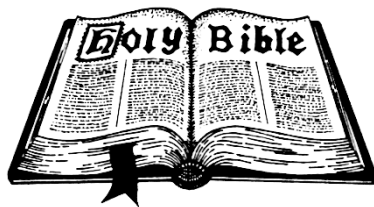


Twelfth Annual
TRUTH IN LOVE
LECTURESHIP

Theme:
**The
Victory
Through Our Lord
Jesus Christ**



May 15-19, 2002

PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR

Hosted By The
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INTRODUCTION

Victory ~ from the Latin *vincere*, meaning to conquer; to win a battle, war or any struggle.

For many years on Saturday mornings ABC's *Wide World of Sports* began with scenes of triumph and tragedy in sports, followed by the phrase, "*Capturing the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.*" Losing can be as bitter as winning is sweet. However, there will always be another day, another competition, another chance to rise from the ashes of failure to the pinnacle of success. Athletes can train harder, work longer, perform better and learn from their mistakes to help them become victorious in future games.



In physical combat victory and defeat are far more serious than in sporting events. In war the consequence of defeat may be permanent injury, slavery, imprisonment or even death. In the event of the latter there is no second chance or rematch so victory is essential. In such cases defeat may not only impact those who are physically doing the fighting, but also their families, governments and all the citizens of the country for whom they are fighting. Had the Allied Forces not successfully defeated Hitler and the Axis of Evil in World War II, we would probably be speaking German, saluting a swastika and the religious freedom we so treasure would not exist. In these conflicts victory and defeat are of the utmost importance, but there is one realm in which the battle is much more serious and the

outcome is frighteningly crucial.

In the spiritual battle for our souls there is no second chance, there will be no rematch and the consequences or rewards are eternal. The difference between victory and defeat is Heaven and Hell. The glory of victory is that it can never be taken from us. Once we have crossed the finish line, having "*run with patience the race that is set before us*" (Heb. 12:1), we will receive a crown of life (2 Tim. 4:8) that is "*incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*" (1 Peter 1:4). With great joy we will lay down our swords having fought a good fight, finished our course and kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7). However, the terror of defeat is that it too is final. If our enemy has victory over us there will be no second chance to escape the condemnation of Hell. Defeat means eternity in a place where the fire will never be quenched (Mark 9:44), the flame torments (Luke 16:24) and there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12). Knowing that victory or defeat means eternal suffering or eternal joy should motivate anyone to take this battle seriously.

OUR ENEMY

The seriousness of the battle is further comprehended when we examine our opponent. He is the father of lies and a murderer (John 8:44); the god and prince of this world (2 Cor. 4:4; John 12:31); a serpent and dragon (Rev. 20:2); a destroyer (Rev. 9:11); a roaring lion and adversary (1 Peter 5:8). The Devil is not just a prankster or joker seeking to irritate and frustrate us. Satan hates us and wants us to suffer in life, die and then suffer for eternity. Jesus warned, "*the thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*" (John 10:10). Our enemy in this battle is seeking to bring about as

much pain as is possible. He is seeking to devour us and his tactics are crafty, deceitful, subtle and treacherous. He will tell us what we want to hear, lie to us and sneak up on us to prevent our victory. He has servants who will assist him in his evil scheme (2 Cor. 11:13-15) and some of those servants may be in our own families or those we consider friends. In addition to the servants fighting for him and against us, the Devil has two powerful weapons that he has used to keep mankind in bondage: sin and death. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). *"For the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"* (Ezek. 18:20). Because all are guilty of sin and the consequence of sin is death, Satan would appear to be invincible. However, Satan should not get an advantage over us because, *"we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Cor. 2:11). God has not left us defenseless against this enemy, but has given us everything we need to successfully fight this battle (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Preparation and knowledge can only take us so far, beyond that we will need a leader, saviour, deliverer, and God has provided one. The idea of battling such a ruthless, cunning, powerful, determined enemy, who has so many supporters and weapons, would be terrifying and hopeless were it not for our leader.

OUR LEADER

While our enemy came to steal, kill and destroy, our Lord, who is our leader, came that *"they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). He does not just promise life (victory), but abundant, overflowing life; our cup runneth over (Psm. 23:5). The General of our salvation is not just good, He is the greatest. He is not just powerful, He is all powerful.

Certainly our enemy is strong, but our Saviour is much stronger. His power over nature was demonstrated when He calmed the storm with only a few words, prompting the disciples to marvel, *“Even the winds and the sea obey Him”* (Matt. 8:27). His power over sickness, disease and all infirmities was displayed when He ended suffering with just the touch of His hand (Matt. 8:14-15). He proved He was more powerful than the grave by simply commanding, *“Lazarus, come forth”* (John 11:43). Jesus showed His supremacy over Satan by casting out some of his demon servants with only one word, *“Go”* (Matt. 8:32). The Lord was able to enter into the strong man’s house, bind the strong man (Satan) and then spoil his house (Matt. 12:29). He has promised, assured, guaranteed victory over our enemy if we follow Him. *“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor. 15:57). Those who are on the Lord’s side do not hope for victory, or think there is a good chance for victory, they are guaranteed to be given the victory by God because our leader has already defeated our enemy.

While specifically this text refers to the victory over death that Christians have through Jesus, in principle it is not limited to this one area. Christians have victory over our enemy, the Devil himself, not just over some of his attacks. While Satan bruised the heel of our leader in His crucifixion, Jesus crushed his head in His resurrection from the dead. Christ took away the only two weapons that Satan had to use against us: sin and death. Jesus overcame sin (Heb. 4:15) and conquered death (1 Cor. 15:54-57) and in so doing we have *“victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

OUR FELLOW SOLDIERS

To further assist us, to give us strength, comfort and support, our leader has provided us with fellow soldiers, allies. There is strength in numbers. In the long ago the wise Solomon instructed,

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken (Eccl. 4:9-12).

Each Christian is a soldier in the army of God, commissioned to resist and oppose our enemy (James 4:7), to defend the faith (Jude 3) and to, "*endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Tim. 2:3). We gain confidence in knowing that we do not stand alone, there are many who are fighting alongside of us in the Lord's army. The enemy has many servants seeking to destroy us and the Lord has many soldiers helping defend us. "*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*" (Rom. 12:5). To borrow from the slogan for the United States Army, we are an "Army of one." We are one body (Eph. 4:4), with one mind, one speech (1 Cor. 1:10), one hope and one leader (Eph. 4:5-6). While there is no doubt that the enemy is fierce and his legion of soldiers is ever growing and outnumbering the army of God, take comfort in knowing,

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4).

OUR VICTORY

Despite the knowledge that we are well prepared, that we have an invincible leader and that we are surrounded by fellow soldiers, sometimes the battle can wear us down. After years of fighting, struggling and opposing the enemy we can grow weary. Our hearts ache over fallen comrades and our bodies become weak from decades in combat. It is in these times of weakness, these moments when our guard is down that we must consider our victory. We must consider the spoils of victory, our reward; eternal life without pain, suffering, sadness or separation (Rev. 21:4); a mansion prepared for us in our Father's house (John 14:1-3); victory in Jesus. When our faith is weak and our strength is waning, we need to follow our leader.

Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds (Heb. 12:1-3).

Our leader is not asking us to fight any battles He Himself has not already fought. He endured temptation without sin (Heb. 4:15). He stood face to face with the enemy and sent him running (Matt. 4:1-11). He endured the ridicule, mocking, shame, suffering and death of the cross (Heb. 12:2-3). He won the victory and offers to give it to us. Whereas Satan wields the weapon of sin and its consequential companion death, Jesus offers us a gift, *"the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ*

our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

When we think we cannot continue, look to the leader. He endured the worst of the war for the joy set before Him (for the victory). He has already won the victory and offers to give it to us. And the victory He gives us cannot be taken from us by our enemy.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

Paul describes those who are in Christ as being more than conquerors, literally, "super-victors."

