31**
 - 3. Without such faith, they do not experience God’s love
 - a. For faith leads to obedience - **Ro 1:5; 6:17**
 - b. And it is in the keeping of God’s commandments that we experience His love - **Jn 14:21-23**
- **Without the same saving faith of their parents, the physical offspring of God’s children will never experience the love of God, thereby possibly doubt God’s love**

B. DO WE DISHONOR GOD'S NAME...?

1. By attending services and offering spiritual sacrifices, but with little effort?
 - a. Today we are to offer the sacrifice of praise to God - **He 13:15**
 - b. Yet the praise of God often pails in comparison to the praise of our favorite sports team, movie star, political leader, etc.
 2. We too can be guilty of sinning by offering halfhearted worship
 - a. For we are to sing "with grace in our hearts to the Lord" - **Co 3:16**
 - b. Will God be pleased with 'blemished sacrifices' today?
- **Can one truly expect to receive God's blessings in their lives if they dishonor His Name by offering anything less than our best?**

C. DO WE DESECRATE HIS COVENANT...?

1. By taking marriage and divorce lightly?
 - a. Though divorce and remarriage are strongly condemned by Jesus - cf. **Mt 5:31-32**
 - b. With one exception provided by the Lord - cf. **Mt 19:9**
 2. Yet divorce and remarriage for unscriptural reasons has become rampant today
 - a. Despite the damage it does to the spouse and children
 - b. Despite the damage it does to our relationship with the Lord - cf. **1 Pe 3:8**
- **When children of God's children don't have the same faith as their parents or grandparents, we should not be surprised to see a rise in divorce and remarriage**

D. DO WE DISPARAGE GOD'S PATIENCE...?

1. Questioning His eventual justice by saying "Where is the promise of His coming?" - cf. **2 Pe 3:3,4**
 - a. We may not say it in so many words
 - b. But do our lives reflect as much?
 2. We can try God's patience and longsuffering - cf. **2 Pe 3:9**
 - a. If we continue in sin
 - b. If we think lightly of sin
 3. God's response will be "the day of the Lord" - cf. **2 Pe 3:10**
 - a. In which Jesus comes again
 - b. To judge the world! - cf. **2 Th 1:7-10**
- **Living like there will always be a 'tomorrow', many of God's 'grandchildren' give little thought to God's longsuffering and the need to repent**

E. DO WE DESERT GOD'S ORDINANCES...?

1. Are we guilty of deserting or forsaking God's ordinances in His church?
 - a. Such as baptism for the remission of sins? - cf. **Mt 28:19-20; Ac 2:38**
 - b. Such as the Lord's Supper in memory of His death? - cf. **Ac 20:7; 1 Co 11:23-26**
 2. Are we guilty of deserting other commands of our Lord?
 - a. Such as the command not to forsake assembling? - cf. **He 10:24-25**
 - b. Such as the command to lay be in store, giving as we prosper? - cf. **1 Co 16:1-2**
- **If we take such ordinances and commands lightly, is that not an indication that we may be God's 'grandchildren' instead of His children?**

F. DO WE DESPISE GOD'S SERVICE...?

1. Jesus would have us seek the kingdom of God - cf. **Mt 6:33**
 - a. To make His rule and righteousness the first priority in our lives

- b. With the assurance that He will provide for our necessities
- 2. Do we question the veracity of His words?
 - a. Suggesting that it would be vain to serve God first in our lives?
 - b. Implicating that those who put jobs or family first will be the blessed ones?
- **Those who are God's 'grandchildren' will more likely trust in their own strength than in the value of serving God first**

CONCLUSION

- 1. We can see many similarities in the book of Malachi...
 - a. Between those of his day who were a generation or two from the faith of their parents
 - b. And many today who are 'second or third generation Christians'
 - **Which is why the OT was written and preserved for our admonition - cf. 1 Co 10:11**
- 2. But notice toward the end of Malachi's message there is hope...
 - a. Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another - **Mal 3:16a**
 - b. The Lord took note, and a 'book of remembrance' was written - **Mal 3:16b**
 - c. The Lord promised to make them His 'jewels' and spare them - **Mal 3:17**
 - **It would become easy to discern between the righteous and the wicked, by their service to God - Mal 3:18**

May we likewise encourage one another to serve God from the heart, out of personal conviction, that we may truly be God's children, not guilty of the "**Sins Of God's Grandchildren**"...!

Binding The Hands Of Jesus

Mark 15:1

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mk 15:1**, we read of how the enemies of Jesus bound Him in preparation for sending Him to Pilate...

“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.”

2. As we read this, it is easy for our hearts to be filled with sadness, and even with a touch of “righteous indignation” for that crowd that bound Jesus in such a way
3. And yet, there are few today who are not guilty of binding the hands of Jesus in a “figurative” way!

[To see what I mean, consider some of the various ways we can be guilty today of “**Binding The Hands of Jesus**”...]

I. BY REFUSING TO OBEY THE GOSPEL

A. IN HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US, JESUS STRETCHED OUT HIS HANDS AND DIED FOR OUR SINS...

1. Even today, through His gospel, He pleads with all to take advantage of His vicarious suffering
2. He does not want us to suffer for the guilt of our own sins
3. In truth, then, His “tender invitation” of **Mt 11:28-30** is still being offered today

B. BUT WHEN ONE REFUSES TO OBEY THE GOSPEL...

1. The hands of Jesus are bound!
2. There is no way such a person can then receive the benefits of Jesus death!
3. For him or her, the death of Jesus was in vain!

C. IS THIS TRUE OF YOU...?

1. It is...if you have not yet accepted the gospel by obeying the commands of Jesus - cf. **Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38**
2. And if it is, then you will one day have to face the righteous indignation of Jesus Himself! - cf. **2 Th 1:7-9**

[But even those who obey the gospel can be guilty of “**Binding The Hands Of Jesus**”. How? One way is...]

II. BY REFUSING TO BE TRANSFORMED

A. CHRIST’S WILL IS THAT WE BE TRANSFORMED...

1. This transformation involves a renewal of the mind - **Ro 12:1-2; Ep 4:20-24**

2. This renewal occurs as we read, study, and meditate upon the Word of God - **1 Pe 1:23-2:2; Ph 4:8**

B. BUT MANY CHRISTIANS NEGLECT THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH WE CAN BE RENEWED...

1. We do not “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” - **Ja 1:21b**
2. Allowing other things to take precedence in our lives, we so “bind the hands of Jesus” that we do not change!

C. ARE WE GUILTY OF THIS...?

1. We are, if we neglect to study the Bible on our own!
2. We are, if we fail to take advantage of opportunities to study with others!
3. Neglect the transforming power of the Word of God, and we are just as guilty of “binding the hands of Jesus” as were those who delivered Him to Pilate!

[We can also be guilty of “**Binding The Hands Of Jesus**”...]

III. BY REFUSING TO PRAY

A. JESUS HAS BECOME OUR “HIGH PRIEST”...

1. He became man for this very purpose - **He 2:17-18**
2. He’s made it possible for us to boldly approach the throne of grace in prayer - **He 4:14-16**
3. As our high priest...
 - a. He is able to save those who come to God through Him - **He 7:25a**
 - b. He “ever lives” to make intercession for us - **He 7:25b**

B. WHEN WE DON’T PRAY AS WE SHOULD...

1. Jesus cannot be our high priest, our intercessor!
2. Figuratively, we’ve taken the “praying hands” of Jesus and “bound” them behind His back!

C. ARE WE DOING THIS...?

1. If so, what a travesty this is!
2. For here is Jesus...
 - a. Who “lives” to intercede for us
 - b. But Who can’t, because we prevent Him from doing so by our failure to pray!

[There is yet another way to be guilty of “**Binding The Hands Of Jesus**”...]

IV. BY REFUSING TO DO OUR PART IN THE CHURCH

A. THE CHURCH IS DESCRIBED AS THE “BODY OF CHRIST”... - Ep 1:22-23

1. As His body, we are individually members of one another - **1 Co 12:27**
2. As members of one another, we are to care for one another - **Ep 4:15-16**
3. It is through such “mutual edification”, that Christ provides much of His help for the members of His body!

B. BUT WHEN WE FAIL TO DO OUR SHARE, AGAIN JESUS IS “BOUND”...!

1. Just as our physical head can do little if our bodily members fail to follow its leading, so it is

with Jesus and His church!

2. Jesus could do so much more for His members, if only more of the members did their part!

C. HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED IT THIS WAY...?

1. That by failing to do our part, we “handicap” the body of Christ?
2. That because of our neglect, or apathy, or lukewarmness...
 - a. Either the whole body of Christ suffers...
 - b. Or others are forced to do “double duty” in order to make up the difference?

[Yes, there are many ways we can be just as guilty of “binding the hands of Jesus” today as were the religious leaders in delivering Jesus to Pilate! But consider just one more...]

V. BY REFUSING TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH THE LOST

A. JESUS HAS MADE HIS DISCIPLES TO BE HIS “HANDS” IN TAKING THE GOSPEL TO THE LOST...

1. Consider **Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16; 1 Pe 2:9**
2. In every case of conversion recorded in Acts, Jesus used a disciple to tell the good news
3. Jesus works the same way today!

B. BUT TO THE DEGREE THAT WE KEEP THE GOOD NEWS TO OURSELVES...

1. We have “bound the hands” of Jesus once again!
2. We hinder Jesus from telling others of His wonderful grace!

C. ARE WE “BINDING THE HANDS OF JESUS” IN THIS WAY...?

1. Every day, countless souls die with no hope of eternal life
2. This need not be, if more made sharing of the gospel the primary concern in their lives!
3. Sadly, in too many cases the primary concern of Christians is the pursuit of pleasure and acquisition of worldly treasures!

CONCLUSION

1. Yes, one does not have to literally “**bind the hands of Jesus**” to be guilty of the same sort of offense that we read about in **Mk 15:1**; as we have seen, there are many other ways as well!
2. Why not today, resolve to “**loose the hands of Jesus**” so that **in** us and **through** us He may accomplish His full desire? Which is...
 - a. To **save** us!
 - b. To **transform** us!
 - c. To **use** us!

Five Views Of Mark 16:16

How Some People Just Will Not Accept The Obvious

INTRODUCTION

1. There is a statement of Jesus that is so plain, and yet so controversial...
 - a. That you rarely hear it referred to by denominational preachers, whether it be in their churches or on TV or the radio
 - b. That when they do, they feel it necessary to give an explanation that goes against the clear statement of Jesus
2. I have reference to the words of Jesus as found in **Mark 16:16**...

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”

3. To illustrate what I said earlier, let’s take a look at four different views of this verse as taught by men, and then contrast those views with the one plainly stated by Jesus and supported by His apostles in their teaching and preaching...

[The first view is one held by those who do not profess to be Christians, but for the purpose of our lesson should be considered. In essence, they would say...]

I. HE WHO BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED “WILL NOT” BE SAVED

A. TWO SEPARATE GROUPS HOLD THIS VIEW...

1. **Atheists** - who do not believe in God, heaven or hell, or salvation of any kind
2. **Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc.**
 - a. Who believe in God (or gods)
 - b. But who do not believe that salvation is to be found in Jesus
 - c. And that to believe and/or be baptized is contrary to the will of God

B. BUT THOSE WHO ACCEPT JESUS AND THE AUTHORITY OF HIS APOSTLES REJECT SUCH A VIEW...

1. There **is** a God who offers salvation (contrary to the views of atheists) - **1 Ti 2:3-4**
2. Salvation **does** come only through Jesus (contrary to the Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc.) - **1 Ti 2:5-6; Jn 14:6**

[Though I doubt any present actually hold to this view, there are some who do, and it only begins to illustrate how some are willing to deny the plain statement of Jesus. Consider a second view...]

II. HE WHO “DOES NOT BELIEVE” AND “IS NOT BAPTIZED” WILL BE SAVED

A. THIS VIEW IS HELD BY “UNIVERSALISTS”...

1. Who believe that God will save everyone eventually
2. To support their view, they will isolate some verses like **1 Ti 2:6**

B. BUT THOSE WHO KNOW THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST AND PAUL LIKEWISE REJECT SUCH A VIEW...

1. Jesus Himself told that there would be few who would be saved - **Mt 7:13-14**
2. Paul warned of those who would not be saved, but face the wrath of God - **Ep 5:5-6**

[Most “Bible-believing, professing Christians” would never treat **Mark 16:16** the way the first two views do. But as we consider two more views, we may start hitting closer to “home”. But please understand...that we do so, desiring to “speak the truth in love”; and we pray that your love for the truth is such that you are willing to seriously consider what follows (cf. **Ac 17:11**). The third “view” then...]

III. HE WHO “DOES NOT BELIEVE” AND “IS BAPTIZED” WILL BE SAVED

A. THIS VIEW IS HELD BY MOST WHO PRACTICE “INFANT BAPTISM”...

1. By “baptizing” (actually sprinkling, not immersing) infants incapable of faith...
 - a. They (esp. **Catholics**) indicate that faith is not essential to salvation
 - b. Some (esp. **Lutherans**) try to get around this by saying that God imparts saving faith to the infant so baptism can still save
2. By sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion, they also indicate Jesus did not mean what He said (the reason “baptized” above is in quotes)

B. BUT SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, WE MUST POINT OUT...

1. That faith is a necessary prerequisite...
 - a. For baptism - **Ac 8:35-37**
 - b. For salvation - **Ro 10:9-10**
2. That sprinkling or pouring is NOT Bible baptism...
 - a. The Greek word used in the Bible is “baptizo”, and it means “to immerse”
 - b. This is why baptism is described in the Bible as a “burial” - cf. **Ro 6:3-4; Co 2:12**
 - c. Sprinkling or pouring was substituted in the place of baptism (immersion) hundreds of years after Christ and His apostles
 - d. By keeping the “tradition of men” by sprinkling or pouring, we fail to keep the command of God” concerning baptism - cf. Jesus’ condemnation of displacing God’s commands by traditions of men, **Mt 15:3-9**
3. That baptizing infants is without scriptural precedent
 - a. There are no commands or examples of infant baptism
 - b. Since the prerequisites of faith (**Mk 16:16; Ac 8:37**) and repentance (**Ac 2:38; 17:30**) are beyond the infant’s capability, they are not suitable candidates for baptism

[I am confident that those who hold to the view of sprinkling infants are honest and sincere. But despite their honest sincerity, they are just as guilty of twisting the words of Jesus as are the atheists, unbelieving Jews (Muslims, Hindus, etc.) and the universalists. But there is another view sincerely held by many, and that is...]