The theme for this Twelfth Annual Truth In Love Lectureship was chosen to solidify and strengthen our faith by identifying our enemies, our leader, our fellowsoldiers and the victory that is ours to enjoy. Let us rejoice and proclaim together,

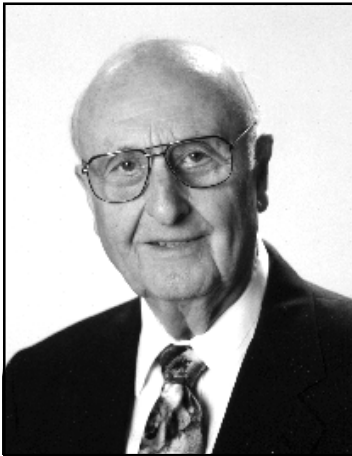
***But thanks be to God, which giveth us
the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ
(1 Cor. 15:57).***

~ Brandon Britton

DEDICATION

One may obey the Lord, becoming a Christian, begin a life of serving the Lord and all appear well. Tragically, some become weary and fall away. Others may serve the Lord for a few (or even many) years, and as unbelievable as it seems, cease to faithfully follow their Savior.

How wonderful it is to have fellowship with those who began a life of service in the Kingdom of God, and have refused to be ensnared by carnal enticements, and



Perry B. Cotham

have continued their journey toward their heavenly mansion (John 14:1-3).

The one to whom we lovingly dedicate this volume is such a one: **Perry B. Cotham.**

The East Hill Church first met in 1951. Over fifty years ago, brother Cotham came to Pulaski, preached the gospel of Christ in what is known as the Ballentine House house section of our building. He lived upstairs during that series. Many have fond memories of his being associated with the church here at that time. This valued and esteemed relationship has continued through the years, and in recent years as he has regularly spoken on the annual **Truth In Love Lectureship.**

Brother Cotham has faithfully, powerfully, effectively preached the gospel throughout the world. He has

been involved in the world's greatest work, preaching the gospel of Christ since 1929 ~ 73 years! He has worked in full-time evangelistic work since 1972. Though over four score and ten years of age, he continues to travel around the world proclaiming the good news of Christ with zeal and godly enthusiasm. With the passing of precious years, he seems to be even more effective in his work for the Lord.

Brother Cotham was blessed with a valuable helpmeet and companion, Teresa, for many decades, before her departure from this life. The Cothams have three children.

Brother Cotham has dear friends, treasured acquaintances and co-laborers in the Lord located in numerous countries around the world. He is esteemed highly, respected greatly, and loved dearly. His friendship and association is treasured.

As we labor for the common cause, with a common goal, we count ourselves greatly blessed to have walked with this faithful soldier of the cross. It is our desire to express a small portion of our love by this dedication of this volume to him.

Paul Sain
Lectureship Director

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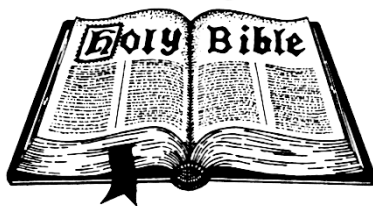
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Chapter 1

The Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ

Kevin D. Beard



Kevin is a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching (1992) • The Beards have worked with congregations in Newbern, TN and presently preaches for the Fayette, AL congregation (since 1999) • A capable song leader • Has been active in mission work overseas • Author of class material for teens • Kevin's father is also a faithful preacher • Kevin and Jan have three children (Jonathan, Justin, and Jeremy).

For many people, victory is a prize to be desperately pursued. Vince Lombardi supposedly said, "*Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing,*" and many people share that sentiment. Some people treasure victory just for victory's sake; but for others, victory takes on different levels of importance depending on the prize to be won: the bigger the prize, the greater the effort to win. The regular season in Major League Baseball is 162 games long. Those teams who will make the playoffs and ultimately play in the World Series will reach those goals despite many ups and downs in the season. Though winning as many games as possible is important, winning an individual game in the middle of the season would not be such a priority that the manager would use every pitcher, every player, and every option to win that one game. However, if that same team were to play

in the final game of the World Series that same manager would use every possible option to win that one game at all costs. What is the difference? The prize to be won as a result of winning that one game is much greater. When the prize is great enough, those who are dedicated to victory will do all that they can to secure victory for themselves. Victory comes more often by determined and practiced effort than by accident. These same principles hold true in Christianity as well. There is a great prize to be won. There is only one way to win that prize. Therefore Christians ought to live with that victory always in mind. Paul discussed these matters in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

THE VICTORY TO BE WON

1 Corinthians 15, the great *"Resurrection Chapter,"* fills the Christian's heart with hope, confidence, and joy. It inspires us to more faithful and diligent service, knowing that whatever things we may face in our earthly lives will one day be swallowed up in the victory that is in Christ. The victory of which Paul writes is threefold.

Victory Over the Flesh

God made the physical world to support life on earth in every way. Genesis states: *"And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food..."* (Gen. 2:9). One would expect that God would provide those kinds of trees and other plants that were good for food, so that human beings would be able to survive. But God knew that life is more than mere survival, so He also made the trees and other plants that were *"pleasant to the sight."* Why did God make roses and daisies, redbuds and dogwoods? Those kinds of plants provide no food; those trees are no good for lumber; why did God bother creating them? He wanted our existence on earth to be enjoyable, and so it is.

But human experience tells us that life is not always enjoyable. As beautiful as the flowers are, they still wither and die. And in the same way, everything connected with the flesh, or earthly things, eventually withers and dies, too. Peter said, *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away"* (1 Peter 1:24). Because the flesh is subject to decay, we must deal with difficult things.

Many people say they want to live to be very old. But living to an advanced age more often than not brings difficult things to deal with. As the body ages it functions less efficiently. Arthritis makes the joints more stiff and painful for many people. Vision and hearing often diminish with advanced age. Many people suffer with heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other maladies, as they get older. A man in his nineties was on the ground in his yard picking up pine cones one day. His neighbor was a younger man in his thirties, and this neighbor went across the street to talk with the elderly gentleman. The older man started to get up from the ground but could not, so he asked his younger neighbor to give him a hand. However, the man did not have the strength to pull himself up either. Finally the younger man lifted his elderly neighbor up and set him on his feet. The old man thanked his young friend and said, *"Well, I guess that's what you get for living to be over ninety years old."* This writer was the younger man in that story. That event forced this writer to think a little differently about living to an advanced age. If they were completely honest about it, how many people in their nineties or beyond would admit that living to such ages was not all it was *"cracked up to be?"* Visit a nursing home and see the number of people suffering because their bodies, or their minds, or both have deteriorated to the point that they are no longer able to live alone and care for themselves. Who would want to live forever in a body that is subject to decay?

The victory we have through Christ gives us victory over the flesh. Paul said,

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption (1 Cor. 15:50).

Because Heaven is not a physical, or fleshly place, flesh and blood (or, physical bodies) cannot go there. Heaven is a place that is impervious to decay. Jesus said that moth and rust do not corrupt things there (Matt. 6:20). Peter said it is an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that does not fade away (1 Peter 1:4). It is permanent; it is eternal; it will never decay, deteriorate, nor be destroyed. Does not it make sense, then, that those who occupy this place must themselves be impervious to decay as well? The Holy Spirit would never have inspired Peter, Paul, and others to describe Heaven as "*incorruptible*" if it would be inhabited by people in fleshly bodies that would get old and wear out.

This fact makes the resurrection necessary. Paul said,

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

When Jesus returns, the dead in Christ will be raised first (1 Thess. 4:16), with an incorruptible body, and the righteous ones who are still living at that time will be changed. In what way will we be changed? We will be changed so that we will be suited to dwell in an incorruptible place. "*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*" (1 Cor. 15:53). Since fleshly bodies are subject to decay,

they cannot inhabit heaven, which is not subject to decay; therefore, the change that will take place will be a changing of the body.

God has not revealed what this new body will be like. John said, "*...it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*" (1 John 3:2). Though we do not know the process God will use to raise the dead and change the living, this should not cause us to doubt His ability to do it. Paul anticipated that some might question the validity of the resurrection because of this: "*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*" (1 Cor. 15:35). Paul called this kind of reasoning foolish. God accomplishes the same kind of feat regularly. When one plants a seed, he expects it to grow. He knows that the resulting plant is different from the seed that was planted; yet that plant came from the seed. Paul said that the seed would not germinate and grow unless it dies. But after it dies, it comes forth from the ground with a new body, one of God's choosing; it is different in form from the seed, yet it is still the same. God does not remove the seed and replace it with the plant. He changes the seed from the seed form to the plant form. In a similar way, God will change the body from a perishable form to an imperishable form. Thus, through Jesus Christ we have victory over the flesh. Injury, disease, and deterioration may inflict the bodies we have while on earth, but we anticipate the day when the Lord will give us a body that will neither become injured nor diseased, nor will it deteriorate.

Victory Over Death

It has been said that from the moment we are born, we begin to die. In one sense, life is but a journey to the grave. No one can escape it. Only two people ever have (Enoch and Elijah), but that was by Divine intervention. For many people death is the great unknown—something to be feared. And so people put off thinking about it; they do not want to talk about it.

Satan held mankind in bondage for ages because of the fear of death. No matter how much people wanted to be free from sin, they could not be free from it; there was no provision for freedom. Paul described this hopeless feeling (Rom. 7:15-25). He talked about how that under the Law of Moses he desired to follow God's law, yet he sinned. He wanted to be free from that sin, but there was no provision in that law to release him from the guilt of sin. He brought the discussion to a climax by saying:

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:22-24).

The Law of Moses did not provide for the release from sin's guilt that Paul and all others under that law sought. Paul answered his own question: *"who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 7:24-25). Jesus Christ delivers all people from the predicament Paul described. But before Christ came there was no solution to the problem. The only

thing man had to look forward to was death, and after death to face God in judgment as one who still possessed the guilt of his sin; how horrible a thought that would be. If Christ had never come, Satan could tell every person, even those who tried to serve God, "*Serve God all you want, but one day you will die.*"

But God never intended for people to live in that kind of fear. Jesus came to deliver the human race from that bondage, but that also made His own death necessary. It would be through Jesus' own death that He would destroy Satan, wresting from him the power of death, thereby delivering the world from that bondage brought on by the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15). Jesus gives us victory over death.

The recurring promise of Christ to the faithful is eternal life.

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life (Matt. 19:29).

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

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:27-28).

There is no doubt that if we are faithful to Christ, He will reward us with eternal life.

But what about death; does the promise of eternal life exempt the Christian from physical death? No. Paul said that death is the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). We know that death shall be destroyed, because Jesus rose from the dead. Paul said, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"* (1 Cor. 15:19-20). Our hope of the promise Christ has given is not tied to physical life; that is, we do not have to hope that Christ returns to take us to heaven before we die. If that were the case, Paul said we would be the most miserable people of all. But because Christ has risen from the dead, we also have the same hope.

So then, we, like Jesus, one day will come out of the grave, never to die again, if we are faithful. We will be raised with a new, incorruptible body, that is not only impervious to decay, but also not subject to death. At that time, death will be finally and completely defeated.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? (1 Cor. 15:54-55).

Victory Over Sin

Though physical decay causes hardship, and physical death brings great sorrow, they both pale in comparison to the problems caused by sin. The

difficulties and problems discussed so far have had to do with physical life, but sin affects not only physical life, but also, and more importantly, spiritual life. Sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2). It causes spiritual death (Eph. 2:1). Everyone is affected by it (Rom. 3:23). There is nothing worse than sin.

To understand the severity of sin, we must always keep God in mind. Paul said, *"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death"* (2 Cor. 7:10). To get out of sin, one must repent, and to repent, one must have godly sorrow. But what is *"godly sorrow?"* In Romans, Paul also discussed the motivation for repentance. There, he said that *"...the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"* (Rom. 2:4). How has God demonstrated His goodness? There are too many ways to count. He created the world and its beauty for us to inhabit and enjoy. He gives us life. He gave His Son to die for our sins. He gave us the Bible to show us how to receive forgiveness and thus become His children. And He demonstrates forbearance and longsuffering toward us. Whatever you can think of that is truly and inherently good came from God, for *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). Yet when we sin, we rebel against God, and in so doing, we reject His goodness. Our sin tells God that we neither care about, nor appreciate His goodness toward us. When we reflect upon that in the proper frame of mind, it causes us to grieve over our sins. Yet this grieving and sorrow focuses primarily on God and what we

do to Him when we sin. To think only of self and how difficult sin has made our lives because of its consequences is to demonstrate only *"worldly sorrow,"* which brings about death. An anagram of the word *"Christianity"* is *"I cry that I sin."* Christians ought to have that attitude. Though we know that God is *"faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9), we still grieve because of our weaknesses, knowing that they hurt God.

The sinfulness of others also disturbs the faithful child of God. Lot is a good example of this. Now Lot made a foolish choice when he decided to *"pitch his tent toward Sodom,"* because the men of Sodom were wicked (Gen. 13:12-13); but at least Lot maintained his own righteousness in that wicked environment. Peter called Lot a just, or righteous man (2 Peter 2:7-8). The things that went on around him in the city troubled him. He did not let himself become accustomed to them, but continually grieved over the sinfulness he witnessed around him. Peter said he *"...vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds"* (2 Peter 2:8). Woods said of this verse,

The words describe the pain that a naturally sensitive and righteous man would experience at the sight of such flagrant lawlessness as that which existed in Sodom. Though in the midst of extreme wickedness, (a) Lot was not corrupted by it; (b) he did not become indifferent to it; (c) he was daily concerned about it. In this he serves as a pattern for us today.¹

Through Jesus Christ we have victory over sin. Paul's discussion of our victory through Christ climaxes with these words:

O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

Sin brought death into the world, but Christ gives us victory over sin because He has “...*washed us from our sins in his own blood*” (Rev. 1:5). Sin exerted its strength through the law. God declared that when we sin we deserve to die (cf., Gen. 2:17). The Law of Moses pointed out sin, and showed how terrible sin was, but it made no provision for the removal of sin. There was no sufficient sacrifice for sin under that law, “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*” (Heb. 10:4). Therefore, there was condemnation under the Law of Moses. But in Christ, there is no condemnation:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:1-3).

The Law of Moses was incapable of setting men free from the law of sin and death; but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus accomplished that which the Mosaic Law could not. Jesus gives us victory over sin.

THE WAY TO VICTORY

In sports there may be many ways to victory. One

football team utilizes its brutal strength on the offensive line to open up holes as their running backs power across the line to gain hard-fought yards down after down. Another football team uses finesse, quickness, and speed, with an accurate quarterback who is able to throw the football to his fleet-footed receivers as they move the ball down the field. Yet another football team may use a variety of plays and styles, sometimes running the ball, sometimes passing the ball, but always varying their plays to keep the other team off balance and guessing what might come next. All of these styles have been successful for various football teams through the years, bringing them victory. There are many ways to victory in football. But there is only **one way to victory** over the flesh, over death, and over sin, and that is **through Jesus Christ**. Paul plainly said that God "...giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). To come to the Father means that one comes into a relationship with God as his father, and ultimately comes to dwell with the Father in that place that Jesus went to prepare. Jesus specified that the only way to accomplish that is through Him. Many people today seem to think that whatever they choose to do will be acceptable with Jesus and with the Father, so long as they do those things sincerely and with the claim that they are doing them to the glory of God. This attitude has brought about all kinds of things that God never authorized: instrumental music, special singing groups, women leaders in worship, *"praise teams,"* dramatic presentations, and so forth. Too many people today

fail to realize or to admit that their claiming that something is acceptable with God does not make it acceptable with God.

Jesus explained it perfectly:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful *works*? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

There will be many people in the Day of Judgment who thought that their lives were filled with good works in the Lord's name. But their claims alone do not establish the Lord's approval. Only those who do the will of the Father in heaven will be accepted. This is why Paul admonishes us: "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*" (Col. 3:17). To do things in the name of the Lord Jesus means to do them according to His authority. Every act in life, in doctrine, and in worship must be authorized by the Lord. How do we know whether the Lord has authorized the things we do? By studying His word. In His word God has given us "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness*" (2 Peter 1:3), and that word is able to equip us completely "*unto all good works*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The New Testament teaches us that all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Certainly the victory discussed above is one of those spiritual blessings. That

victory is given through Christ and that spiritual blessing is located in Christ. Every person ought to learn how to get into Christ, because it is only in Christ that anyone will be saved. The New Testament has only two verses that specifically say anything about getting into Christ. They are Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27. Both verses specify that one must be baptized into Christ:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (Rom. 6:3).

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).

To get into Christ a believer who has repented of his sins and confessed his faith in Christ must be baptized in order to have the blood of Jesus wash away his sins (Acts 2:38; 8:36-37; Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16). Once one has entered Christ's body through baptism (cf., 1 Cor. 12:13), he must stay in Christ through living faithfully to the Lord's will (1 John 1:7). Only in this way can anyone achieve the victory.