IV. HE WHO BELIEVES AND “IS NOT BAPTIZED” WILL BE SAVED

A. THIS VIEW IS HELD BY THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN SALVATION BY FAITH “ONLY”...

1. That one is saved **before** baptism
2. That baptism is not essential to salvation
- **This view is held for all practical purposes by most denominations**

B. BUT JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES CLEARLY TAUGHT DIFFERENTLY...

1. That faith “alone” cannot save
 - a. As declared by Jesus - cf. **Mt 7:21; Lk 6:46**
 - b. As taught by His apostles - cf. **Ro 6:17-18; He 5:9; Ja 2:14,17,20,24,26; 1 Pe 1:22; 1 Jn 2:3-5**
2. That baptism **is** essential to salvation
 - a. According to Jesus - **Jn 3:5; Mk 16:16; Mt 28:18-20**
 - b. According to His apostles - **Ac 2:38; 22:16; Ga 3:26-27; Co 2:12-13; Ti 3:5; 1 Pe 3:21**

[Again, I believe that those who hold this view (including personal relatives) are sincere, and are not knowingly twisting the words of Jesus. Yet, I cannot help but think of such people as Paul thought of his brethren in the flesh (cf. **Ro 10:1-3**). This leads us to the fifth and final view, one that I believe we are compelled to accept...]

V. HE WHO BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED WILL BE SAVED**A. THIS VIEW TAKES THE WORDS OF JESUS AT FACE VALUE...**

1. No explanations are necessary
2. Jesus says what He means, and means what He says

B. WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN PREVIOUSLY THAT THE BIBLE TEACHES...

1. That one must “believe” - cf. **Ac 8:36-37**
2. That one must be “baptized” to enjoy the forgiveness of sins - cf. **Ac 2:38; 22:16**

CONCLUSION

1. Which of the five views of **Mark 16:16** do you hold to?
 - a. He who believes and is baptized “will not” be saved?
 - b. He who “does not believe” and “is not baptized” will be saved?
 - c. He who “does not believe” and “is baptized” will be saved?
 - d. He who believes and “is not baptized” will be saved?
 - e. He who believes and is baptized will be saved?

-- **It should be clear there is only view which is in harmony with Jesus’ words, as there is only one which does not involve “tampering” with the clear statement of Jesus!**
2. But perhaps more importantly, with which of these views is your life consistent?
 - a. One may hold intellectually to the **fifth** view...
 - 1) But act as though they believed the **second** view
 - 2) How? By never confessing faith in Christ and being baptized!
 - b. One may hold intellectually to the **fifth** view...
 - 1) But act as though they believed the **third** view
 - 2) How? For though they may have been “baptized”, they are not living the life of faith required of one in Jesus!
 - c. One may hold intellectually to the **fifth** view...
 - 1) But act as though they believed the **fourth** view
 - 2) How? For while believing in Jesus, they have never submitted to being baptized!

Only those who have come to Jesus in faith and **acted** in harmony with His teachings can have the assurance of salvation. The words of the Bible are clear...

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” - Ac 2:38

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” - Ac 22:16

Mary, Mother Of Jesus

Luke 1:26-28

INTRODUCTION

1. An important person in God's scheme of redemption is Mary, mother of Jesus...
 - a. Introduced by Luke, with the visit by the angel Gabriel - **Lk 1:26-28**
 - b. Mostly remembered for her role in the birth of Christ - **Lk 1:29-56; 2:1-19**
2. Mary is worthy to be called "blessed" (**Lk 1:48**), but we need to distinguish between...
 - a. What the Bible actually teaches about Mary
 - b. What has been taught by sources outside the Bible

[To have a proper understanding of Mary, the mother of Jesus, let's first review the...]

I. BIBLICAL RECORD

A. HER ANCESTRY...

1. Luke's genealogy of Jesus is thought to through Mary, not Joseph - **Lk 3:23-38**
 - a. Note that Jesus was supposed to be "the son of Joseph"
 - b. But was "of Heli" (i.e., Mary's father)
 - c. Which explains the apparent contradiction between Matthew's and Luke's genealogies
 - d. Mary descended from David through Nathan - **Lk 3:31**
 - e. While Joseph descended from David through Solomon - **Mt 1:6**
2. That she was descended from David is also implied by:
 - a. The angel's statement that Jesus would receive the throne of His father David - **Lk 1:32**
 - b. Other similar statements that imply a flesh and blood relationship through Mary
- **Ac 2:30; Ro 1:3; 2Ti 2:8**

B. HER VIRGINITY...

1. Is clearly attested to by Luke - **Lk 1:26-38**
2. Likewise by Matthew - **Mt 1:18-25**

C. HER FAMILIAL RELATIONS...

1. She likely had normal relations with her husband after Jesus' birth
 - a. Joseph "did not know her **till**" she had Jesus - **Mt 1:25**
 - b. This strongly implies he did afterwards
2. She likely had other children
 - a. Jesus was "**firstborn Son**" - **Mt 1:25; Lk 2:7**
 - b. Which normally implies she had others
3. Jesus is said to have four brothers and at least two sisters - **Mt 13:55-56**
 - a. Some claim that these were children of Joseph from a previous marriage
 - b. Or that they were actually cousins of Jesus
 - c. But taken at face value, it is clear Jesus had siblings

D. HER CHARACTER...

1. We learn a lot from Gabriel's visit and her subsequent visit with Elizabeth - **Lk 1:26-56**

- a. Her faith in God, humility, obedience
- b. Her praise of God, and familiarity with the OT
2. She demonstrated faithfulness in her service to God
 - a. The circumcision of her Son - **Lk 2:21**
 - b. His purification and presentation in the temple - **Lk 2:22-28**
 - c. Her observance of the Passover - **Lk 2:41**

E. HER GRADUAL SEPARATION...

1. Her primary task was to bear the Savior and raise Him up
2. As He began His work, there was a necessary gradual separation
 - a. Intimated early on, when the boy Jesus was at the temple - **Lk 2:41-51**
 - b. Evidenced further at the wedding feast in Cana - **Jn 2:1-5**
 - c. The emphasis upon His true family in His teaching - **Mt 12:46-50**
 - d. The entrusting of her to John's care at the cross - **Jn 19:25-27**
3. She is at last seen with the disciples of her Son, following His ascension - **Ac 1:12-15**
4. Her role from being mother of Jesus has shifted to being a disciple of Jesus

[What may surprise some is that once the church began on the day of Pentecost (**Ac 2**), we never read of Mary again in the Scriptures! But over the past 2000 years there have been quite a few...]

II. EXTRABIBLICAL DEVELOPMENTS

A. PERPETUAL VIRGINITY...

1. From the second century A.D., many have taught that Mary remained a virgin
2. That Jesus' brothers and sisters were either cousins or step-siblings (children of Joseph from a previous marriage)
3. This view has appealed to those who view marital sex as less than holy (contra **He 13:4**)
4. She could have remained a virgin, but the Biblical evidence suggests otherwise

B. THEOTOKOS (GOD-BEARER)...

1. During the fourth to six centuries A.D., **theotokos** became a catchword of Christological orthodoxy, that stressed the divinity of Christ
2. Though not a Biblical term, as first used it did teach truth about Mary - cf. **Lk 1:35**
3. But it has come to suggest erroneous Mariological connotations (e.g., Mary as the Mother of God)

C. INTERCESSION OF MARY...

1. During the middle ages, some believed it required the intercession of saints to find forgiveness for post-baptismal sins
2. According to this view, who better to intercede for us than Mary, the Mother of God and Lady in the courts of heaven?
3. Biblically, such need is unnecessary - cf. **Ro 8:34; 1Ti 2:5; He 4:14-16; 1Jn 2:1**

D. VENERATION OF MARY...

1. Together with the intercession of Mary came the veneration of Mary
2. Distinctions were made:
 - a. **Latria** (true worship) is proper to God alone
 - b. **Hyperdulia** (extreme honor) is proper to Mary, Queen of heaven
 - c. **Dulia** (honor) to the saints

3. But in practice, such distinctions are of little significance; adulation to Mary in prayers and hymns have sometimes surpassed those given to the Godhead
4. Yet not even apostles nor angels accepted adulation or obeisance - **Ac 10:25-26; Re 22:8-9**

E. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION...

1. In the nineteenth century, Pius IX decreed the doctrine of Immaculate Conception
2. Many think this refers to the virgin birth of Jesus, but it declares that Mary was conceived without Original Sin, preparing her to be a suitable mother for Jesus
3. This also postulates that Mary went on to live a life without sin - contra **1Jn 1:10**

F. ASSUMPTION OF MARY...

1. In 1950, Pius XII decreed that Mary, at the end of her life, was physically taken into heaven
2. This idea first came from apocryphal fourth-century writings (e.g., The Passing Of Mary)
3. It became an established teaching across the Eastern, Western, Coptic and Oriental churches from at least the late 7th Century A.D.
4. Views differ as to whether she died or fell asleep before being taken up into heaven

CONCLUSION

1. Extrabiblical developments continue in Mariology (or perhaps more properly, Mariolatry)...
 - a. Mary as the mother of all Christians
 - b. Mary as Mediatrix
 - c. Mary as Co-Redemptrix
 - d. Mary as Queen of heaven
 - e. Reparations to the Virgin Mary
2. Mary certainly occupies a place of honor and dignity in the Scriptures
 - a. For her role as the human mother of the Messiah
 - b. For her example of faith, humility, and devotion
3. Thus we can agree with...
 - a. **Gabriel:** "Blessed are you among women!" - **Lk 1:28**
 - b. **Elizabeth:** "Blessed are you among women!" - **Lk 1:42**
 - c. **Mary herself:** "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." - **Lk 1:48**
4. But Mary was not perfect, at times she possessed bewilderment...
 - a. At the statements made when her Son was presented in the temple - **Lk 2:33-35**
 - b. At the conduct of her Son in the temple when He was twelve - **Lk 2:48-50**

A balanced view of Mary and her role in the plan of redemption will be limited to the Biblical evidence, for it is evident how far afield people will go when left to their own devices, and we have warnings not to add to the Word of God... - cf. **Deu 4:2; Pro 30:6; Mk 7:6-13; Re 22:18-19**

Note: Much of this material was taken from an article on Mary by G. W. Bromiley, (1988; 2002). The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised (3:271). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Nevertheless At Your Word I Will

Luke 5:1-11

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus charged His apostles to make disciples of all the nations..
 - a. Baptizing them upon His authority - **Mt 28:18-19**
 - b. Teaching them to observe what He commanded - **Mt 28:20**
 - **Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?**

2. The mindset of a disciple was displayed when Jesus called Peter...
 - a. When Jesus was teaching at the Sea of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee) - **Lk 5:1-3**
 - b. When Jesus called on Peter to let down the net - **Lk 5:4-5**
 - c. When Jesus called on Peter to lay down his net - **Lk 5:10-11**
 - **Did you notice the mindset of a disciple of Jesus?**

[We see the mindset of a disciple as we note...]

I. PETER'S WILLINGNESS TO DO THE LORD'S WORD

A. IN LETTING DOWN THE NET...

1. Jesus instructed Peter to let down his net - **Lk 5:4**
2. Peter did not think it would do any good - **Lk 5:5a**
 - a. They had been fishing all night, they had caught nothing
 - b. Wouldn't a fisherman know more about fishing than a carpenter?
3. Yet Peter said, "Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." - **Lk 5:5b**
 - a. Though he did not think it would work
 - b. Though it defied common sense
4. The result of doing the Lord's word - **Lk 5:6-8**
 - a. The catch was overwhelming for one net, even for two boats
 - b. Peter was made aware of his own sinfulness
- **Here we see the mindset of a disciple: "Nevertheless at Your word I will..."**

B. IN LAYING DOWN THE NET...

1. He and his coworkers were astonished at their success - **Lk 5:9-10a**
2. Jesus reassured Peter, and then called him and his partners to follow Him - **Lk 5:10b-11**
 - a. Though he did not think he could be any good ("I am a sinful man, O Lord!")
 - b. Though it meant leaving behind a successful business and family
 - 1) Peter left his wife (for the time being) - cf. **Lk 4:38; Lk 18:28; 1 Co 9:5**
 - 2) James and John left their father - cf. **Mt 4:21-22**
 - c. Yet they left all and followed Him!
3. The result of doing the Lord's word
 - a. The Lord called them to even greater service - cf. **Lk 6:13-14**
 - b. They would receive even greater rewards - cf. **Lk 22:28-30**
- **Such is the mindset of a disciple: "Nevertheless at Your word I will..."**

[Peter, together with James and John, illustrate the attitude that must characterize a disciple of Jesus: a willingness to do whatever the Lord says, no matter the cost, even when we don't understand why...]

II. OUR WILLINGNESS TO DO THE LORD'S WORD

A. IN BECOMING HIS DISCIPLE...

1. We may not think we can do any good
 - a. We might think we are too sinful, but Jesus calls sinners - cf. **Lk 5:8,32**
 - b. Even the rankest of sinners can serve Him - cf. **1 Co 6:9-11**
 2. We are to follow Him above all (family, work, self)
 - a. Jesus must come before family, even self - **Lk 14:26**; cf. **Mt 10:37**; **Lk 9:23-26**
 - b. Jesus must come before work as well - **Lk 14:16-24**
 3. For those willing to follow Him, the rewards are great
 - a. In this present time, much more! - **Lk 18:28-30a**
 - b. In the age to come, eternal life! - **Lk 18:30b**
- **Do we have the mindset to become a disciple (“Nevertheless at Your word I will”)?**

B. IN BEING HIS DISCIPLE...

1. The Lord may ask us to do things we don't think will work
 - a. Such as laying up treasure in heaven, instead of for self - **Lk 12:15-21**
 - b. Such as seeking first the kingdom of God - **Lk 12:22-34**; cf. **Mt 6:33**
 2. The Lord may ask us to do things we don't yet understand
 - a. Why be baptized for the remission of our sins? - **Mk 16:16**; **Ac 2:38**
 - b. Why observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week? - **Ac 20:7**
 - c. Why not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together? - **He 10:25**
 - d. Why singing is commanded, and not playing instruments? - **Ep 5:19**; **Co 3:16**
 - e. Why women are not permitted public roles in worship? - **1 Co 14:34-37**
 - f. Why churches are not to be burdened by familial responsibilities? - **1 Ti 5:16**
 3. For those willing to obey Him, the rewards are great
 - a. Our labor is not in vain - **1 Co 15:58**
 - b. We can look forward great reward (“inherit the kingdom”) - cf. **Mt 25:34**; **2 Pe 1:11**
- **Is our mindset that of being a disciple (“Nevertheless at Your word I will”)?**

CONCLUSION

1. Are you willing to become a disciple of Jesus...?
 - a. Heeding His call to follow Him?
 - b. Putting Him before family, work, self?
2. Are you willing to adopt the mindset of a disciple...?
 - a. Obeying the Word of the Lord?
 - b. Even when it may seem futile or unreasonable?

Though it may defy common sense, may we ever say “**Nevertheless at Your word I will**”...

The “Me First” Mentality

Luke 9:57-62

INTRODUCTION

1. As Jesus went about His earthly ministry, people either wanted to follow Him, or were invited by Him; yet some desired to do so on their own terms - **Lk 9:57-62**
 - a. “Lord, let **me first** go and bury my father.”
 - b. “Lord, I will follow you, but let **me first** go and bid them farewell who are at my house.”
2. This “**me first**” mentality was fundamentally opposed to Jesus’ concept of following Him...
 - a. He demanded that one “deny himself” to follow Him - **Lk 9:23**
 - b. He required that one “hate...his own life also” - **Lk 14:26**

[Living in a culture that praises putting self first and then “**Looking Out For #1**”, it easy for Christians to adopt this “me first” mentality. Consider some ways we can be guilty of...]