LIVING WITH VICTORY IN MIND

The victory Paul discussed is yet future. That fact gives us hope in difficult times. It helps us to deal with the things in life that we cannot understand. It inspires us to want to do even more in the cause of Christ. These are the very kinds of things Paul wanted the Christians in Corinth to understand. He concluded this discussion about the victory we have through Christ by saying:

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

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

If people think that their effort is meaningless, they will eventually give up. That same thing can happen in Christianity. If people believed that there was no real purpose for living righteously, they would quickly cease to live righteously. But there is a purpose to righteous living; it is worthwhile. The ultimate victory awaits the faithful. Those who give up will not receive the victory. Therefore, we must do all that we can to remain faithful.

Paul instructs us to be steadfast and unmovable. Living with the victory in mind means living with the determination to overcome. God has promised that there is no power strong enough to remove us from His love (Rom. 8:38-39); but we can fall from grace by turning away from the Lord and giving in to sin (Gal. 5:4). Many have compared salvation to an election in which only three votes are cast. God already has cast His vote for our salvation; Satan already has cast his vote against our salvation; we will cast the deciding vote. It is vitally important then, that Christians face life with a steadfast determination to overcome every temptation. We can overcome any temptation we face (1 Cor. 10:13), but we must decide to do so. It is vitally important that Christians face life with a steadfast determination to avoid the influence of false teachers. False teachers are prevalent in the world and their doctrine will lead us away from Christ unless we mature in the faith (Eph. 4:14-16; 1 Peter 2:2). This kind of determination to do right regardless of what others did brought many into God's favor: Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David,

Daniel, and so many others all shared a steadfast determination to do right. Surely they had the victory in mind, and so must we.

In addition to this steadfast determination, Paul instructs us to be *"always abounding in the work of the Lord."* Proper attitudes are necessary and good; but those attitudes must translate into action. Everything about serving Christ requires action. The people in Jerusalem on Pentecost asked what they needed to do and Peter told them what to do (Acts 2:37-38). Saul asked the Lord, *"what wilt thou have me to do"* (Acts 9:6), and the Lord later sent Ananias to tell Saul what to do. The angel instructed Cornelius to send for Peter who would come and tell them what they ought to do (Acts 10:6). Christianity is an active service. Knowing that victory is at stake should cause every Christian to fill his life with service to the Lord. Notice that Paul's instructions did not specify a token service; rather he said the Christian's life should be filled to overflowing with the work of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Satan is the adversary of all of mankind. He seeks only destruction. Sadly, he will succeed with most people (cf. Matt. 7:13-14). But God has promised a victory to those who desire to receive it. That victory is a complete and ultimate victory over the things that bring us pain, sorrow, and suffering. It is a victory over the flesh, death, and sin. But the only way to achieve that victory is through Jesus Christ, by living in complete submission to His will. If we will live with that victory in mind, then our lives will demonstrate the confidence we have

in Christ. We will live with a steadfast determination to do right and our lives will be full of good works for the Lord. We, like Paul, ought to praise God for the great victory that He gives us through Jesus Christ.

ENDNOTES

1 Guy N. Woods, **A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude** (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1987), 169.

Chapter 2

God's Eternal Purpose For All Mankind

Ryan Tuten



Ryan Tuten has done local preaching in Waycross, GA and presently preaches for the Lake City Church of Christ in Lake City, FL. Ryan is a 1998 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. He is a talented, knowledgeable and zealous proclaimer of the Word. The Tutens have two children.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak on this important topic, *"God's Eternal Purpose for All Mankind."* I commend this faithful congregation of God's people for their firm stand in the truth of God's eternal plan to save man. The East Hill congregation is greatly blessed to have faithful elders, deacons and preachers who are dedicated to the Holy Scriptures. The scriptural soundness of this effort is reflective of the daily soundness of the membership of this great church of our Lord.

From the very beginning of time, God has had a plan and purpose for man. Paul expressed to the Christians at Ephesus,

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the **eternal** purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord: (Eph. 3:10-11).

Throughout all the pages of the Holy Scripture we see the need for human redemption. The fact of redemption implies the need for redemption. The first three chapters of Genesis are specifically designed to explain the need for redemption. In spite of all that God had done, and in spite of all the wonderful circumstances, blessings, and opportunities – Adam and Eve transgressed God's will. Through this sin of Adam, sin and death entered into the world, Romans 5:12. Consequently man is born into a world where sin and death (both physically and spiritually) do exist.¹ One dies physically as a consequence of Adam's sin.² One dies spiritually as a consequence of his own sins (Ezek. 18:20). When an accountable individual yields to temptation and transgresses God's law he thereby becomes a sinner, and involved in spiritual death.³ He stands in need of deliverance, redemption and begs the question, "*Does God have a plan for me?*"

All of mankind who are at the age of accountability share the need for redemption. This is true because all have sinned (Rom. 3:23).⁴ The Gentiles, prior to the New Testament gospel, had violated that which God had given them, and thus were condemned before God, Romans 1:18-32.⁵ The Jews, prior to the New Testament gospel, had violated the Mosaic law, and were therefore condemned, Romans 2:1-3, 20. They, Jews and Gentiles alike, were sinners – guilty, and condemned, Romans 3:22,23. Further, "*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,*" (1 John 1:8). Therefore, God sheds light on our question and shows us we are in need of a Savior, true redemption.

The Bible teaches that only through Jesus Christ can redemption be found (Acts 4:12). In Romans 3:24

Paul refers to *"being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* Paul tells the Ephesians that we have this redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ, (Eph. 1:7). Christ is our Deliverer, Paul addresses the churches of Galatia and states that, *"Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:"* (Gal. 1:4). Now we begin to see the unfolding of God's plan and purpose for man.

Our lesson title makes a statement as well as creates some questions, *"God's eternal purpose for mankind."* Notice the first word is *"God,"* all things must begin with God, *"In the beginning God..."* (Gen. 1:1). Throughout all of time man has realized there is a need for heavenly guidance. The prophet Isaiah many years ago stated through inspiration, *"Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word..."* (Isa. 66:5). We must all realize that the way of man is not in himself (Jer. 10:23). When God speaks, that is final and He forbids man to take away or to add to His Divine Word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). His Word is our final judge (John 12:48). Therefore let us examine the Word of God and see God's plan and purpose for mankind.

As the story of God's purpose for man unfolds, it becomes evident that God has always had a plan. There are some basic fundamental facts that help in drawing this conclusion, as noticed earlier: (1) man is in need of redemption; (2) and this redemption can only be found in Jesus Christ; (3) and the Old Testament points to Christ. The New Testament shows that He came and is coming again and that the Christ is the sum and substance of the whole Bible message. From these fundamental facts we have the inevitable conclusion that

the *purpose of the Bible* is: The glory of God, and the salvation of man, through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁶ This is the purpose line which runs through the whole Bible – from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. Every word of every verse of every paragraph of every chapter of every book has a vital connection with this purpose.

With this purpose in mind let us examine the Word of God, looking at Christ as the sum, substance and center of the Bible message. Noticing God's purpose for man reaches back before the foundation of the world began (Rev. 13:8). Observing the coming of Christ as the theme. How the Old Testament points toward the coming of Christ; the New Testament emphasizes that Christ did come, and that He will come again. With this in mind let us look at the purpose God has for man as depicted in the Testaments.

I. LOOKING AT GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

One must remember that the Old Testament story was preparatory for the work of Christ. From the beginning chapters of Genesis through the final chapter of Malachi we see the unfolding of God's purpose and plan for man. In John 5:39, Jesus stated, "*Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me.*" Jesus here was speaking to those Jews who were arrogantly proud of their Jewish heritage, to the extent that they trusted in their fleshly descendance from Abraham to save them.⁷ Jesus yet informs them that the Law of Moses (Genesis–Deuteronomy), and all the other Divinely inspired books that accompanied it (Joshua–Malachi), was not going to

save them.⁸ The Scriptures (in this case the Old Testament, the New Testament had not yet been written) proclaimed/testified of Jesus and that He is the giver of eternal life. We often forget that the Bible is not just a book of interesting stories, facts and accounts of the lives of many people, rather, it is a book about Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is a book about the Christ. The Old Testament rings with the message that Christ is coming. There are many today who teach and believe that God never had a purpose or plan for man except by some accident. Yet as one goes back to Genesis it doesn't take long to meet the Messiah. It was not long after man was placed in the beautiful garden of Eden that Satan came tempting man, and because of man yielding to Satan and his devices, man fell from the grace of God. Immediately upon the sin of Adam and Eve, God started His incessant, foredetermined, merciful movement toward Calvary. To Satan He said,

...and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed (Christ, via the virgin birth, emphasis RT): he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15).