I. THE “ME FIRST” MENTALITY

A. IN OUR ATTENDANCE...

1. The Scriptures reveal the example and value of assembling together with other Christians - **Ac 2:42; 20:7; He 10:25**
 2. Yet many will often put personal interests before opportunities to attend services:
 - a. Recreational outings
 - b. Family gatherings
 - c. Elective work or school related activities
 - d. Staying home to read or watch TV
- **Haphazard attendance is a sign of the “me first” mentality**

B. IN OUR CONTRIBUTION...

1. Christians are instructed to give of their prosperity to meet certain needs - **1 Co 16:1-2; 2 Co 9:7-9**
 2. Yet many will give sparingly because:
 - a. They want to spend as much as possible on things for themselves
 - b. They have failed to properly budget their contribution to the Lord
 - c. They are burdened with bills for things that are not necessities, but actually luxuries
- **Negligent giving of our prosperity is a sign of the “me first” mentality**

C. IN OUR SERVICE TO ONE ANOTHER...

1. God has blessed each of us with gifts to serve one another - **Ro 12:3-8; 1 Pe 4:10-11**
 2. Yet many make little effort to do their part in the work of the local congregation:
 - a. They do not learn the names of the other members
 - b. They do not seek to find their “gift” or ability God has given them
 - c. Men do not attend the business meetings; women do not teach classes
 - d. They may attend church, but only to receive, not to give of themselves
- **Lack of involvement in the local church is a sign of the “me first” mentality**

D. IN OUR FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS...

1. Christians have duties to members of their physical families - **Co 3:18-21; Ep 5:22,25,33**
 2. Many families suffer when people seek their own interests above another
 - a. When husbands and wives are selfish in their dealings with each other
 - b. When parents divorce without regard to the impact on their children
 - c. When children fail to honor and obey their parents
- **Dysfunctional families abound where the “me first” mentality exists**

[Our service to the Lord, His church and our families is greatly hindered by the “me first” mentality, and is detrimental to our souls those around us. How much better, for us to learn and practice...]

II. THE “OTHERS FIRST” PRINCIPLE

A. AS EXEMPLIFIED BY CHRIST...

1. He came to this earth because He put others first - **2 Co 8:9; Mt 20:28**
 2. We are called upon to adorn the same mind or attitude - **Ph 2:3-8**
 - a. To do nothing through selfish ambition or conceit
 - b. To esteem others better than ourselves
 - c. To look out for the interests of others
- **Jesus exemplified the principle of “others first” that He desires in us as well**

B. AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE MACEDONIANS...

1. Note their great liberality despite their own poverty - **2 Co 8:1-4**
 2. Note why they were able to be so gracious in thinking of others first - **2 Co 8:5**
 - a. They first gave of themselves to the Lord, then to others!
 - b. The mentality of “Lord first” instead of “me first” enabled them to put “others first”
 3. Their liberality continued in supporting Paul to preach the gospel - cf. **Ph 4:10-18**
 4. Putting God and others first ensured that their needs would be met - **Ph 4:19**
- **The Macedonians exemplified the true value of putting “others first”**

CONCLUSION

1. Do we have the “me first” mentality...?
 - a. If we do, we cannot be Jesus’ disciples
 - b. If we do, the church and our own spiritual lives will suffer
2. Do we want to be rid of the “me first” mentality...?
 - a. The “me first” mentality will be destroyed when we adopt the “others first” principle
 - b. The “others first” principle will be developed as we make “the kingdom of God first” - **Mt 6:33**

When we truly put the kingdom of God and others before ourselves, then the Lord will see to it that we have the things that we need...! - cf. **Mt 6:30-33; Ph 4:19**

Distracted By Good

Luke 10:38-42

INTRODUCTION

1. As Christians, we have many responsibilities that are proper...
 - a. As parents, spouses, or children - cf. **1 Ti 5:8; Co 3:18-21**
 - b. As employees, or employers - cf. **Co 3:22-4:1**
2. Yet sometimes what is **good** can get in the way of what is **better**...
 - a. When we fail to properly prioritize our activities
 - b. Allowing ourselves to be distracted by what is good, missing out on what is better

[A good illustration of this is seen in the story of Martha and Mary, two sisters who along with their brother Lazarus were loved by Jesus (cf. **Jn 11:5**). Turning to our text (**Lk 10:38-42**), let's examine...]

I. THE EXAMPLE OF MARTHA AND MARY

A. MARTHA WAS DISTRACTED...

1. She had invited Jesus to her house - **Lk 10:38**
 - a. That it was her house leads most to think she was the eldest, head of the household
 - b. Her hospitality is certainly commendable, a noble trait - cf. **Isa 58:7; He 13:2**
 2. She became distracted by much serving - **Lk 10:40**
 - a. The Son of God, the Messiah, had come to her house - what an honor!
 - b. There were likely others beside Jesus: His disciples, her family, neighbors
 - c. She naturally wanted her sister Mary to help - **Lk 10:40**
 3. She began to worry and be troubled by many things - **Lk 10:41**
 - a. These were not things that were wrong in of themselves
 - b. But they took priority when they should not have
 - c. Which caused anxiety of mind and distress of spirit!
- **Martha allowed that which is good get in the way of that which is better!**

B. MARY WAS DISCIPLINED...

1. She sat at Jesus feet and heard His word - **Lk 10:39**
 - a. Sitting at His feet was the ancient posture of disciples or learners - cf. **Ac 22:3**
 - b. It indicates she was His disciple, she wanted to learn from Him
 - c. She was more concerned about being a good disciple, than a good hostess
 2. She chose the one thing needed - **Lk 10:42**
 - a. In the end, there is one thing that is really necessary
 - b. That would be seeking God's kingdom and righteousness - **Mt 6:33**; cf. **1 Ti 4:8**
 3. She chose that which had eternal consequence - **Lk 10:42**
 - a. She chose "that good part, which will not be taken away from her"
 - b. For Jesus offered blessings that would last - cf. **Jn 4:14; 5:24; 10:27-28**
 - c. Of which even her sister Martha was aware - cf. **Jn 11:21-27**
- **Mary had the discipline to seek first things first, putting the better before the good!**

[From the example of Martha and Mary, what lesson can be drawn...?]

II. THE LESSON OF MARTHA AND MARY

A. ARE WE DISTRACTED...?

1. By things that may be good within themselves?
 - a. Our duties as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers?
 - b. Our responsibilities to work and community?
 2. Jesus warned against allowing such things to take precedence in our lives
 - a. Family cannot come before our service to the Lord - **Mt 10:37**; cf. **12:46-50**
 - b. Family and work cannot come before the kingdom of God - **Lk 14:16-24**
 - c. Cares of this world can render us unfruitful - **Lk 8:14**
 - d. Cares of this world can leave us unprepared - **Lk 21:34**
 3. If we become **distracted** by even things that are good...
 - a. We will find ourselves like **Martha**: worried, troubled, stressed out!
 - b. We may find ourselves like **Esau**: selling our inheritance for a morsel! - **He 12:16**
- **Are we distracted by the good?**

B. ARE WE DISCIPLINED...?

1. To seek that which is better, the one thing that is really needed?
 - a. The kingdom of God and His righteousness?
 - b. Eternal life and the blessings which accompany it?
 2. Jesus taught of the value of choosing the good part
 - a. God's providential care in our lives - **Mt 6:31-33**
 - b. Ample surplus to replace our sacrifice for the gospel - **Mk 10:28-30**
 - c. Peace and joy which the world cannot give - **Jn 14:27; 15:11; 16:33; Ph 4:6-7**
 3. If we are **disciplined** enough to make the proper choice...
 - a. We will find ourselves like **Mary**: free of anxiety, praised by the Lord!
 - b. We will find ourselves like **Job**: experiencing the end intend by the Lord! - **Ja 5:11**
- **Are we disciplined to choose that which is better?**

CONCLUSION

1. Martha had the opportunity to serve the Lord again...
 - a. On a joyous occasion, after the raising of her brother from the dead - **Jn 12:1-2**
 - b. Then she served with no distraction, free from worry, with no rebuke from the Lord
2. Such is the case of those who learn from Martha and Mary...
 - a. Who put first things first, seeking first God's will and work in their lives
 - b. While the Lord comes first, they become better hosts, spouses, parents, workers
 - c. Better than if they tried to do it on their own, without God's help!

Seek first the will of God, and everything falls into place. Become distracted by even that which is good, anxiety and problems will be our lot in life! Are we willing to learn from Martha and Mary...?

Condemned By Others

Luke 11:31-32

INTRODUCTION

1. On the Judgment Day, we will be judged by Jesus Christ...
 - a. As claimed by Jesus Himself - **Jn 12:48**
 - b. As taught by the apostle Paul - **Ac 17:30-31; 2 Co 5:10; 2 Ti 4:1**
2. But Jesus also spoke of others judging on that Day...
 - a. The Queen of the South - **Lk 11:31**
 - b. The men of Nineveh - **Lk 11:32**

[In what way will they judge the generation of Jesus' day? Might they also judge us on that day? Let's take a closer look...]

I. THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND...

1. The Queen of the South was also known as the Queen of Sheba - **1 Kin 10:1**
 - a. Sheba was likely a city of Arabia (possibly Yemen)
 - b. Located south of Judea, at least twelve hundred miles (**Hendriksen**)
2. She came to see Solomon - **1 Kin 10:2-13**
 - a. With a great retinue and much wealth
 - b. But was amazed by Solomon's wisdom and wealth
 - c. She praised Solomon and gave him great gifts
 - d. Solomon gave gifts to her in return

B. WHY SHE WILL CONDEMN THEM...

1. She traveled a great distance to hear truth; they had the truth at hand - **Lk 11:31**
2. She traveled to hear Solomon; they had access to One far wiser, better and greater
3. By **past example** and **future testimony** she will condemn those who rejected Jesus!

C. WILL SHE CONDEMN US...?

1. If we reject such easy access to the Word of God today?
2. If we allow such things as time and distance to keep us from learning the truth, attending services, going to gospel meetings, etc.?

D. MIGHT OTHERS CONDEMN US...?

1. There are **Christians** today whose example might put us to shame
 - a. Who must use public transportation, travel great distances, often with feeble health, to attend services of the church, or to hear the gospel preached
 - b. Might they not rise with the Queen of the South to condemn us on the Judgment Day, if we make excuses for not making the effort to learn the truth and serve the Lord?
2. There are even **non-Christians** whose example could shame us
 - a. Those whose make great sacrifices for their political or religious views
 - b. Do they serve their ideologies with greater fervor than we do our Lord?

[Now let's take a closer look at...]

II. THE MEN OF NINEVEH

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND...

1. Jonah was sent to preach to the Ninevites - **Jon 1:1-2; 3:1-4**
 - a. The capital of ancient Assyria, a large city
 - b. His message: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"
2. The men of Nineveh responded favorably - **Jon 3:5-10**
 - a. The people believed, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth
 - b. The king likewise, calling for national fasting and prayer for forgiveness
 - c. God relented from the disaster He said that He would bring upon them

B. WHY THEY WILL CONDEMN THEM...

1. The Ninevites heeded:
 - a. A minor prophet - **Lk 11:32**
 - b. A sinful, foolish, and bigoted prophet
 - c. A message of damnation and doom
 - d. A sermon without signs and wonder to confirm it
2. The Israelites rejected:
 - a. The Son of God - **Lk 11:32**
 - b. A sinless, wise and compassionate Messiah
 - c. A message of grace and redemption
 - d. Many sermons with signs and wonders to confirm them as being from God
3. By **past example** and **future testimony** they will condemn those who rejected Jesus!

C. WILL THEY CONDEMN US...?

1. If we reject the words of Jesus Christ today?
2. If we refuse to repent and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ, despite the many opportunities that have been given to us?

D. MIGHT OTHERS CONDEMN US...?

1. There are **Christians** today whose example might put us to shame
 - a. Who respond in faith and repentance as soon as they understand God's Word?
 - b. Might they not rise with the men of Nineveh to condemn us on the Judgment Day, if we make excuses for not obeying the truth though we've heard it many times?
2. There are even **non-Christians** whose example could shame us
 - a. Who quickly respond in obedience, even though it may be to religious error?
 - b. Do they serve their false religions with greater fervor than we do our Lord?

CONCLUSION

1. With whom shall we stand on the Judgment Day...?
 - a. Will it be with those like the Queen of the South and the men of Nineveh?
 - b. Or with those like the Israelites who rejected the Savior sent to them?
2. The answer depends on how we make use of the opportunities given us...
 - a. Whether we will make the effort to **learn** the truth

b. Whether we will make the effort to **heed** the truth

Even more than the Israelites of Jesus' day, we have been given a great opportunity to know, learn and obey His message of grace and salvation. Reject it, and we can expect to be condemned, not only by Jesus, but by all who received His message in faith and obedience...!

Are There Few Who Are Saved?

Luke 13:23

INTRODUCTION

1. In August 2005, **Newsweek** and **Beliefnet** asked 1,004 Americans what they believe and how they practice their faith
2. Among the questions was this one: **Can a good person who isn't of your religious faith go to heaven or attain salvation, or not?**

3. Here are their responses...

	Yes	No	Don't know
Evangelical Protestants	68%	22%	10%
Non-Evangelical Protestants	83%	10%	7%
Catholics	91%	3%	6%
Non-Christians	73%	3%	24%
Total	79%	12%	9%

4. The responses are interesting...
 - a. Most people believe those of different faiths will be saved
 - b. Among Catholics and more liberal Protestants, that view is overwhelming
 - c. Even the majority of those who view themselves as “evangelical” agree

[This would suggest that most believe many will be saved. Is that true? Jesus was asked a similar question (cf. **Lk 13:23**), and spoke often on the subject of who will be saved. Note that He taught...]

I. FEW WILL BE SAVED

A. MANY THINK MOST WILL BE SAVED...

1. Or to put it another way, that most people will go to heaven
2. Yet Jesus taught that few would be saved - **Lk 13:23-24**; cf. **Mt 7:13-14**

B. WE DO WELL TO REMEMBER...

1. Only eight souls were saved during The Flood - **Gen 7:21-23**; **1 Pe 3:20**; **2 Pe 2:5**
2. Only three souls escaped the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah - **Gen 19:24-30**
3. Only two men out of 603,550 over the age of 20 were permitted to enter the land of Canaan - **Num 14:26-32**; cf. **1:45-46**

[Sadly, there will be few who find the way that leads to life (**Mt 7:14**). And what is the way that leads to life? Again, we find Jesus taught that...]

II. JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

A. MANY THINK ALL RELIGIOUS PEOPLE WILL BE SAVED...

1. As some put it, “It doesn’t really matter what you believe...”
2. Yet Jesus taught that no one comes to the Father but through Him - **Jn 14:6**

B. WE DO WELL TO REMEMBER...

1. The example of Cornelius, a religious person who needed salvation - **Ac 10:1-6; 11:14**
2. The example of many other religious people who needed salvation
 - a. The devout Jews on the Day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:5,36-38**
 - b. The devout Ethiopian returning from worship at Jerusalem - **Ac 8:27-28,35-38**
 - c. The devout Lydia, a worshipper of God who kept the Sabbath - **Ac 16:13-14**
 - d. The devout Saul, doing what he thought was the Lord's will - **Ac 26:9; cf. Ga 1:14**

[Being religious is not enough, and one cannot truly be a Christian who believes that salvation can be found outside of Christ (**Ac 4:12**). But note that Jesus also taught salvation is...]

III. FOR THOSE WHO OBEY

A. MANY THINK THAT ALL WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS WILL BE SAVED...

1. That we are saved by faith only, with no need for obedience
2. Yet Jesus warned of those who believed in Him but were lost - **Mt 7:21-23**
 - a. They believed Him to be their Lord
 - b. They spent their lives in service to the Lord
 - c. But they had not done the Father's will!

B. WE DO WELL TO REMEMBER...

1. That Jesus is the author of salvation to all who obey Him - **He 5:9**
2. The end of those who do not obey His gospel - **2 Th 1:7-9**
3. Not all believers will be saved
 - a. The demons believe, yet tremble! - **Ja 2:19**
 - b. Some believed, but were unwilling to confess Him - **Jn 12:42-43**

CONCLUSION

1. Believing that many (if not all) will be saved is...
 - a. A comforting doctrine
 - b. A view praised as tolerant and loving
2. But if one really desires to follow Jesus, they must abide in His teaching (**Jn 8:30-32**)...
 - a. That few will be saved
 - b. That Jesus is the only way
 - c. That salvation is for those who do His Father's will

Of course, God wants all men to be saved (**1 Ti 2:3-6; 2 Pe 3:9**). He has provided His Son as the perfect Sacrifice and the perfect Mediator. But will we believe and obey His Son...?

God's Second Law Of Pardon

Acts 8:22

INTRODUCTION

1. The Scriptures reveal different instructions on how to obtain forgiveness...
 - a. To alien sinners outside of Christ - cf. **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - b. To erring Christians guilty of sin - cf. **Ac 8:22; 1 Jn 1:19**
2. The difference has been described by some as “**God’s Two Laws Of Pardon**”...
 - a. **For the alien sinner**, there is God’s **first law** of pardon
 - 1) Hear the gospel
 - 2) Believe that Jesus is the Christ, who died for our sins
 - 3) Repent of sins
 - 4) Confess faith in Christ
 - 5) Be baptized for the remission of sins
 - b. **For the erring Christian**, there is God’s **second law** of pardon
 - 1) Repent of sins
 - 2) Pray to God
 - 3) Confess sins to God

[As we evangelize, we often spend much time explaining the first law. As Christians seeking to maintain our relationship with God, we should be equally concerned with the second law. So let’s take a closer look at “**God’s Second Law Of Pardon**”...]

I. WHAT CHRISTIANS MUST DO

A. WE MUST REPENT OF SINS...

1. Note that repentance is required in both laws of pardon - cf. **Ac 2:38; 8:22**
 2. What does it mean to repent? Literally, it means “a change of mind”
 - a. “signifies to change one’s mind or purpose” - **Vine**
 - b. “this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God” - **ibid.**
 3. Thus it involves making a decision to stop sinning
 - a. Just as the alien sinner is called to do so in becoming a Christian
 - b. So the erring Christian must do to return to the Lord
 4. Repentance is produced by “godly sorrow” - cf. **2 Co 7:9-10**
 - a. A sorrow for having sinned against God - e.g., **Psa 51:4**
 - b. As opposed to worldly sorrow for getting caught or being exposed
 5. Repentance is also prompted by God’s goodness - **Ro 2:4**
 - a. Awareness of God’s grace and kindness should lead us to repent
 - b. Frequent meditation on the Word of God will help in this regard
 6. Repentance will be manifested by a remarkable change - **2 Co 7:11**
 - a. Such as diligence and zeal to do right
 - b. Such as indignation for our sins and a desire to make right
- **So the first step for erring Christians is to repent of their sins!**

B. WE MUST PRAY...

1. So Peter told Simon when he sinned after having believed and was baptized - **Ac 8:22**
 2. Compare this to God's first law of pardon
 - a. Baptism is an act of faith, in which we make an appeal - **1 Pe 3:21**
 - b. Prayer is also an act of faith, as we appeal for forgiveness
 - c. Yet alien sinners are commanded to repent and be baptized - **Ac 2:38**
 - d. While erring Christians are commanded to repent and pray
 3. The difference is understandable
 - a. Before baptism, one is not a child of God - **Ga 3:26-27**; cf. **Jn 3:3-5**
 - b. After baptism, prayer is a privilege for those who are God's children - cf. **Ga 4:6-7**
 4. Praying is effective for the Christian because of our **two intercessors**
 - a. Jesus, who understands our feelings - **He 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 7:24-25**
 - b. The Holy Spirit, who communicates our feelings - **Ro 8:26-27**
 5. As we pray, we must do so with humility
 - a. Compare the difference between the Pharisee and the publican - **Lk 18:9-14**
 - b. God favors the humble and contrite in spirit - **Psa 34:18; Isa 66:1-2**
- **Having repented, the erring Christian humbly needs to pray!**

C. WE MUST CONFESS...

1. So John wrote to Christians, to experience God's forgiveness - **1 Jn 1:9**
 2. Compare this to God's first law of pardon
 - a. Where confession is commanded, but not confession of sins
 - b. Instead, confession is made concerning Jesus Christ - **Ro 10:9-10**; cf. **Ac 8:37**
 3. Understanding the word "confess"
 - a. Comes from the Greek word **homologeō**
 - b. "lit., to speak the same thing; to agree with, admit" - **Vine**
 - c. In regards to sin, it means to openly and honestly admit sin without hiding it or offering excuses for it - e.g., **Dan 9:4-6,10-11,15**
 4. Confession of sins should be made...
 - a. Continuously - for John literally wrote "If we keep confessing our sins..."
 - b. For both known and unknown sins - e.g., **Psa 19:12**
 - c. Always to God, sometimes to each other - cf. **Ja 5:16**
- **So as the erring Christian prays, confession of sins should be made!**

[Simple is God's second law of pardon: to repent and pray, confessing our sins! To encourage us to be diligent in taking advantage of this wonderful grace, consider now...]

II. WHAT GOD WILL DO

A. GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL...

1. As John promised in encouraging us to confess our sins - **1 Jn 1:9**
 2. This means He will be **true** to His promise
 3. What promise? The promise found in the prophecy of the New Covenant!
 - a. Found in Jeremiah, repeated in Hebrews - **Jer 31:31-34; He 8:7-13**
 - b. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." - **He 8:12**
- **Thus we have the assurance of God's response!**

B. GOD WILL BE JUST...

1. As John promised in encouraging us to confess our sins - **1 Jn 1:9**

2. This means He will be **righteous** in forgiving our sins
 3. How can this be? By virtue of the cleansing blood of Jesus!
 - a. A cleansing alluded to earlier - **1 Jn 1:7**
 - b. So God can be both just and justifier of those who have faith in Christ - **Ro 3:24-26**
- **Thus we have the basis for God's response!**

C. GOD WILL FORGIVE AND CLEANSE...

1. He will "forgive us our sins" - **1 Jn 1:9**
 - a. "The word 'forgive' describes the act of canceling a debt and the restoration of the debtor" - **Kistemaker**
 - b. No longer will the guilt of our sins be held against us!
 2. He will "cleanse us from all unrighteousness" - **1 Jn 1:9**
 - a. "The word 'cleanse' refers to making the forgiven sinner holy so that he is able to have fellowship with God" - **Kistemaker**
 - b. The word "all" is reassuring; no sin is beyond God's ability to forgive the penitent Christian who confesses their sin!
- **Thus we have blessedness of God's response!**

CONCLUSION

1. With God's second law of pardon, the Christian who repents, prays, and confesses will...
 - a. Experience the continual cleansing of the blood of Christ!
 - b. Enjoy the blessedness of knowing your sins are forgiven!
2. Why would any Christian hesitate to obey God's second law of pardon...?
 - a. You can have the same joy of salvation as when you were baptized into Christ!
 - b. For you rise from prayer as cleansed from sin as when you arose from the watery grave!

If you want to have the same joy, the same assurance of salvation, as that new babe in Christ who comes forth to a new life, then take advantage of "**God's Second Law Of Pardon**"...!

"Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." - Isa 55:6-7

What It Means To Preach Jesus

Acts 8:35

INTRODUCTION

1. It is not uncommon today to hear people say “**Let’s just preach Jesus...!**”
 - a. Often in response to those who preach and teach on baptism
 - b. Which many modern preachers rarely mention in their preaching
2. But **what does it mean to preach Jesus...?**
 - a. Should it include baptism?
 - b. If so, what else should be included?
3. In **Acts 8**, we read of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch...
 - a. Who on his return from Jerusalem was met by Philip the evangelist - **Ac 8:26-29**
 - b. Who invited Philip to explain a passage from the book of Isaiah - **Ac 8:30-34**
 - c. Beginning with the passage (**Isa 53:7-8**), note that Philip preached Jesus to him - **Ac 8:35**

[We can learn what it means to preach Jesus from what is written regarding the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch! For example, consider what we can glean from...]

I. ISAIAH’S QUOTATION

A. JESUS DIED FOR OUR SINS...

1. The passage from Isaiah reveals the reason for the Messiah’s suffering - **Isa 53:4-6,10-11**
 2. Christ’s death for our sins was fundamental to the gospel Paul preached - **1 Co 15:1-3**
- **Preaching Jesus therefore proclaims His death for our sins**

B. JESUS HAS BEEN EXALTED...

1. Isaiah’s prophecy begins and ends with the exaltation of the Messiah - **Isa 52:13; 53:12**
 2. The theme of Jesus’ exaltation permeated Peter’s preaching - **Ac 2:36; 5:30-31**
- **Preaching Jesus therefore pronounces that He has been exalted by God**

[From **Isaiah’s Quotation**, we learn that preaching Jesus includes preaching how Jesus died for our sins, and has been exalted to the right hand of God! Now let’s consider what we learn about preaching Jesus from...]

II. THE EUNUCH’S QUESTION

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM...

1. Notice the first question asked by the eunuch - **Ac 8:36**
 - a. “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”
 - b. Preaching Jesus clearly included preaching on baptism!
2. Indeed, baptism was important to Jesus and His apostles
 - a. Jesus commanded it in giving the great commission - **Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16**
 - b. The apostles commanded it in their preaching - **Ac 2:38; 10:47-48**
 - c. The apostles also wrote of its value in their epistles - **Ro 6:3-4; 1 Pe 3:21**

-- **Preaching Jesus therefore includes preaching baptism!**

B. THE IMMEDIACY OF BAPTISM...

1. The Ethiopian was anxious to obey; Philip was willing to accommodate him - **Ac 8:38**
 - a. Why the urgency? Why not wait until they got to town, or to a church?
 - b. Others were baptized immediately, even after midnight - **Ac 16:30-33**
 2. The reason for such urgency is clearly taught elsewhere
 - a. Baptism is for the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - b. We experience the working of God, and put on Christ - **Co 2:12-13; Ga 3:27**
- **Preaching Jesus therefore calls upon people to be baptized quickly!**

[From **The Eunuch's Question**, the importance and immediacy of baptism clearly taught elsewhere is implied. Let us also be careful to note what we learn about preaching Jesus from...]

III. PHILIP'S QUALIFICATION

A. THE NECESSITY OF FAITH...

1. Philip's response to the eunuch's question qualified who should be baptized - **Ac 8:37**
 - a. "If you believe...you may"
 - b. Faith is a necessary prerequisite to baptism, which precludes infant baptism
 2. Indeed faith is necessary to salvation - **Jn 8:24**
 - a. Through faith we can have life in His name - **Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. Baptism is a working of God when our faith is present - **Co 2:12**
- **Preaching Jesus therefore demands faith in Jesus before baptism!**

B. THE NECESSITY OF HEARTINESS...

1. Philip required a wholehearted faith - **Ac 8:37**
 - a. "If you believe with all your heart, you may"
 - b. Baptism without such faith renders one simply wet!
 2. The sort of hearty sincerity God has always required
 - a. By the children of Israel under the Law - **Mt 22:37**
 - b. By the partakers of Christ today - **He 3:12-14**
- **Preaching Jesus therefore requires more than just mental assent before baptism!**

CONCLUSION

1. Preaching Jesus certainly involves more, including...
 - a. Preaching **repentance**, though such is not mentioned in our text - cf. **Lk 24:46-47**
 - b. Preaching **the resurrection of Christ**, though such is not mentioned - cf. **Ac 17:30-31**
2. Yet from the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, preaching Jesus must include...
 - a. Preaching about **the suffering and exaltation of Christ**
 - b. Preaching **the necessity and immediacy of baptism by a sincere believer**
3. Today, many do not preach Jesus as Philip and the apostles did...
 - a. They ignore baptism altogether, or render it insignificant
 - b. They call upon people to pray, when apostolic preaching called for people to be baptized

Has Jesus truly been preached to you, as Philip preached Jesus to the Eunuch? - cf. **Ac 2:36-38; 22:16**

What Hinders Me From Being Baptized?

Acts 8:36

INTRODUCTION

1. With the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, we have an example of conversion...
 - a. Involving someone who was very religious, yet still lost - **Ac 8:27-28**
 - b. Who was willing to learn, open to being taught - **Ac 8:29-34**
 - c. To whom Philip preached Jesus - **Ac 8:35**
 - d. Who then immediately requested and received baptism - **Ac 8:36-38**
2. His inquiry, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” is enlightening...
 - a. It reveals that baptism in water was integral to preaching Christ - **Ac 8:35-36**
 - b. Indeed it was commanded by Christ Himself - **Mk 16:15-16**
 - c. His apostles commanded it as well - cf. **Ac 2:38; 10:47-48**
3. His inquiry also raises questions that we do well to ask...
 - a. What does hinder one from being baptized?
 - b. What should not hinder one from being baptized?

[In answer to such questions, let’s first notice...]

I. WHAT DOES HINDER ONE

A. LACK OF FAITH...

1. Belief in Christ as a prerequisite is clearly stated by Philip - **Ac 8:37**
2. Jesus also stressed the necessity of faith - **Mk 16:16; cf. Jn 8:24**
- **If one does not believe, or is incapable of belief, then that hinders baptism**

B. LACK OF REPENTANCE...

1. Repentance as a prerequisite to baptism is implied by Peter - **Ac 2:36-38**
2. It is clearly a prerequisite to having one’s sins “blotted out” - **Ac 3:19**
- **If one does not repent, or is incapable of repentance, then that hinders baptism**

C. LACK OF WATER...

1. We are talking about baptism in water - **Ac 8:36; 10:47**
2. A baptism that “washes away sin”, because it is a burial with Christ - **Ac 22:16; Ro 6:3-4**
- **If there is no water, then that hinders baptism**

[Of course, lack of water is rarely the issue. God has made water plentiful. It is the lack of faith or repentance that is really the only thing that hinders one from being baptized. Yet people often allow things they should not to keep themselves from being baptized. Let’s examine...]