This movement to the Hill of Calvary is not only seen here but the precious blood line runs through the whole Old Testament.

In Genesis He is the Creator and Seed of woman.

In Exodus He is the Lamb of God for sinners slain.

In Numbers He is the Star of Jacob.

In Deuteronomy He is the Prophet like Moses.

In Joshua He is the Captain of the Lord's host.

In Judges He is the Messenger of Jehovah.

In Ruth He is our Kinsman Redeemer.

In Samuel He is the despised and rejected King.

In Kings and Chronicles He is the Lord of Lord
and the King of Kings.
In Ezra and Nehemiah He is the Lord of Heaven
and Earth.
In Job He is our Risen and Returning Redeemer.
In Psalms He is the Blessed man, the Son of God,
the coming One, the Reigning One, the
leader of Praise.
In Proverbs He is our Wisdom.
In Ecclesiastes He is the Forgotten Wise man.
In Song of Solomon He is my Beloved.
In Isaiah He is our Suffering Substitute.
In Jeremiah He is the Lord of the Righteous.
In Lamentations He is the Man of Sorrows.
In Ezekiel He is the Throne Sitter.
In Daniel He is the Smiting Stone.
In Hosea He is David's greater King.
In Joel He is the Lord of Bounty.
In Amos He is the Rescuer of Israel.
In Obadiah He is the Deliverer upon Mount Zion.
In Jonah He is the Buried and Risen Savior.
In Micah He is the Everlasting God.
In Nahum He is the stronghold in the day of wrath.
In Habakkuk He is the Anchor of our Faith.
In Zephaniah He is the Judge and Cleanser.
In Haggai He is the Lord of Presence and Power.
In Zechariah He is the smitten Shepherd.
In Malachi He is the Sun of Righteousness.⁹

Therefore as one seeks for Jesus, the Second person of the Godhead, it is easy to see that Christ is painted for us in every book. Christ is the Redeemer and Head of the church, He is the one the prophets told was coming to set up His spiritual kingdom.

What was God's purpose for mankind in the Old

Testament? It was to introduce us to the Messiah which would come for the redemption of mankind, "*in the fulness of time.*"

II. LOOKING AT GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MANKIND THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus came into this world at exactly the right time. "*In the fulness of time,*" (Gal. 4:4) when conditions were favorable after long centuries of preparation, the Son of God became flesh and dwelled among men (John 1:1-5,14). The blood of innocent animals which were slain in the Old Testament times beginning with those which had to be killed in order to adequately clothe Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:7, 21) down through the Mosaic worship, when the blood flowed like rivers, yet could not take away even one sin.¹⁰

In those sacrifices there (was) a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:3-4).

Before the cross, the sins were forgiven in promise, not in actuality. Otherwise, there would have been no need for another sacrifice and another law (Heb. 10:9); man would still be subject to the Law of Moses.¹¹

Further, man could not die to redeem himself. It would require an innocent person, who would also have to have flesh, in order to shed his blood in the place of man's blood, go into the grave, and then have the power to come forth from the grave - conquering death, Hades, and the grave.¹²

The redemption of mankind would require that an

innocent victim be sacrificed, for one who was guilty could pay the price only for his own sins. Again, it would require that he be the brother of mankind, in order to suffer, die and to shed innocent blood. Still again, it would require that the victim have the power to come forth from the grave victorious, never to die again. Only one person could meet these demands of God's justice, the requirements:

But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man ... Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all of them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

He thereby was, "*made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people*" (Heb. 2:9; 14-17). Therefore it is not hard for any honest Bible student to see that God had a purpose for mankind painted throughout the pages of the New Testament. Christ the Redeemer was in God's eternal purpose for mankind.

Notice how Christ is pictured throughout the pages of the New Testament:

In Matthew He is the King of the Jews.

In Mark He is the Servant of Jehovah.

In Luke He is the Perfect Son of Man.

In John He is the Son of God.

In Acts He is the Ascended Lord.

In Romans He is our Righteousness.
In 1 Corinthians He is the First Fruits from the Dead.
In 2 Corinthians He is made a sin sacrifice for us.
In Galatians He is the end of the Law.
In Ephesians He is our Armor.
In Philippians He is the Supplier of every need.
In Colossians He is the Pre-eminent One.
In 1 Thessalonians He is our Returning Lord.
In 2 Thessalonians He is the World's Merciful Judge.
In 1 Timothy He is the Mediator.
In 2 Timothy He is the Bestower of Crowns.
In Titus He is our Great God and Savior.
In Philemon He is the Father's Partner.
In Hebrews He is the Rest of Faith and the Fulfiller
of Types.
In James He is the Lord of Sabbath.
In 1 Peter He is the Theme of Old Testament
Prophecy.
In 1 John He is the Word of Life.
In 2 John He is the Target of the Anti-Christ.
In 3 John He is the Personification of Truth.
In Jude He is the Believers Hope.
In Revelation He is the Loveable King and Lord.¹³

Thus Christ was in the eternal plan and purpose of God for mankind. John stated, "*The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*" (John 1:29), was "*slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev. 13:8). God had His plan of redemption before He made man. In fact, Christ through His eternal Spirit "*offered himself without blemish unto God*" to "*cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God*" (Heb. 9:14). Paul wrote,

...who saved us and called us with a holy calling,
not according to our own works, but according

to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:9-10).

"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love..." (Eph. 1:4). God promised the *"hope of eternal life...before the world began"* (Titus 1:1-2), including the great home of the redeemed in heaven (Matt. 25:34). Yes, the Lamb of God was *"foreknown indeed before the foundations of the world"* these words of Peter cannot be denied (1 Peter 1:18-21).

III. MAN'S DEVIATION FROM GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE FOR MANKIND

It is not hard for any honest Bible student to see that there are those who abuse and attack the idea that God has a pattern or purpose for mankind. When one speaks of a pattern, we speak of a plan to follow. How would it be possible to hold to a pattern if one did not exist?¹⁴ Friends, there is a pattern, and it serves a very useful purpose for mankind. If all would follow the SAME pattern, and we must, then all would speak the SAME thing. Some of our religious neighbors today teach that: *"Yes, God has a plan...but...it came by means of an accident."* In other words this plan or purpose of God was not eternal. Others teach that: *"Yes, God has a plan and purpose for mankind...but...all you need is faith and nothing more."* Others go even to the extreme and teach that God's purpose and plan for man concerning His redemption was fashioned even before the world began.

In other words, God "*predestined*" who could, would and should be saved, and man has absolutely nothing to do with it. None of these thoughts are new, for man has always seemed to be dissatisfied with God's plan and tried his own ideas. I am reminded of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-15), Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2), King Saul, the Prophet Jonah, Naaman the Leper who made the statement, "*Behold I thought*" and many others too numerous to name. The simple point is, man being dissatisfied with God's plan tries to adjust or change the plan. In understanding this, none of us should deny the need for direction for "*it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jer. 10:23). The directions we are to follow are found in the precious Word of God and not some man made creed or doctrine.

We have a pattern which gives us direction as to what to say. Peter points this out when he says, "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11). May we all strive to please God and not man (Acts 5:29).

CONCLUSION:

John, the apostle, tells us that he heard the redemption song. He describes this in Revelation 5:9-12. What a wonderful experience that must have been for this man of God! But this just simply affirms that which God wanted us to know all the time. He wanted us to know of heaven's interest in man's redemption. Again and again, you will find "*redemption's sweet story*" told over and over on the pages of the Bible.

The types and shadows of the Old Testament were pointing in the direction of Christ. Every lamb that was slain was pointing up to "*The Lamb*" that was slain (John

1:36). In the New Testament, Peter tells us this "*redemption story*" as he stated,

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed (1 Peter 2:24).

We need to tell this story over and over. We need to know and be able to tell others that someone was involved in our redemption.¹⁵ He is identified as the Christ (1 Peter 2:21). He is the one who personally did something about our redemption. Notice Peter stated, "*Who his own self bare our sins*" (1 Peter 2:24). You also will notice that it says, "*in his own body.*" Therefore we see that Jesus is personally involved with our redemption, which is in perfect harmony with the rest of the Bible message. Remember the message to Joseph, "*...for he shall save his people from their sins...*" (Matt. 1:21).

We know that our redemption does not come without a price. Paul affirms this when he said by inspiration: "*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Cor. 6:20). This was prefaced with the remark, "*ye are not your own*" (1 Cor. 6:19). Peter says,

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...But with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19)

At this point, we need to stop and consider that Christ had to leave heaven to come down here to earth and endure all of the suffering and pain, but we also know that "*Though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.*" Yes,

when Christ came to suffer the scorn, the shame and the stripes, He did it for us. What a story!

Some time back as I was driving down the road I saw a bumper sticker which read "**His Pain, Our Gain!**" How true that is. Peter points to this fact as he reminds us that it "*by His stripes we are healed,*" This is such wonderful news for the sin sick soul. We have, because of His redemption, and because of the price He paid, been separated from sin. The Blood of Jesus Christ made this possible.

Yes, one should always rejoice to hear "*Redemption's Song*" and always look forward to having the opportunity to tell "*Redemption's Story.*" May God help us to appreciate our redemption and understanding that God has a plan for mankind. God has a plan for us! May we learn to appreciate this more and more each day that we live and have a stronger desire to see more and more people brought to the "*Redeeming Savior.*"

ENDNOTES

1 Roy Deaver, "*Background for studying the Old Testament Books*" **The Living Messages of the Books of the Old Testament**, (October 23-27, 1977), p. 2.

2 Ibid., p. 3.

3 Ibid., p. 4.

4 Ibid., p. 4.

5 Ibid., p. 4.

6 Ibid., p. 5.

7 Brandon Britton, "*Notes from class taught at East Hill Church of Christ*" **His Story**, 2001

8 Ibid., p. 2.

9 James Meadows, "*God speaks to today's world*" **A Study of Church Discipline**, (1970), pp. 5-6.

10 Curtis Cates, *"In the beginning God...- and its relationship to God's eternal purpose in Christ"* **God's Eternal Purpose, Vol. 1**, (Sixth Annual), p. 96.

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Chapter 3

Christ, Our Commander-In-Chief

Perry B. Cotham



Perry B. Cotham was born in Murray, KY • He began preaching the Gospel in 1929 • He attended Freed-Hardeman College and then Murray State College where he received a B.A. degree • Full-time local work with congregations in OK and TX • Full-time evangelistic work since 1972 • Has traveled extensively preaching the Gospel • Authored sixteen tracts • He and his wife Teresa (deceased) have three children.

I am grateful for the opportunity that has been afforded me to again be with brother Paul Sain and this good church in another great lectureship, which is designed to encourage and strengthen members of the church of our Lord. I like the theme chosen *“The Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

After speaking of the resurrection, the apostle Paul exclaimed,

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

Paul wanted the Christians to realize that one day all trials and tribulations would be over and that physical death would be no more, and that we would have a new, resurrected, immortal body that never again would be separated from the spirit (soul) of man. Indeed, one day,

having come through "*the valley of the shadow of death*" (Psm. 23:4), the redeemed saints of God will then shout:

O death, where is thy sting? O grave [Hades, NKJV, the realm of disembodied spirits], where is thy victory? (1 Cor. 15:55).

The apostle here personifies death, as if it were a living being to some day be conquered. This means that after the children of God enter into their resurrected bodies, with all trials and pains of this earthly life past, never to be experienced again, they can then truly sing:

VICTORY IN JESUS

I heard an old old story
How a Savior came from glory,
How He gave His life on Calvary
To save a wretch like me;
I heard about His groaning,
Of His precious blood's atoning,
Then I repented of my sins,
And won the victory.

O victory in Jesus,
My Savior, forever,
He sought me and bo't me
With His redeeming blood;
He loved me ere I knew Him,
And all my love is due Him,
He plunged me to victory,
Beneath the cleansing flood.

Christ was raised from the dead to die no more. He became "*the firstfruits of them that slept*" (1 Cor. 15:20). "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (v. 22). "*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*" (v. 26). Then, when all the dead are raised by the power of God, and all those who are alive and remain until the

Lord comes again and are also changed instantly like the bodies of the raised saints, then the shout of victory will be heard (1 Thess. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Phil. 3:21). *"For this corruptible [body] must put on incorruption, and this mortal [body] must put on immortality"* (1 Cor. 15:54). When this happens at the end of time then there will be rejoicing for the victory that has been won. Luther G. Presley, the song writer, caught this vision of the joy of the children of God after the resurrection and wrote the words of this song:

What a song of delight in that city so bright
Will be wafted 'neath heaven's fair dome,
How the ransomed will raise happy songs in His praise,
When all of God's singers get home.

Having overcome sin, "hallelujah amen,"
Will be heard in that land o'er the foam,
Every heart will be light and each face will be bright,
When all of God's singers get home.

This indeed shall happen. Our bodies will be raised. We will die no more. Death will be conquered. God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2).

A WARFARE

When we speak of winning a victory we usually think of a war, a commander-in-chief, a struggle of fighting to win the victory. The Scriptures bear out this figure of speech for Christians (Eph. 6:11-17). The subject then of this lesson is to suggest some ideas along this line of thought. Christians are engaged in a war. Christ is our Commander-in-Chief. The one Person of Christianity is Christ, and His message is the message of man's salvation from sin by the grace of God.

Paul exhorted the young evangelist Timothy to “*war a good warfare*” (1 Tim. 1:18). Then he said that Timothy was to hold “*faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck*” (v. 19). Then he named two who had done this, namely, “*Hymenaeus and Alexander*” (v. 20). Thus Timothy was to carry on a good warfare against the enemies of the truth in Ephesus:

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine...so do (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

So should all gospel preachers do the same thing today. Just as some in that early day of the church had “*made shipwreck*” of their faith, so the same can happen today. It has always happened, is happening, and always will happen in the church of our Lord. Such individuals corrupt the pure gospel and destroy their own soul, as did the two that Paul mentioned. Preachers should hold fast the true faith in a good conscience, for the ministry of preaching faithfully the word is a warfare.

Matthew Henry, in his commentary, made these observations:

The ministry is a warfare, it is a good warfare. Against sin and Satan and under the banner of the Lord Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), and in his cause, and against his enemies, ministers are in a particular manner engaged. Ministers must war this good warfare diligently and courageously, notwithstanding opposition and discouragements.¹

Again, Paul, in closing his letter, wrote:

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and

oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith (1 Tim. 6:20-21, cf. vs. 3-5).

Of course, all members of the church, as well as preachers of the gospel, are to hold to *"the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3, ASV). They should stand for the truth and be opposed to all corrupt teaching and practice, which is contrary to true New Testament Christianity (cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:12; Acts 20:28-31). It is a spiritual warfare in which we as Christians are engaged. We are fighting against Satan and his followers.

MUST OBEY CHRIST

We are to obey our Commander-in-Chief of our salvation in all things. Paul admonished Christians:

And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Col. 3:17).

"In the name of the Lord," means by the authority of the Lord. The Lord's will is found in the New Testament. There are no new, modern-day additional revelations of truth to God's Word. We must follow the teaching of the Bible in our preaching/teaching and practice. We must do **all** *"in the name of the Lord."*

One definition of *"chief,"* as given by Webster is: *"The head or leader of any body or organization."*² Christ is the only head of the church. God *"hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body..."* (Eph. 1:22-23). *"And he is the head of the body, the church"* (Col. 1:18). *"There is one body"* (Eph. 4:4). There is *"but one body"* (1 Cor. 12:20).

Christ is the supreme one in authority. After His resurrection, Christ proclaimed: *"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth"* (Matt. 28:18, ASV).

It is very important in the realm of religion to understand who has the right to direct affairs and to say what should be done. Many in their religious work do not respect the authority of Christ. Jesus, after His ascension, sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles to guide them into all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit came to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Those who heard the message proclaimed were convicted of sin and were told to *"repent, and be baptized ... for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38). After their baptism *"they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine [teaching, ASV]"* (Acts 2:42). The Lord's church is the saved, and *"the church is subject unto Christ"* (Eph. 5:24). Therefore, we are to do all *"in the name of,"* or by the authority, of Christ. Our teaching (preaching) is authoritative only to the extent that it is supported by a proper use of the Holy Scriptures.