II. WHAT SHOULD NOT HINDER ONE

A. PRIDE...

1. Some are too proud to admit they need forgiveness for their sins

2. Some are too proud to acknowledge they are mistaken about their need for baptism
3. Such pride will keep God away - cf. **Psa 138:6; Ja 4:6**
- **Pride should never hinder one from being baptized**

B. FAMILY...

1. Some are concerned what their family will think
2. Perhaps they are afraid of being disowned by their family
3. Jesus made it clear that family should not prevent us from doing His will - **Mt 10:37-38**
- **Family should never hinder one from being baptized**

C. PEER PRESSURE...

1. Some are afraid of being ridiculed or ostracized by their friends
2. It was peer pressure that kept some from confessing Jesus - cf. **Jn 12:42-43**
3. Jesus made it clear that what others think should not sway us - cf. **Lk 9:26**
- **Peer pressure should never hinder one from being baptized**

D. IMPROPER UNDERSTANDING...

1. **Some believe they do not know enough to be baptized**
 - a. They presume that one must know everything the Bible teaches
 - b. Yet like the eunuch, most conversions in the NT occurred after one sermon
 - c. Jesus stated that much teaching follows, not precedes, baptism - **Mt 28:19-20**
 - d. If one is a penitent believer, willing to follow Jesus as Lord, they are ready
2. **Some believe they are not good enough to be baptized**
 - a. They presume that they must reform themselves first
 - b. But baptism is for sinners, not saints
 - c. Much spiritual development occurs after salvation, not before - cf. **Co 3:1-14**
 - d. If one has repented (changed their mind to serve God), they are ready
- **Misunderstanding should never hinder one from being baptized**

E. TIME OF DAY OR NIGHT...

1. Some may think baptism can occur only at certain times
2. As in response to the invitation at the end of a sermon, or at some special baptismal service
3. The eunuch's baptism illustrates it can be done anywhere, anytime - **Ac 8:38**
4. Likewise the baptisms of the Philippian jailor and his family - **Ac 16:25-33**
- **The time or place should never hinder one from being baptized**

CONCLUSION

1. After the eunuch was baptized, he went on his way rejoicing - **Ac 8:39**
 - a. He believed that Jesus was the Christ, who died for his sins
 - b. He had confessed his faith in Jesus as the Christ
 - c. Though not mentioned, we can assume that he repented of his sins
2. If you desire the same assurance of salvation that the eunuch enjoyed...
 - a. Then let nothing hinder you from obeying the gospel in the same manner
 - b. Be baptized as soon as possible, upon the confession of your faith in Jesus

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” - Ac 22:16

People Of The Way

Acts 9:2

INTRODUCTION

1. Today it is common to use terms referring to the people of God such as...
 - a. The church of Christ, the church of God - **Ro 16:16; 1Co 1:2**
 - b. The body of Christ, the kingdom of Christ - **Ep 1:22,23; Col 1:13**
 - c. The temple of God, the bride of Christ - **1Co 3:16; Re 19:7-8**

2. But in the early days of the church, they were also known as people of “**The Way**”...
 - a. Saul of Tarsus persecuted those of the Way - **Ac 9:2; 22:4**
 - b. Others spoke evil of the Way - **Ac 19:9**
 - c. At Ephesus there was a riot about the Way - **Ac 19:23**
 - d. Paul confessed to worship God according to the Way - **Ac 24:14**
 - e. Felix the governor gained accurate knowledge about the Way - **Ac 24:22**

[Today the expression “**The Way**” is rarely used, except by parachurch organizations, individual congregations, and even some cult groups. But what did it mean in the early days of the church...?]

I. THE MEANING OF THE WAY

A. PROBABLE ORIGIN...

1. Jesus taught about two ways - **Mt 7:13-14**
 - a. The broad way that leads to destruction
 - b. The narrow way that leads to life
 2. Jesus claimed to be the way - **Jn 14:6**
 - a. The way to truth and life
 - b. The only way to the Father
- **It seems likely that Jesus’ statements led to the use of “The Way”**

B. POSSIBLE MEANINGS...

1. Simon J. Kistemaker (BNTC) suggests it refers to:
 - a. The teaching of the gospel
 - b. The Christian’s conduct directed and guided by the gospel
 - c. The Christian community in general
 2. W. A. Ewell (ECB) suggests it connotes something of:
 - a. The way of salvation - **Ac 16:17**
 - b. The true way of God - **Ac 18:25-26**
 3. J. B. Polhill (NAC) suggests it reflects an early self-designation of the Jewish Christian community in which they saw themselves as the “true way” within the larger Jewish community - cf. **Ac 24:14**
- **It likely referred to following Jesus as “the Way” in both doctrine and life**

[Here are a few things involved in following Jesus as “the Way”...]

II. THE WAY OF JESUS

A. THE WAY TO GOD...

1. Jesus is the only way to God - **Jn 14:6; Mt 11:27**
2. Through Jesus, both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father - **Ep 2:18**

B. THE WAY TO TRUTH...

1. Jesus came to this world to bear witness to the truth - **Jn 18:37**
2. He offers the truth that sets us free from the bondage of sin - **Jn 8:32-36**
3. The truth that calls us to be renewed in righteousness and holiness - **Ep 4:20-24**

C. THE WAY TO LIFE...

1. Jesus came that we might live more abundantly - **Jn 10:10**
2. He offers a life with:
 - a. Love, that passes knowledge - **Jn 15:10; Ep 3:17-19**
 - b. Peace, that surpasses understanding - **Jn 14:27; 16:13; Php 4:6-7**
 - c. Joy, that is inexpressible - **Jn 15:11; 1Pe 1:8**
3. He offers life beyond this life - **Jn 11:25; 1Th 4:13-18**

D. THE WAY OF PRAYER...

1. Jesus taught us how to pray, to pray diligently and humbly - **Lk 11:1-13; 18:1-14**
2. He serves as High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate as we pray - **He 4:14-16; 7:25; 1Jn 2:1**

E. THE WAY OF SERVICE...

1. Jesus came to serve, and taught His disciples to do likewise - **Mt 20:25-28; Jn 13:12-17**
2. Therefore His followers are to serve one another in love - **Ga 5:13; 1Pe 4:9**

F. THE WAY OF SUFFERING...

1. Jesus had to suffer to enter His glory - **Lk 24:25-26**
2. He calls us to follow in His steps - **1Pe 2:20-23**
3. Should suffering for Christ come our way, let us be ready! - **1Pe 3:14-17; 4:1-4,14-16**

G. THE WAY TO GLORY...

1. Jesus will one day be revealed in glory - **2Th 1:10**
2. We too shall be revealed in glory in Him! - **2Th 1:12; Col 3:4**

CONCLUSION

1. We may or may not refer to ourselves as **“People Of The Way”**...
 - a. There are other designations just as scriptural
 - b. In some situations, it could be misunderstood as a cult
2. But we should never stop thinking of **Jesus as the Way**...
 - a. The way to God and glory
 - b. The way to truth and life
 - c. The way of prayer, service, and suffering for righteousness' sake

Indeed, for such things Jesus is and always will be the only Way! Have you accepted Him as your Way to salvation and eternal life...? - **Mt 11:28-30; cf. Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38; 22:16; Re 2:10**

Walking In The Fear Of The Lord

Acts 9:31

INTRODUCTION

1. In writing about the early church, Luke recorded:

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” (Ac 9:31)

Note that they were “walking in the fear of the Lord”!

2. In writing to the church at Philippi, Paul told them:

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;” (Ph 2:12)

3. The concept of “fear and trembling” in connection with God is not a popular concept today...
 - a. People prefer to hear about God’s love, longsuffering and mercy
 - b. Sometimes, when we point out God’s righteous indignation, holiness, and justice, people reply “My God is not like that!”
4. The emphasis on God’s love and mercy today is probably an reaction to the “hell, fire, and brimstone” preaching of another generation
5. But could it be that we have gone to other extreme...?
 - a. Where there is no concept of “fear and trembling” as it relates to the Christian?
 - b. Could this be why many Christians are apathetic in their service?
 - c. Could it be we have forgotten Whom we should fear if we are negligent in our service? - cf. **Mt 10:28**
6. In this lesson, I hope to accomplish three things...
 - a. Define the “fear of the Lord”
 - b. Point out why the “fear of the Lord” is important to the Christian
 - c. Suggest how we can develop a healthy “fear of the Lord” without going to one extreme or the other

[We begin by...]

I. DEFINING THE FEAR OF THE LORD

A. THE WORD “FEAR”...

1. In the Hebrew, the word is **yir’ah** and is used in the Old Testament to describe:
 - a. fear, terror
 - b. awesome or terrifying thing (object causing fear)

- c. fear (of God), respect, reverence, piety
2. The Greek word is **phobos**, and it is used to describe:
 - a. fear, dread, terror
 - b. that which strikes terror

B. IN CONNECTION WITH THE FEAR OF THE LORD, IT IS OFTEN DEFINED AS “REVERENCE” OR “AWE”...

1. Which is fine as far as it goes...
2. But I wonder if this definition truly goes far enough...
3. For though the terms “reverence” and “awe” imply a place for “trembling”, do most people make the connection?

C. THE FEAR OF THE LORD SHOULD INCLUDE A PLACE FOR “TREMBLING”...

1. Even as Paul indicated in **Ph 2:12**, by combining “fear and trembling”
2. The Greek word for “trembling” is **tromos** and means “a trembling or quaking with fear”
3. Just as one would likely tremble in the presence of one who could take our life, so Jesus taught us to fear the Lord - **Mt 10:28**

D. A PROPER FEAR OF THE LORD WOULD THEN INCLUDE...

1. “reverence and awe...”
2. “being afraid to offend God in any way” - **Hendriksen**
3. A trembling and quaking if one knows they have offended God and have not obtained forgiveness! - cf. **He 10:26-27, 30-31; 12:28-29**

[The value of such an attitude is seen as we continue on and now notice...]

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD

A. FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, WE LEARN...

1. The “fear of the Lord” is the beginning of knowledge - **Pro 1:7**
2. The “fear of the Lord” will cause one to hate evil - **Pro 8:13**
3. The “fear of the Lord” will prolong life - **Pro 10:27**
4. The “fear of the Lord” provides strong confidence and is a fountain of life - **Pro 14:26-27**
5. The “fear of the Lord” prompts one to depart from evil - **Pro 6:6**
6. The “fear of the Lord” leads to a satisfying life, and spares one from much evil - **Pro 19:23**
7. The “fear of the Lord” is the way to riches, honor, and life! - **Pro 22:4**

B. WITHOUT THE FEAR OF THE LORD...

1. We close ourselves to the treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge!
2. We will flirt with evil and be corrupted by it
3. Our lives are likely to be shortened by our refusal to heed God’s word (e.g., suffering sexually transmitted diseases because we did not heed His Word on sexual relationships)
4. We will not come to know the love of God that gives us assurance and confidence of our salvation
5. When fallen into sin, we will not be motivated to repent and turn to God!
6. We will not be motivated to truly “work out our own salvation”!

[Without the fear of the Lord, we cannot please God (cf. **Isa 66:1-2**). Only the person who “trembles at His Word” has God’s promise to receive His tender mercy! (cf. **Psa 103:17-18**). But how does one develop the **proper** fear of the Lord without going to the extreme of earlier generations...?]

III. DEVELOPING THE FEAR OF THE LORD

A. THE FEAR OF THE LORD COMES THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD...!

1. Just as “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (**Ro 10:17**), the same can be said for the “fear of the Lord”!
2. Notice **Deu 31:10-13**, where the children of Israel were told to gather every seven years to read and hear the Word...
3. The purpose? “...that they may learn to fear the Lord”!
4. As one reads the Word of God, they should gain a healthy degree of the “fear of the Lord”
 - a. Consider the words of Paul in **Ro 2:4-11**
 - b. Or how about the words of Peter in **2 Pe 3:7-14**

B. THE WORD OF GOD, PROPERLY USED, MAINTAINS A PROPER BALANCE...

1. To avoid extremes, we must read **all** of God’s Word
 - a. Some read only those portions will reveal God’s love and mercy, and have no “fear of the Lord”
 - b. Others emphasize the “fire, hell and brimstone” passages, and know nothing of God’s everlasting lovingkindness
 - c. One develops an **attitude of permissiveness** that belittles God’s holiness and justice
 - d. The other develops a **psychosis of terror** that forgets God’s grace and compassion
2. Even in the passages noted above, the context of each speaks much of God’s grace and forgiveness for those who will repent!
3. So we must be careful how we use the Word of God, but use it we must!

CONCLUSION

1. The Psalmist said...

“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all [them that are] about him.” (Psa 89:7)

2. Why do we need to fear the Lord? To be sure we “work out our salvation with fear and trembling”!
3. The warning is necessary, for as it is written in Hebrews:

“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left [us] of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard [it].” (He 4:1-2)

Again...

“Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Hebrews 4:11)

4. With the proper fear of the Lord, we will “work out our salvation”, we will “labor...to enter into that [heavenly] rest”!

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

(2 Co 7:1)

Are you “perfecting holiness in the fear of God”?

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Acts 16:30-33

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Ac 16:30-33** we find a familiar passage...
 - a. In which Paul is confronted by the Philippian jailor
 - b. Who asked, **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”**
2. This is a most important question...
 - a. Salvation from sin is our greatest need - cf. **Ro 6:23**
 - b. The answer must be according to the Word of God
3. The answer given is often limited to what is mentioned in **Ac 16:31**...
 - a. Without consideration of all that is said in the context
 - b. Without noting what is taught elsewhere in the Scriptures

[If one asks **“What Must I Do To Be Saved?”**, how should we reply? Shall we limit our response to the words of **verse 31**? Well, consider first of all...]

I. WHAT IS NOT MENTIONED

A. THE NEED TO REPENT OF SINS...

1. Nothing is said about the need to repent
 2. Yet Jesus wanted repentance to be preached in His name - **Lk 24:46-47**
 3. And so the apostles often preached the need to repent of sins
 - a. As did Peter in his first two sermons - **Ac 2:37-38; 3:19**
 - b. As did Paul in his sermon in Athens - **Ac 17:30-31**
- **Shall we conclude that repentance is not necessary because it is not mentioned in the conversion of the Philippian jailor?**

B. THE NEED TO CONFESS CHRIST...

1. Nothing is said about the need to confess
 2. Yet Jesus taught of the necessity of confessing Him before others - **Mt 10:32-33**
 3. And so the apostles often mentioned the importance of confessing Christ
 - a. Confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus leads to salvation - **Ro 10:9-10**
 - b. Confessing that Jesus is the Son of God leads to abiding in God - **1 Jn 4:15**
- **Shall we conclude that confession is not necessary because it is not mentioned in the conversion of the Philippian jailor?**

[We would be mishandling the Scriptures to suggest that simply because **repentance** and **confession** are not mentioned in **Ac 16:31** that they are not necessary to salvation. But now let's consider...]