It is easy for false teachers to come in a congregation and persuade some members to believe and practice some things contrary to the will of Christ. This happened in Galatia, according to Paul's language in Galatians 1:6-7:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, spoke of two false teachers,

Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is

past already, and overthrow the faith of some
(2 Tim. 2:17-18).

Hence, in this spiritual war in which Christians are engaged, Christ being our Captain and Chief, we are to obey Him in all things at all times. Christ is "*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*" (Heb. 5:9). He is "*the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). Definitely, obedience to Christ is necessary for one's salvation (cf. Matt. 7:21, 24-28).

However, to obey Christ may at times cause us to endure hardships. Again to Timothy Paul wrote: "*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Tim. 2:3). The captain of the army may require at times of His soldiers duties that are difficult to perform, but a good soldier obeys, and endures the hardships. Likewise preachers, as well as all members, will endure trials that may often attend one's obedience to Christ as good soldiers of the Lord. We fight under His banner, in His cause, and against His enemies. We must always remember that absolute authority in Christianity is Christ.

FALSE AUTHORITIES

Some religionists desire to go by other sources of authority in religion than the teaching of Christ recorded in the Bible. Some go by their **conscience**. But conscience is not an infallible guide. Saul of Tarsus, in his early life, was a bitter enemy and persecutor of the Lord's church. His conscience approved his action (Acts 22:3-5; 23:1; 26:9-11). He thought he was doing the right thing by persecuting Christians. But, he was wrong. Later, he spoke of that period of his life and said he was then the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15-16).

Conscience depends upon one's education, or his information or knowledge. It does not determine right and wrong. Our conscience merely **approves** when we do what we **believe** to be right, and **disapproves** when we do what we **believe** to be wrong.

The story of Jacob's life is another example of how one can be honestly mistaken. Jacob mourned over what he believed was the death of his son, Joseph. But, Joseph's older brothers had deceived Jacob. They had sold Joseph into bondage in Egypt. Later in life, Jacob got to see Joseph. Hence, in all of those years when he believed and thought that his son was dead did not prove it to be true. (This interesting story is related in Genesis 37:11-36, 39-50.)

Feelings cannot be a safe guide in religion. A person feels good when he does what he thinks is right. But this does not mean that he is right. We must, therefore, reject feelings as a source of authority in religion. Some say, "*I am satisfied with my religion.*" Can you say, "*Christ is satisfied with me?*" Are you obeying the Lord? Others often say: "*I think one church, or faith, is as good as another.*" However, there is not one passage of Scripture that teaches this. Man's thoughts are not always God's thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9).

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov.
14:12; cf. 16:25).

Hence, we must always obey the teaching of Christ to be right. Many people are going to be sadly disappointed in the day of judgment for not having obeyed the Lord in this life (Matt. 7:21-23; cf. vs. 13-15).

Others think that there have been certain individuals

who have received some special message or revelation from the Lord since the days of inspired men and the completion of the New Testament. Many examples of this idea could be given. For instance, Mohammed (A.D. 570?-632), of Arabia, claimed that the angel Gabriel revealed to him certain truths and established the Moslem religion with the Koran, the book containing the professed revelations. Although in some ways this is a worthwhile, growing religion, it is a false system, contrary to the teaching of the Bible. Joseph Smith (1805-1844) claimed to have special revelations from God, and established Mormonism. This is another growing religion in the world, which is false. William Miller and Mrs. Ellen G. White claimed to have received Divine revelations and they set up Seventh-Day Adventism. Mrs. Mary Baker Glover Eddy (1821-1920) also claimed to have special direct revelations spoken to her and founded Christian Science. *Every religious delusion the world has ever known has been founded upon a so-called special revelation from God or the Holy Spirit, in addition to the divinely written Word of God.*

But can we believe that the same God would deliver so many conflicting revelations? God is not the God of "confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33); He "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). The Holy Spirit does not inspire one man to preach up a doctrine and another to preach it down. The Lord is not the author of many "cults" and "isms" in what is called "Christendom" today. God has not spoken directly to anyone to reveal any truth since the days of the inspired apostles of Christ and the close of the Book of Revelation by the apostle John (Rev. 22:18-19). There are no living apostles of Christ today. We are to hear the Lord in all things (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-2; 2:1-4), and all truth has

been given, confirmed, and recorded in the New Testament. This Book is complete, perfect, infallible, and is the inspired teaching by the authority of Christ, our Savior who is our only Commander-in-Chief.

Such is true regarding the papacy, the creeds of men, and all the religious councils. The pope is not the head of the Lord's church. Furthermore, human creeds, often conflicting in their teachings and conflicting with what the Bible teaches, are wrong. If a creed contains more than the Bible, it contains too much. If it contains less than the Bible, it does not contain enough. If it contains exactly what the Bible teaches, we do not need it, as we have God's Word, the Bible.

Christianity ~ the religion of Christ, based upon the teaching in the New Testament ~ is the only Divine and true religion in the world. All other systems of religion, regardless of their age or number of adherents, are either perversions of true Christianity or they are the systems of human philosophy. We cannot, therefore, accept any of these religions as having the true teaching, or the true source of authority in religion.

Definitely, the question of authority in Christianity is the most vital and far-reaching question before the religious world. Catholicism is a mixture of Judaism, paganism, and Christianity. Protestantism, in its various forms and "isms," is Christianity corrupted by theological speculations and decrees. Hence, the question of importance is always, "*What does Christ teach in His inspired word in the New Testament?*" (cf. Heb. 9:15-17). It is not a question of **interpretation**, but of **authority**. "*For what saith the scripture*" (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 4:30). "*What is written in the law? how readeest thou?*" (Luke 10:26). Man must accept and appropriate salvation offered by the grace of

God on the Lord's terms as laid down in the New Testament. No one else has the promise of forgiveness.

Christ built His church (Matt. 16:18). Any church that does not have the true identifying marks of the Lord's church, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, cannot be considered as Christ's church, regardless of the name it may bear. When any group of people claiming to be a church follows any principle of teaching and practice other than the Gospel, it is not the true church of Christ. Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:36), our Captain and Commander-in-Chief, we must follow His leadership in all that the church does and says. When the church follows the Word, it is truly the church of Christ. Only in this way will it be the church of Christ. With the completion of the New Testament "*all things*" pertaining "*unto life and godliness*" had been given (2 Peter 1:3). There is only one Savior and one plan of salvation for all men (Acts 10:34-35), and there is only one church for all the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6). Thus, any body of people that follows the teaching of Christ, as revealed in His Word, is a true church of Christ. If that is not a true church, then there can be no true church. Furthermore, any church that departs from this divine teaching by either adding to it, subtracting from it, or by substituting something else for what is contained in it, is, to that extent, an **apostasy** from the true church of the Lord. There is nothing that can be rightfully added to the Word of God and nothing that can be rightfully taken from it.

A SCRIPTURAL PLEA

Peter admonished: "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11). Hence, we plead for the religious world to drop all things not taught in God's

Word and to follow only the Bible. To call Bible things by Bible names and to do Bible things in Bible ways.

Think what sweeping changes would be made by the restoration of the authority of Christ and His Word. If this were done throughout all Christendom and among all world religions, it would strip paganism of its idols and false systems of worship; it would destroy Catholicism with its popes and cardinals, etc.; it would remove from Protestantism all of its human elements such as creeds, names, and ceremonies; it would bring about Christian unity for which our Savior so earnestly prayed before going to the cross (John 17:20-22); it would give to Christianity a power it once had in the first century when multiplied thousands turned to the Lord and were saved (Acts 6:7; 14:7; 18:8; 21:20); and it would bring about the speedy evangelization of the world, for which we so earnestly pray. We believe this is the only way that it can be done. **May God hasten the day!**

So it is back to the Bible, back to obeying our one and only Commander-in-Chief and obeying Him in all things. For this we earnestly plead!

CONCLUSION

The Scriptures clearly teach how one is saved from sin by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, and then added to the Lord's spiritual body, the church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:26-39; 2:47). The Word of God also teaches us what name to wear, how to worship "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24), and how to live faithfully the Christian life (Acts 2:44; 20:7; 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16; Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). If you are not a Christian, we plead with you to obey the gospel of Christ tonight

and be baptized. You will then be forgiven of your past sins, saved, and be added to the Lord's family. If you will then live faithfully the life as a child of God, when the earthly life is over heaven will be your eternal home. Then you will forever enjoy, by the grace of God, *Victory In Christ Jesus*.