II. WHAT IS MENTIONED

A. BELIEVING ON THE LORD...

1. We are told of the need to believe on the Lord - **Ac 16:31**

2. This is consistent with what Jesus Himself taught
 - a. Believing in the Son is key to having eternal life - **Jn 3:36**
 - b. Unless we believe in Him, we will die in our sins - **Jn 8:24**
 3. And so the apostles often proclaimed the importance of faith in Jesus
 - a. That one might have life in His name - **Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. That believing with the heart leads to righteousness - **Ro 10:9-10**
- **Without question faith is imperative to salvation, because of what the Bible says about it**

B. BAPTISM IMMEDIATELY...

1. We notice that the jailor and his family were baptized immediately - **Ac 16:33**
 2. This is similar to what we read elsewhere in several cases of conversion
 - a. 3000 were baptized on the day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:41**
 - b. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized as soon as he saw water - **Ac 8:35-38**
 - c. Paul was encouraged not to delay - **Ac 22:16**
 3. Why were they baptized immediately, even when it was after midnight?
 - a. Peter said it was for the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38**
 - b. Paul was told it was to wash away sins - **Ac 22:16**
 - c. Paul later wrote that it was a cutting away of the body of sins - **Co 2:11-13**
 - d. Peter later wrote that it saves us through the resurrection of Christ - **1 Pe 3:21**
- **When one sees what is revealed about baptism in the New Testament, we can understand why it was received as soon as possible by those who heard the gospel**

CONCLUSION

1. Why does Paul only mention faith in answer to the question in **verse 31**...?
 - a. Because the answer takes into consideration one's spiritual state or condition
 - b. For the jailor, he first needed to be told to believe in Jesus
 - c. For the 3000 on Pentecost, they already believed by the time they asked their question, so faith is not even mentioned (but implied nonetheless!)
2. What answer should we give to those who ask "**What must I do to be saved?**"...
 - a. Our answer depends upon what the state the person is in
 - 1) If they have yet to believe in Jesus, then the need to believe in Him - **Ac 16:30**
 - 2) If they believe in Jesus, then the need to repent, confess, and be baptized for the remission of their sins - **Ac 2:38; 22:16; Ro 10:9-10; Ga 3:26-27**
 - b. Our answer should entail all found in the Word of the Lord
 - 1) Paul proceeded to speak the word of the Lord to the jailor and his family - **Ac 16:32**
 - 2) Such evidently included the need to be baptized immediately - **Ac 16:33**

A proper answer to "**What must I do to be saved?**" will take into consideration both the spiritual state of the inquirer and all that that the Word of God reveals on the subject. Have you responded to what the Bible teaches regarding salvation in Christ...?

The Excellence Of The Knowledge Of Jesus Christ

Philippians 3:8

INTRODUCTION

1. Prior to his conversion to Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul was on the “fast track”, a “rising star,” in the religion of Judaism - cf. **Ga 1:13-14; Ph 3:4-6**
2. But once he came to know who Jesus Christ really was, all the power, all the prestige, all the position of influence that he once had, meant nothing - cf. **Ph 3:7-8**
3. What mattered now was for him to “know Jesus Christ”:

“...I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...” (Ph 3:8)

4. What is there about the knowledge of Jesus Christ that makes it so desirable for people like Paul and countless others? And should we desire this “knowledge”, how do we gain it?

[To answer these questions, let’s first make some observations about...]

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST THAT IS “EXCELLENT”

A. IT MUST BE A “PERSONAL” KNOWLEDGE...

1. We cannot come to know Jesus solely through another person’s acquaintance with Him
2. While we may initially learn about Jesus from others, especially the authors of the New Testament, we must come to know Him for ourselves
 - a. Like Paul, we must speak in the first person: “that I may know Him” (**Ph 3:10**)
 - b. The “faith of our fathers” must become **our** faith, for God does not have any “grandchildren”

B. IT MUST BE AN “INTELLIGENT” KNOWLEDGE...

1. Jesus does not expect us to commit “intellectual suicide” to know Him, He desires us to use our minds as well - cf. **Mt 22:37**
2. Thus we should desire to know all the Word reveals about Him...
 - a. His natures, both divine and human
 - b. His offices, both as king and priest, savior and shepherd
 - c. His works, both then and now
 - d. His past shame and suffering, his present and future glory and exaltation

C. IT MUST BE AN “AFFECTIONATE” KNOWLEDGE...

1. If I know Him at all, I must love Him
2. Indeed, I am accursed if I do not! - cf. **1 Co 16:22**
3. As with our minds, so we must love the Lord with all our hearts - **Mt 22:37**

D. IT WILL BE A “SATISFYING” KNOWLEDGE...

1. It will satisfy where other things do not - cf. Paul’s willingness to forego the advantages he had in Judaism
2. It will be “bread” that fills our hunger, and “water” that quenches our thirst - cf. **Jn 6:35**

E. IT WILL BE AN “EXCITING” KNOWLEDGE...

1. The more we know of the “Beloved”, the more we will want to know
2. We will come to realize that in Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” - **Co 2:3**
3. We will realize that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” - **Co 2:9**
4. And that we are “complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” - **Co 2:10**

F. IT WILL BE A “HAPPY” KNOWLEDGE...

1. For in Him is the key to joy despite all our circumstances - cf. **Ph 4:4**
2. We may have tribulation, but in Christ we can have joy! - cf. **Jn 16:33**

[Such is the “excellence” of this knowledge of Jesus Christ! Is it not worth having? More than anything in the world cf. **Ph 3:8**! But how do we get it...?]

II. GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

A. THE WORD OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL...

1. The only accurate source for learning about Jesus is the Word of God...
 - a. Movies, books, magazines, etc., written by men can be entertaining and sometimes instructive; but such are often filled with erroneous concepts
 - b. The only reliable source is the inspired Word that we call the “Bible”
2. And we should not limit our search for knowledge about Jesus to the four gospels...
 - a. The **Old Testament** contain Messianic prophecies that reveal much about the nature of Christ - e.g., **Isa 9:6-7; Mic 5:2**
 - b. The book of **Acts** describes the only history we have of the beginning and early years of His church
 - c. The **epistles** reveal much about His present work as our King and High Priest - e.g., **He 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 1 Pe 3:22; Re 1:5-6**
3. So if you wish to truly learn of Jesus, commit yourself to a study of the Word of God!

B. BUT SO IS OBEDIENCE...

1. It is not enough to just have “head knowledge” concerning Jesus Christ
2. For the “true knowledge” of Jesus comes only as we obey Him - cf. **1 Jn 2:1-6**
3. Especially as we develop the qualities of character He displayed, which is the goal of all His commandments - cf. **2 Pe 1:5-8**
 - a. Note that it is only when these Christ-like qualities are “yours and abound” can it be said we are “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - b. This is what it really means to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” - **2 Pe 3:18**

CONCLUSION

1. Have you come to “know” Jesus Christ our Lord? Have you begun to experience what Paul called “the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”?

2. If not, why not start today? The Savior's tender invitation is still open to all who heed it:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

“Take my yoke upon you and LEARN FROM ME, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light”

- Mt 11:28-30

You can come to Jesus by heeding the gospel message He wanted the whole world to hear (**Mk 16: 15-16**), and then continue to learn from Him as you heed all the things He commanded His apostles (**Mt 28:19-20**)!

Rejoice Always!

1 Thessalonians 5:16

INTRODUCTION

1. In **1 Th 5:16**, we have a command which is just as binding upon Christians as any you can find in the Word of God: *“Rejoice always”*
2. It has been my observation that many Christians fall far short in carrying out this command in their lives...
 - a. It is often apparent as we go about our daily living
 - b. It frequently carries over into our worship (e.g., lack of enthusiasm in singing, boredom in singing and listening to preaching)
3. Why is it that many Christians don't seem to have joy in their lives...?
 - a. There may be many different reasons
 - b. In this lesson, I wish to touch on several

[As we begin, let me make sure that we understand what “joy” really is...]

I. DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING “JOY”

A. IN THE GREEK, THE MOST COMMON WORD FOR JOY IS “CHARA”...

1. It means “joy, delight, gladness” (**Vines**)
2. It is closely related to **charis** (grace) and **charisma** (gift)
 - a. “We might like to think of **charis** and **charisma** as that which produces joy; and **chara** as the response to a gift which is given.” (**Denny Diehl**)
 - b. This is in agreement with the definition found in the **Zondervan Topical Bible** for joy: “the emotion excited by expectation or acquisition of good”

B. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOY AND GIFT...

1. Understanding the close relationship between joy and gift allows us to appreciate a very important principle
2. We have or show joy in direct response to the value of the gift received!
 - a. The greater the value we place on some gift, the greater our joy when received
 - b. To illustrate, imagine your reaction to three different gifts:
 - 1) The gift of a penny (ho hum)
 - 2) The gift of a hundred dollars (now that's really nice)
 - 3) The gift of a new house (wow! that's fantastic! whoopee!)
3. Can you see how the response or emotion of joy is in direct proportion to our evaluation of the gift received?

C. APPLY THIS PRINCIPLE TO THE JOY CHRISTIANS SHOULD HAVE...

1. What has God given to us?
 - a. It may be easier to list those things God **hasn't** given us!
 - b. For everything good in this life is from God - cf. **Ja 1:17**
2. The most valuable gift God has given us is eternal life! - cf. **Ro 6:23**

- a. This involves freedom from the condemnation for sin, through Jesus' blood!
 - b. Also, fellowship with God as we go through this life!
 - c. With the hope of everlasting life with God after this life!
- **Should not the great value of this gift produce great joy? It did for the Ethiopian**

[But as mentioned in the introduction, many Christians who possess this great gift are not as joyful as they should be. Again I ask, why? Perhaps one reason is this...]

II. WE DON'T APPRECIATE THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR SIN!

A. WE DON'T APPRECIATE WHAT SIN DOES...

- 1. How it separates us from God - cf. **Isa 59:1-2**
- 2. How it can condemn us to spiritual death and hell - cf. **Ro 6:23; Re 21:8**

B. WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE...?

- 1. Perhaps we look at sin from the world's point of view:
 - a. "Sin is not all that bad"
 - b. "It is only a violation of human relationships, which we can easily correct by saying 'I'm sorry'"
- 2. Instead, we should be looking at it from God's point of view...
 - a. Just one sin makes a person guilty of all! - **Ja 2:10-11**
 - b. Sin has affected everyone! - **Ro 3:23**
 - c. Sin is so terrible, God had to send His Only Begotten Son to die for our sins!

[Until we realize the terribleness of sin, we won't appreciate the salvation from sin which God offers. And that leads us to perhaps the main reason why most Christians lack joy...]

III. WE DON'T APPRECIATE THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR GIFT!

A. WE DON'T APPRECIATE WHAT JESUS HAS DONE...!

- 1. How He has reconciled us back to a loving fellowship with God! - **2 Co 5:18-19**
- 2. How in Christ, all things have become new! - **2 Co 5:17**

B. WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE...?

- 1. Here are some hints:
 - a. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." - **Jn 15:11**
 - b. "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." - **1 Jn 1:4**
 - John wrote, and Jesus spoke, concerning things designed to give us fullness of joy!
- 2. Many Christians never take the time to contemplate and understand...
 - a. What Jesus taught
 - b. What His apostles wrote
- 3. If we did, I believe we would appreciate...
 - a. The terribleness of our sin
 - b. The magnitude of the gift of salvation in Christ!
- 4. Instead, we allow ourselves to more influenced by the world and its standards
 - a. Such that we value material things over spiritual things
 - b. Such that we have and show more joy over receiving things like...
 - 1) A new job, promotion, raise

- 2) A new house, car
 - 3) A husband, wife, or children
- ...than we do over receiving the gift of salvation from sin!

[I am not suggesting we should not rejoice over material gifts; indeed, we should be thankful. But if we are not as joyful over our spiritual gifts, we need to retrain our thinking through the Word of God! There may be another reason why some Christians are not joyful...]

IV. OVERREACTING TO EMOTIONALISM

A. THERE IS CERTAINLY A DANGER IN EMOTIONALISM...

1. Emotionalism is where emotions rule instead of the Word of God
2. It is often a “better felt than told” kind of religion
 - a. Where people depend more on what they feel in their heart
 - b. Rather than basing their beliefs and actions on what the Bible says
3. Such emotionalism often manifests itself in worship that is characterized by disorderly outbreaks of emotion
 - a. Contrary to what is ordained in **1 Co 14:40**
 - b. Where such displays are often totally unrelated to what is being said

B. BUT THERE IS ALSO A DANGER IN THE OTHER EXTREME...

1. Of resorting to “dead formalism”
 - a. In which little or no emotion is shown
 - b. Whether in our singing, or in offering an “amen” to our prayers
 - Worship which does not involve the heart is just as wrong! - **Mt 15:7-18**
2. The extreme to which one can go can be quite absurd, as illustrated in this story:

“A man walks into a worship assembly. The preacher is eloquently expressing God’s love for us, and the man says ‘Amen!’ That draws a few stares and whispers of ‘Who is that?’ The preacher goes on to state that Jesus died for our sins so that we can go to heaven and the man says ‘Alleluia.’ Again more stares and questions. Finally, the preacher states that through Jesus we may have eternal life, and the man says ‘Praise the Lord.’ Everyone is looking now, and one fellow goes over to the newcomer to inform him, ‘We don’t praise the Lord here.’”

C. THERE CAN BE BOTH JOY AND ORDERLY WORSHIP...!

1. There is room for “Amen’s” and “Praise the Lord!” when offered with sincerity and in keeping with what is said
2. In reacting to one extreme, let’s not go to the other and take away the joy of being a Christian!
 - a. “Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God.” - **Joel 2:23**
 - b. “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’” - **Psa 122:1**
 - c. “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” - **Ph 4:4**
 - d. “...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” - **Ep 5:19**

CONCLUSION

1. Oh, but many Christians enter the worship of our Creator and Savior with the enthusiasm and vigor of those filling their income tax returns on April 14th!

2. Brethren, this should not be! And if it is...
 - a. We need to pray the prayer of David: “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation...” - **Psa 51:12**
 - b. We need to allow the Word of God to do its work: “Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Lord God of hosts.” - **Jer 15:16**
3. If we would spend time with the Word of God, we would learn we also have been called of God...
 - b. Called out of sin and its consequences
 - b. Called into a wonderful relationship with God and Jesus Christ, where all can be made new!
4. With such a knowledge of God’s great gift, joy is a natural reaction and also a wonderful blessing:

“Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long, And in Your righteousness they are exalted.” (Psa 89:15-16)

Don’t you want that joy? Then understand and accept the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord!

Hardened By Deceit

Hebrews 3:13

INTRODUCTION

1. When a Christian loses his or her faith, it is a difficult thing to behold...
 - a. As they drift further and further away from the Lord
 - b. Especially when it involves a dear friend or beloved relative
2. Some might question whether the person was ever truly saved...
 - a. The Calvinist would so affirm (believing in “once saved, always saved”)
 - b. While possible one was never saved, also possible is actual apostasy - **He 3:12-14**
 - c. A believer can become an unbeliever, thereby losing any security afforded the believer

[Our text reveals that apostasy begins when the heart is “**Hardened By Deceit**”. That we might better understand what happens and avoid such a tragedy, let’s first take a closer look at...]

I. THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

A. SIN ENTRANCES...

1. There are the “passing pleasures of sin” - **He 11:25**
 - a. Sin can certainly promise pleasure
 - b. But such pleasure is only temporary (“passing”)
 - c. Sin’s destructive forces soon follow (social, mental, physical, spiritual) - e.g., **Pr 5:8-14**
 2. There is “the deceitfulness of riches” - **Mt 13:22**
 - a. Riches of this world promise much (pleasure, power, security)
 - b. But they are uncertain, as evidenced in times of economic collapse - **1Ti 6:17**
 - c. Love of money leads one away from God, toward destruction and sorrow - **1Ti 6:9-10**
- **Sin entrances, but deceives with its false promises**

B. SIN ENSLAVES...

1. Those who commit sin become slaves of sin - **Jn 8:34**
 - a. Like one who becomes addicted to drugs
 - b. Even those once delivered from the bondage of sin - **2Pe 2:19-20**
 2. The bondage of sin can be overwhelming - **Ro 7:14-25**
 - a. Without Christ, the will to do good might be present, but the ability is not
 - b. And thus we become slaves to sin - cf. **Ro 6:16**
- **Sin enslaves, having deceived us through false promises of freedom**

[Once **enslaved** to sin through the **entrancement** of sin, the downward spiral of apostasy leads toward unbelief through...]

II. THE HARDENING OF SIN

A. SIN BLINDS...

1. Consider those who walk in the futility of their minds - **Ep 4:17-18**
 - a. Their understanding is darkened, they are alienated from God

- b. Because of their ignorance, because of their blindness
- 2. The same thing happens to those once saved - **2Pe 2:20-22**
 - a. They are again entangled and overcome by the pollutions of the world
 - b. But now it is worse than before!
- **Enslaved to sin, one soon becomes blind to reality**

B. SIN HARDENS...

- 1. Consider again those who walk in the futility of their minds - **Ep 4:19,22**
 - a. They are past feeling
 - b. They are given over to lewdness, moral uncleanness, greediness
 - c. The man of sin grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts
- 2. The same thing happens to those once saved - **He 3:12-14**
 - a. We can become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin
 - b. Leading to an evil heart of unbelief in departing from God
- 3. Making it difficult for others to reach out to their hard hearts, as long as they:
 - a. Persist in crucifying Christ afresh - **He 6:4-6**
 - b. Persist in sinning willfully - **He 10:26-31**
- **The hardening of sin can lead to a terrifying end!**

CONCLUSION

- 1. For **the alien sinner** who is “Hardened By Deceit”...
 - a. There is still hope: **the gospel of Christ!**
 - b. That contains the power of God to save - **Ro 1:16**
 - c. By breaking through the bondage of sin - **Ro 7:25; 8:1-2,12-13**
- 2. For **the erring Christian** who is “Hardened By Deceit”...
 - a. There is still hope: **the chastening of the Lord!**
 - b. Who chastens that we not be condemned with the world - **1Co 11:30-32**
 - c. Because God loves His children - **He 12:5-11**

At times it may seem impossible to break through the hard hearts of loved ones that have been deceived by sin. But let us not underestimate the power of **the gospel of Christ** and **the love of God** to break those hard hearts! Let us stand ready to assist those who positively respond to God’s grace.

In the meantime, may those whose hearts are still tender heed the admonition...

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

but exhort one another daily, while it is called "TODAY," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end...”

- He 3:12-14

Make Your Calling And Election Sure

2 Peter 1:10

INTRODUCTION

1. The promises of God for those He has called are great and precious... - **cf. 2 Pe 1:4; 3:13**
2. Incumbent upon us is the duty to make our calling and election sure... - **2 Pe 1:10**
 - a. Implied is that one's calling and election is conditional
 - b. That those who have been called need to make their election sure

[Are you making your calling and election sure? A good place to start is with...]

I. YOUR INITIAL CALL AND ELECTION

A. GOD CALLS THROUGH THE GOSPEL...

1. God calls us through the gospel - **2 Th 2:14**
 2. The gospel of Christ concerning His death, burial and resurrection - **1 Co 15:1-4**
 3. This gospel contains commands that must be obeyed - **cf. 2 Th 1:8; 1 Pe 4:17**
 - a. The command to believe in Jesus - **Jn 8:24**
 - b. The command to repent of sins - **Ac 17:30-31**
 - c. The command to confess Jesus as Lord - **Ro 10:9-10**
 - d. The command to be baptized - **Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38; 22:16**
- **Have you responded to the gospel with the obedience of faith? - Ro 1:5; He 5:9**

B. MAKING SURE YOUR RESPONSE TO THE CALL...

1. By obeying **all** the commands of the gospel
 - a. Not just the command to believe, but the command to repent
 - b. Not just the command to confess, but the command to be baptized
 2. By obeying the commands in a **Biblical** manner; e.g., have you been:
 - a. Baptized in the proper mode (immersion, **not** pouring or sprinkling)?
 - b. Baptized for the right purpose (for the remission of sins, **not** as a public profession)?
 - c. Baptized as a suitable subject (a penitent believer, **not** as an infant incapable of faith)?
 3. If your response was different in any way, what should you do?
 - a. Those baptized improperly were re-baptized - **cf. Ac 19:1-5**
 - b. If your baptism was in any way different, you should be concerned - **cf. Ep 4:5**
 - c. A Biblical baptism (mode, purpose, subject) can remove all doubt
- **Make your calling and election sure with a Biblical response to the gospel!**

[But you should not stop with reflection on your **initial** call and election, for Peter's admonition in our text (**2 Pe 1:10**) was given to Christians. You should also consider...]

II. YOUR ULTIMATE CALL AND ELECTION

A. MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN...

1. Jesus taught this truth in several parables
 - a. The Tares - **Mt 13:41-43**

- b. The Wedding Feast - **Mt 22:1-14**
 - c. The Talents - **Mt 25:24-30**
 - d. The Vine And The Branches - **Jn 15:1-2**
 2. Note the calling and election of **the nation of Israel**
 - a. Israel as a whole was called to be God's people - **Deu 7:6**
 - b. But their calling was conditional - **Exo 19:5-6**
 - c. And many individuals failed to live up to their calling - **He 3:7-11,16-19**
 3. Similar is the calling and election of **the church of God**
 - a. The church as a whole are called to be God's people - **1 Pe 2:9-10**
 - b. Yet our calling and election as individuals is conditional - **Ro 11:22; Re 2:4-5,10c**
 - c. We can become hardened by sin and fall away - **He 3:12-15**
- **We have been called, but will we be chosen at the last day? - Mt 25:34**

B. MAKING SURE YOUR ELECTION BY GOD...

1. By being fruitful in the knowledge of Christ - **2 Pe 1:5-11**
 - a. Adding to our faith such things as virtue, knowledge, self-control
 - b. Abounding in perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love
 2. By growing in grace and knowledge - **2 Pe 3:17-18**
 - a. Aware of the danger of apostasy
 - b. Standing fast in the grace of Christ
 3. By learning from the parables of Jesus
 - a. Not doing those things that offend, or practice lawlessness (**Tares**)
 - b. Adorning ourselves with garments of righteousness (**Wedding Feast**)
 - c. Utilizing what talents (abilities, opportunities) Christ has given us (**Talents**)
 - d. Bearing fruit in our service to the Lord (**Vine and Branches**)
- **Will your entrance into the kingdom be abundantly supplied? - 2 Pe 1:11**

CONCLUSION

1. It never hurts to ask oneself: **“Have I truly responded to the gospel of Christ...?”**
 - a. Was I scripturally baptized into Christ for the remission of my sins?
 - b. Was my baptism like those depicted in the examples of conversion in the Scriptures?
 - c. Might I need to be re-baptized like those in Ephesus?
2. It never hurts to ask oneself: **“Am I growing in grace...?”**
 - a. Am I abounding in the knowledge of Christ?
 - b. Am I utilizing what talents Christ has given me?
 - c. Am I bearing fruit for Christ?

With such questions, one seeks only to **“Make Your Calling And Election Sure”**. Paul expressed it this way:

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.”
- **2 Co 13:5**

The Promise Of New Heavens And A New Earth

2 Peter 3:13

INTRODUCTION

1. In describing the events pertaining to the Day of the Lord, the apostle Peter...
 - a. Depicts the destruction of the heavens and the earth - **2 Pe 3:7,10-12**
 - b. Declares that we look for new heavens and a new earth - **2 Pe 3:13**

2. The hope for new heavens and a new earth is based upon a promise; what promise has been made regarding such things...?
 - a. One in the Old Testament, centuries before Peter's statement - **Isa 65:17; 66:22**
 - b. One in the New Testament, possibly decades after Peter's statement - **Re 21:1**

[Since we are to “look” for such things (**2 Pe 3:13**), let's examine what has been promised about a new heavens and a new earth...]

I. AS PROMISED BY GOD

A. PROPHESED IN ISAIAH...

1. A detailed promise of new heavens and a new earth - **Isa 65:17-25**
 - a. In conjunction with the promise of a new Jerusalem
 - b. Depicting long life, physical blessings, peace among the wildlife
2. A brief reference to new heavens and a new earth - **Isa 66:22-24**
 - a. In conjunction with the preservation of Israel's remnant
 - b. Depicting worship by the nations, torment of the transgressors

B. INTERPRETATIONS OF ISAIAH...

1. Some understand these promises to apply figuratively to Israel's return from exile
 - a. “The passage before us is highly poetical, and we are not required to understand it literally.... The immediate reference here is, doubtless, to the land of Palestine, and to the important changes which would be produced there on the return of the exiles;” - **Albert Barnes**, Notes On The Bible, commentary on Isa 65:17
 - b. “I think it refers to the full conversion of the Jews ultimately; and primarily to the deliverance from the Babylonish captivity.” - **Adam Clarke**, Commentary on the Bible, commentary on Isa 65:17
2. Some suggest a secondary if not primary reference to the church today
 - a. “but it cannot be doubted that, under this imagery, there was couched a reference to far more important changes and blessings in future times under the Messiah - changes as great as if a barren and sterile world should become universally beautiful and fertile.” - **Barnes, ibid.**
 - b. “We conclude that...Isaiah's new heavens and new earth are the present order under Christ (65:17), which followed the passing of the old heathen systems (34:3-4) and the Jewish order (51:6,16)...” - **Homer Hailey**, A Commentary on Isaiah, Appendix B, p. 539

- c. "Isaiah used this...imagery when he prophesied of the new order that was to replace the Mosaic economy." - **Robert Harkrider**, Revelation, Truth Commentary, p. 239
- 3. Others suggest a secondary if not primary reference to the eternal state of the redeemed
 - a. "Isaiah 65:17-25 must also be understood as describing the final state of the redeemed" - **Anthony Hoekema**, The Bible and The Future, p. 178
 - b. "This passage (Isa 65:17-25)...does not need to be interpreted as describing the millennium, but makes good sense when understood to be an inspired picture of the new earth which is to come." - **ibid.**, p. 203
 - c. "'The new heavens and the new earth,' like many other prophecies has an immediate and a remote fulfillment, the first being the creation of 'an utterly new environment' in the first advent of Christ and the preaching of the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. The remote and final fulfillment is yet to occur when God will shake the earth the second time, signifying its 'removal' (He 12:27), when the present earth and the works within it are 'burned up' (2 Pe 3:7-10), when the 'elements shall melt with fervent heat,' and when has arrived that final 'day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.' It is freely admitted that these sensational promises could all be interpreted figuratively; but this writer, along with many others, clings to the conviction that cosmic disturbances of the most tremendous and far-reaching nature are most surely associated with the final Judgment Day in the Word of God." - **James Coffman**, commentary on Isa 65:17-25

C. PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON ISAIAH...

1. The final chapters of Isaiah (60-66) concentrate on the glory to come for restored Zion
2. I believe much of this section was fulfilled with the **inauguration** of the Messianic age in the first coming of Christ
3. Isaiah may have also looked forward to the future glory of Zion (spiritual Israel, i.e., the church) to be experienced at the **culmination** of the Messiah's reign at the end of time, following the resurrection and final judgment - cf. **Isa 11:1-4**
4. If so, Isaiah framed his description of the new heavens and new earth in terms to which the Babylonian captives could easily relate
5. Thus I tend to favor Coffman's perspective of both an immediate and remote fulfillment
 - a. The immediate fulfillment pertained to the first advent of Christ
 - b. The remote fulfillment pertains to the second advent of Christ

[When Peter said "according to His promise", I believe he had reference to the promise made in Isaiah, first written to provide great hope to Israel facing Babylonian captivity. To Christians in the first century facing persecution, a similar prophecy concerning new heavens and a new earth was written to them...]

II. AS PROMISED BY JESUS

A. PROPHESED IN REVELATION...

1. The present earth and heaven are no more - **Re 20:11**
 - a. At the day of Judgment they have "fled away"
 - b. There was found "no place for them"
2. John saw a new heaven and new earth - **Re 21:1**
 - a. For the first heaven and first earth had "passed away"
 - b. There was also "no more sea"

B. INTERPRETATIONS OF REVELATION...

1. Some believe it is a depiction of the church today
 - a. Following the persecution by the forces of Satan in the first couple of centuries
 - b. A picture of the church purged and purified by suffering
2. Others believe it is a depiction of the eternal state of the redeemed
 - a. “Peter and John were both writing of the final judgment and what should follow, rather than of the church today, purged and purified by suffering.” - **Homer Hailey**, A Commentary on Revelation, p. 406
 - b. “John’s prophecy in this vision was about things beyond the final judgment (20:13)... From Peter and John’s position in time, the destiny of the redeemed after the final judgment stands in contrast to this present era of the church age.” - **Harkrider**, *ibid.*

C. PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON REVELATION...

1. Revelation was written to comfort persecuted Christians in Asia Minor - **Re 1:4**
2. It describes events that would “shortly take place” - **Re 1:1,3; 22:6,10**
3. Such Christians were assured that Christ would be victorious - **Re 17:14**
 - a. Over the harlot, first supported by the beast and then devoured by it - **Re 17:3,16**
 - b. Over the beast and the false prophet, puppets of Satan - **Re 13:1-4,11-12; 19:20**
 - c. Over Satan himself, first by binding him for a long time - **Re 20:1-3**
4. The Christians in Asia Minor were also comforted by scenes in the distant future, similar to how Isaiah comforted his contemporaries by looking to the future
 - a. The ultimate end of Satan - **Re 20:7-10**
 - b. Deliverance from condemnation at the Judgment - **Re 20:11-15**
 - c. The eternal blessedness of the heavenly city - **Re 21:1-22:5**
5. Thus I favor the perspective espoused above by Hailey and Harkrider
 - a. John wrote of the final judgment and what was to follow
 - b. He depicted the destiny of the redeemed after the final judgment

[Having now reviewed the prophecies of God and Jesus as found in Isaiah and Revelation, let’s summarize what is “**The Promise Of New Heavens And A New Earth**”...]

III. AS PERCEIVED BY MAN

A. IN RELATION TO HEAVEN ITSELF...

1. Some believe it has nothing to do with heaven, but only the church today
2. Many believe it to be a metaphor of heaven itself, in which we will spend eternity
3. Yet the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed, the New Jerusalem, is depicted as being **separate** from the present dwelling place of God (i.e., heaven)
 - a. “...the New Jerusalem, which **comes down out of heaven** from My God.” - **Re 3:12**
 - b. “... the holy city, New Jerusalem, **coming down out of heaven** from God” - **Re 21:2**
 - c. “... the holy Jerusalem, **descending out of heaven** from God” - **Re 21:10**
4. As depicted, the eternal destiny of the redeemed is...
 - a. **Not** our spending eternity with God in heaven (His current dwelling place)
 - b. **But** God spending eternity with us in the New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven (His current dwelling place) - cf. **Re 21:2-3,22-23; 22:3-5**
5. This eternal heavenly city, which comes down out of heaven, is depicted in the context of the new heavens and a new earth - **Re 21:1**
 - a. Not in heaven itself, where God now dwells
 - b. But in a whole new order or spiritual state, where God will dwell with us!

B. IN RELATION TO THE PRESENT HEAVEN AND EARTH...

1. Some believe the “new” heavens and earth are the old purified and renovated
 - a. Including amillennialists like Barnes, B.W. Johnson, Hoekema, Kistemaker
 - b. Some arguments in favor
 - 1) The Greek word **kainos** (new, **2 Pe 3:13; Re 21:1**) does not mean new in time or origin, but new in **nature** or **quality**
 - 2) Renewal over annihilation seems to be supported by Paul in **Ro 8:19-22**
 - 3) A supposed analogy between the new earth and the resurrected bodies of believers
 - 4) If annihilation instead of renewal, then Satan would have won a great victory
2. Others believe the “new” heavens and earth are a new creation altogether
 - a. Such as Hailey
 - b. Some arguments in favor
 - 1) The Hebrew word **bara** (create, **Isa 65:17**) is the same word used to describe the initial creation of the heavens and earth - cf. **Gen 1:1; Isa 40:26**
 - 2) Jesus said, “heaven and earth will pass away” - **Mt 24:35**
 - 3) The Hebrew writer refers to “the removal of those things that are being shaken” (i.e., heaven and earth) - **He 12:26-27**
 - 4) Peter tells us concerning the present heavens and earth:
 - a) The heavens will pass away, be dissolved, being on fire - **2 Pe 3:10,12**
 - b) The elements will melt with fervent heat - **2 Pe 3:10,12**
 - c) The earth and the works in it will be burned up - **2 Pe 3:10**
 - 5) John describes the present heavens and earth:
 - a) As “fled away” - **Re 20:11**
 - b) Had “passed away” - **Re 21:1**
3. Some are uncertain, such as Coffman (and myself):
 - a. “We confess our inability to find any certainty on this question”
 - b. “It is not really necessary for us to know exactly what may be meant by this promise”

CONCLUSION

1. One may be uncertain whether the old heavens and old earth will be...
 - a. **Renovated** by fire, in preparation as an eternal dwelling place
 - b. **Annihilated** by fire, to be replaced by a totally new eternal dwelling place
2. Yet one can be certain that **in some way** there will be new heavens and a new earth...
 - a. For God has promised it - **2 Pe 3:13**
 - b. And God cannot lie! - **Ti 1:2; He 6:17-18**

How then should we live in view of this promise? Hear the words of Peter...

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;” - 2 Pe 3:14

Are we looking forward to those things described by Peter and John? Even more important, are we being diligent to be found prepared for when Jesus comes again...?

The Blessed State Of The Righteous Dead

Revelation 14:13

INTRODUCTION

1. In describing the Revelation that was shown to him, John heard words of comfort...
 - a. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" - **Rev 14:13a**
 - b. "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." - **Rev 14:13b**
2. What else does the Bible say about the state of the righteous dead...?
 - a. In regards to the **intermediate** state?
 - b. That period from the moment of one's death until the resurrection of the last day?

[The answer depends upon what covenant was in force. But in both testaments we find words and imagery that suggests a condition of blessedness for the righteous dead. Consider what we find...]

I. DURING THE OLD COVENANT

A. WORDS THAT COMFORTED...

1. The death of God's saints was precious in His sight - **Psa 116:15**
2. The death of the righteous was rest and peace, confronting evil no longer - **Isa 57:1-2**
- **Such words hinted of a blessed condition of the righteous dead in OT times**

B. IMAGERY THAT CONSOLED...

1. The beggar Lazarus was consoled and comforted - **Lk 16:19-22,25**
2. The reference to Moses places this during the Old Covenant - **Lk 16:29-31**
3. Jesus' account accords somewhat with Greek concepts of **Hades**
4. The Greek conception of Hades was that of a locality receiving into itself all the dead, but divided into two regions, one a place of torment, the other of blessedness. - **ISBE**
5. Greeks referred to the place of torment as **Tartarus**; Peter also - cf. **2 Pe 2:4**
6. Jews viewed the place of blessedness where Abraham was as **Paradise** - **Barnes**
7. Jesus later promised the thief that he would be in Paradise - **Lk 23:43**
8. Which between His death and ascension must have still been in Hades
 - a. For after His death Jesus descended to Hades - cf. **Ac 2:27**
 - b. Yet after His resurrection He had still not ascended to Heaven - cf. **Jn 20:17**
- **The story of Lazarus and the promise to the thief on the cross illustrates the blessed state of the righteous at that time**

[While the Old Covenant was still in effect, little was revealed about the state of the righteous dead. We now live under the New Covenant, where more is revealed and the blessedness is even greater...]

II. DURING THE NEW COVENANT

A. WORDS THAT COMFORT...

1. Paul viewed his impending death as a **departure**, using "a metaphor drawn from loosing

- from moorings preparatory to setting sail” (**Thayer**) - **2 Ti 4:6**
2. Peter used the Greek word **exodos** (translated “decease”), meaning “exit”, the same word used to describe the Exodus of Israel from Egyptian bondage - **2 Pe 1:15**
 3. Paul wrote of death as a **gain**, something far better than living - **Ph 1:21,23**
 4. He looked forward to **being with Christ, at home with the Lord** - **Ph 1:23; 2 Co 5:6-8**
 5. He described the righteous dead as **asleep in Jesus**, yet **living with Him**, and **coming with Him** - **1 Th 4:13-14; 5:9-11**
 6. He described **Paradise** as now in the third heaven (the presence of God!) - **2 Co 12:1-4**
 - a. Could the location of Paradise have changed from Hades to heaven?
 - b. Many believe that such occurred at the ascension of Christ, as suggested in **Ep 4:8-10**
- **Death for the righteous now promised something far greater!**

B. IMAGERY THAT CONSOLES...

1. Jesus made promises that clearly refer to the eternal state, after the Judgment
 - a. The right to the tree of life - **Re 2:7; cf. 22:2,14**
 - b. Not hurt by the second death - **Re 2:11; cf. 21:8**
 - c. Names not blotted out of the Book of Life - **Re 3:5; cf. 20:12,15**
 2. Yet also those that refer to the intermediate state, between death and the resurrection
 - a. To reign over the nations with Christ - **Re 2:26-27; 3:21; cf. 20:4-6**
 - b. To walk with Him in white, clothed in white garments - **Re 3:4-5; cf. 7:9-17**
- **Jesus describes blessings for the righteous dead prior to eternal state!**

CONCLUSION

1. The condition of the righteous in the intermediate state has always been one of bliss...
 - a. As depicted by the story of the rich man and Lazarus
 - b. Yet that only describes the condition while the Law of Moses was still in effect
2. The New Testament indicates that the condition of the righteous dead changed after Jesus ascended to heaven, so that...
 - a. Paradise is now in the presence of God in heaven
 - b. Faithful Christians can look forward to being with Christ upon their death
 - c. The righteous dead are now in the presence of Jesus, comforted by Him and serving God in His temple, even reigning with Him!
3. “But if righteous dead are in heaven now, what happens after the resurrection and judgment...?”
 - a. God and Jesus will dwell with them in heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven into a new heaven and new earth - cf. **Re 21:1-22:5**
 - b. A promise Peter and the early Christians looked forward to - cf. **2 Pe 3:13**

Wonderful are the words John heard from heaven...!

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”

The Heavenly City

Revelation 21:2-22:5

INTRODUCTION

1. It is written that Abraham looked for a city...
 - a. A city whose builder and maker is God - **He 11:8-10**
 - b. A city God had prepared for him - **He 11:13-16**
2. It is written that we too look for a city...
 - a. A city which is to come - **He 13:14**
 - b. A city promised by Jesus to those who overcome - **Re 3:12**

[John was shown a **vision** of a great city, along with words of comfort and warning (**Re 21:2-8**). He was then offered a detailed glimpse of this heavenly city. Let's take a closer look at what he saw...]

I. THE GREAT CITY (9-21)

A. JOHN IS SHOWN THE HOLY CITY...

1. By one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of wrath - **Re 21:9-10a**
 - a. Who offered to show John "the bride, the Lamb's wife"
 - b. Who carried him away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain
 2. He sees the great city, the holy Jerusalem - **Re 21:10b-11**
 - a. Descending **out of heaven** from God - cf. **Re 21:2**; also **3:12**
 - b. Having the glory of God, with light like a jasper stone, clear as crystal - cf. **Re 4:2-3**
- **The imagery is uncertain, but the city may be depicted as hovering between heaven and the new earth**

B. JOHN DESCRIBES THE HOLY CITY...

1. It had a great and high wall - **Re 21:12-14**
 - a. With twelve gates, with three gates each on east, north, south
 - b. With twelve angels at the gates
 - c. With the twelve tribes of Israel's names inscribed on the gates
 - d. With twelve foundations
 - e. With the twelve apostles' names inscribed on the foundations
2. The measurement of the city, the gates, and the wall - **Re 21:15-17**
 - a. The angel had a golden reed to measure them
 - b. The city is laid out as a cube, its length, breadth, and height are each 12,000 furlongs (1500 hundred miles cubed), the distance from Orlando to Denver!
 - c. The wall is one hundred and forty-four cubits (216 feet), either high or thick
3. The construction of the city, the wall, its foundations, and the gates - **Re 21:18-21**
 - a. The wall was of jasper; the city was pure gold, like clear glass
 - b. The twelve foundations of the wall were adorned with precious stones:

1) Jasper	5) Sardonyx	9) Topaz
2) Sapphire	6) Sardius	10) Chrysoprase
3) Chalcedony	7) Chrysolite	11) Jacinth
4) Emerald	8) Beryl	12) Amethyst

- c. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate one pearl
- d. The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass
- **Imagine the colors, with varying shades of green, red, blue, gold, and clear crystal!**

[Truly a great city; beyond our comprehension, but worthy of contemplation! Let's read more about...]

II. THE GLORIOUS CITY (22-27)

A. ILLUMINATED BY THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE LAMB...

1. Its temple are the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb - **Re 21:22**
 - a. There is no temple, unlike there was in heaven described earlier - **Re 7:15**
 - b. For that depicted the blessing of the intermediate state, but this the eternal state
 2. It is illuminated by the glory of God and the Lamb - **Re 21:23**
 - a. There was no need of the sun or moon to shine in it - cf. **Isa 60:19-20**
 - b. Of course, the sun and moon as we know it had burned up, and replaced by a new heaven and a new earth - cf. **2 Pe 3:10-13; Re 21:1**
- **A glorious city, illuminated by a glorious God and Savior!**

B. ENHANCED BY THOSE WHO ENTER IT...

1. The nations of the saved shall walk in its light - **Re 21:24a**
 - a. The saved come from different nations - cf. **Mt 28:19**
 - b. The imagery is similar to that found in Isaiah - cf. **Isa 60:3-9**
 2. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it - **Re 21:24b**
 - a. Perhaps referring to such righteous kings like those of Judah (David, Hezekiah, Josiah)
 - b. Or those redeemed by the Lamb, who will reign together with Him - cf. **Re 22:6**
 3. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day, and there is no night there - **Re 21:25**
 - a. Those twelve gates of pearl shall remain open
 - b. There is no night, for the glory of God and the Lamb are ever present
 4. The nations shall bring their glory and honor into it - **Re 21:26**
 - a. Glory and honor to be added to the glory of God and the Lamb - cf. **Re 21:23**
 - b. Glory and honor they themselves received at the coming of the Lord - cf. **2 Th 1:10-12**
 5. Nothing that defiles shall enter it - **Re 21:27**
 - a. None that cause an abomination or a lie, shall enter it - cf. **Re 21:8**
 - b. Only those written in the Lamb's book of Life enter it - cf. **Re 3:5; 20:15**
- **A glorious city, enhanced by the glorified redeemed of all nations!**

C. PROVISIONED FOR EVERLASTING SERVICE...

1. The water of life - **Re 22:1**
 - a. A pure river, clear as crystal
 - b. Proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb
 - c. Promised to those who thirst (for righteousness) - **Re 21:6; 22:17; cf. Mt 5:6**
2. The tree of life - **Re 22:2**
 - a. In the middle of the street (was in the garden of Eden, now in the city of God!)
 - b. Straddling the river of the water of life (from which it gets its nourishment?)
 - c. Bearing twelve fruits, yielding fruit every month (perpetual provisions)
 - d. With leaves for the healing of the nations (no more sickness)
3. The reign of His servants - **Re 22:3-5**
 - a. The curse which made work difficult is no more - cf. **Gen 3:17-19**
 - b. The throne of God and of the Lamb is present (God's reign continues!)

- c. His servants serve Him (there will be work, but it will not be laborious)
 - d. They shall see His face (like the angels, they will enjoy His presence) - cf. **Mt 18:20**
 - e. His name will be on their foreheads (they shall be designated as His) - cf. **Re 3:12**
 - f. There shall be no night, no need of lamp nor light of the sun (for God is the light)
 - g. They shall reign forever and ever (the exalted nature of our service!) - cf. **Mt 25:21**
- **A glorious city, with provisions to enable glorious service for eternity!**

CONCLUSION

1. Granted, we are dealing with a **highly figurative passage**...
 - a. John was shown that which is to come in symbols - cf. **Re 1:1**
 - b. We must be careful not to strain the figures beyond their intended purpose
2. But how shall we **envision** the hope that we have in Christ...?
 - a. With images of our own imagination, with those from other uninspired sources?
 - b. Or with those provided by Jesus Himself, to comfort and encourage His servants?
3. As we look for the city to come (cf. **He 13:14**)...
 - a. A city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God - cf. **He 11:10**
 - b. A city prepared by God who is not ashamed to be called our God - cf. **He 11:16**

...may we who are disciples of Jesus Christ allow the vision seen by John to **excite** and **encourage** us to remain faithful until we walk through those pearly gates! Listen, then, to these words:

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

- Rev 22:12-17