ENDNOTES

1 Matthew Henry, **Commentary on the Bible**, Vol. VI, (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, reprinted edition, no date), p. 810-811.

2 **Webster's Collegiate Dictionary** (Springfield, Mass.: G & C. Merriam Co., Fifth Edition, 1939), p. 175.

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Chapter 4

The Bible: Our Guide, Our Rulebook

Barry M. Grider



Barry Grider is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching • Actively involved in evangelistic work (locally and overseas) • Powerfully and effectively presented the gospel of Christ in various publications • He has worked with churches in Fayette, AL; Austin, Texas and presently with the Forest Hill church in Memphis, TN • Barry and Celicia have two children.

INTRODUCTION

Patrick Henry stated, “*The Bible is worth more than all other books that have ever been written.*” No other volume can provide the quality of life enjoyed by its adherents. Furthermore, this precious Book divine, if followed, will guarantee the entrance of our souls into a better place, when this life is over. Hence, one should quickly see the *value* of the Holy Scriptures.

The Psalmist declared,

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping them there is great reward (Psm. 19:10-11).

Likewise, the Bible is worth more than all other books because of its *veracity*. Even though God’s Word

is filled with divine wisdom and shall always be an instrument that serves man's best interests, still multitudes despise the Bible and will not conform their lives to it. Many turned from Jesus after He preached the truth unto them (John 6:60) because they would not conform to His standard. His standard today is the Bible, His truth (John 17:17). Truth by its very nature is exclusive and many are repulsed by such strictness. For this reason very few will be saved (Matt. 7:13,14). The Bible is like a mirror (James 1:23-25). It truly reflects our spiritual condition. Instead of conforming their lives to it, many in rebellion simply toss it aside. There have even been efforts down through the ages to not only discredit the Bible, but to destroy the good Book. These efforts are always futile. Jesus declared, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*" (Matt. 24:35). The Word of God shall be opened in judgement, for Jesus continues,

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

The Bible is, also, worth more than all other books because of the *victory* it provides. Since we shall be judged according to the Bible, obviously those who follow its precepts will be justified on the day of judgement. Notice the connection Paul stresses between salvation and the Word:

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Tim. 4:16).

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15).

James records,

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).

God, who always keeps His promises (Titus 1:2), will not deny salvation to those who are obedient to His will. Peter spake to those outside of Christ, and said, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). Jesus said, *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev. 2:10). Now, can one imagine standing before Christ, having obeyed the gospel and having remained faithful, and then be denied heaven? Absolutely not! Through the Word of God there is enormous victory.

THE BIBLE ~ A GUIDE

Man left to himself brings chaos (Jer. 10:23). He needs help from above. Refusing to follow God's instruction destroys the individual, as well as, the home and society. Most, if not all, of those familiar with the Genesis account have read about Cain and Abel, the children of the first parents on earth. Cain, of course, displeased that God accepted his brother's worship, but refused his sacrifice, arose and slew Abel. Refusing to repent, Cain fathered a race whose wickedness would cause God to send a flood that would destroy mankind.

It is evident that when one deviates from God's plan, destruction is inevitable. One of the descendants of Cain, Lamech, "*took unto him two wives*" (Gen. 4:19). This, of course, was not the plan of God (Matt. 19:8). It is interesting as one continues the narrative that the descendants of godly Seth intermarried with the children of Cain and "*took them wives of all which they chose*" (Gen. 6:1-2). Insatiable appetites for sensual pleasure eventually created a violent society, as well (Gen. 6:11). It seems that whenever God's standard regarding human sexuality is abandoned, violence will always ensue.

America has forsaken the Biblical principles upon which she was founded. This is particularly true as our country seeks to legitimize every form of sexual gratification no matter how deviant or perverted it may be. Despite the campaign for "*safe sex*," the number of young people who are engaging in fornication has risen astronomically since the 1960's era when "*free love*" became a common expression. What was called love was lust, and the consequences of such inordinate affection have been tremendous. Unwanted pregnancies, abortion, disease (some of which are fatal), and psychological disturbances are all the result of removing the absolute standard of the Bible and replacing it with the humanistic agenda. Divorce is prevalent in our society and most often occurs because a couple (or at least one spouse) tires of the other and desires someone new. Marriage, in the estimation of some, is like buying a car, when you tire of the old, get a new one. Sadly, homosexuality, which mocks God's design, is becoming more and more accepted as a legitimate alternative lifestyle. Recently the religious world was stunned by revelations that numerous members of the Roman Catholic "*clergy*" were

engaged in pedophilia. While such is sickening to the true child of God, such behavior should not be surprising since the Roman Catholic church abandoned the ideal of marriage, considering celibacy to be a more spiritual and pious way to live. While some have chosen not to marry and have remained pure before God, most men and women at some time in their lives desire to marry. This is good in the eyes of the Lord for He created marriage to benefit man. Those who violate what our Lord teaches concerning the marriage relationship, including the Catholic church, must pay an enormous price.

What is the point? All of the devastation that immorality has caused could have been avoided had God's Word been applied. Irving Berlin wrote and Kate Smith made popular the stirring patriotic hymn, God Bless America, which contains the line, "*Stand beside her, and guide her, through the night with a light from above.*" What was that light? The Bible! Notice the attitude of our first three presidents toward the Bible:

George Washington: It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.... He is worse than an infidel who does not read his Bible and acknowledge his obligation to God.

John Adams: The Bible is the best Book in the world.

Thomas Jefferson: I have always said and always will say that the studious perusal of the Sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, better husbands....The Bible makes the best people in the world.

It would be wonderful if all our modern political leaders had the same respect for the Bible. It was

interesting to hear members of Congress singing God Bless America the evening following the September 11, 2001 attacks. Such was blatant hypocrisy considering so many policies endorsed by many of the ones singing have been detrimental to the homes of the nation and a rejection of the light from above. The psalmist wrote, *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway"* (Psm. 119:105). The Bible is like a road map that guides us to heaven. It serves as a light to light our way, saying, *"Don't step here"* or *"Follow this direction."* If one wants to live a life that is blessed and has meaning, remember these words,

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean
not unto thine own understanding. In all thy
ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy
paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

Man acknowledges God when he listens and obeys His word. Hence, one has the direction that he needs in life, because God's Word cannot fail.

THE BIBLE ~ OUR RULE BOOK

In order to succeed in life one must be willing to play by the rules. This is a well observed principle in almost every area, from business to baseball. However, the masses reject the idea of *"playing by the rules"* when such pertains to religion. In fact, in modern day *"Christendom,"* the spirit of antinomianism (no law or rules) reigns supreme. Yet the Bible is clear. The Ten Commandments were not just suggestions for the children of Israel. Likewise, the gospel is not just good advice for those living today. Yes the Bible is a guide, but more than a guide. Man does not have the option

of rejecting the Bible and still be pleasing to God.

Psalms 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible containing 176 verses. This chapter is a remarkable tribute to the Bible itself. Likewise, it teaches strict adherence to divine precepts:

Thou has commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were to directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments (vs. 4-6)

Furthermore, Paul stated, *“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Tim. 2:5). The Apostle makes clear if one is to compete he must do so by adhering to the rules. Can it really be said that the Bible, especially the New Testament, is a book of rules and regulations? Are we not now under grace? Did Christ not bring about the end of law (Rom. 10:4)? Grace is God’s unmerited favor extended to all mankind through His Son Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11). However, God’s grace does not nullify our obedience (Rom. 6:1-2). In fact, for a man to appropriate the grace of God he must be obedient (Eph. 2:8-10). God’s grace teaches (Titus 2:12) through a system called the gospel (Rom. 1:16). Sometimes the word grace is used synonymously with the gospel. Furthermore, Romans 10:4 does not teach the end of law, but, rather, that Christ was the aim or purpose of the law of Moses.

If one is to follow a set of rules, this means a standard has been set. The word rule appears several times in the New Testament originating from the Greek word *Kanon*. Rule denotes a standard, boundary, or a line drawn.

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing (Phil. 3:16).

A RULE BOOK IMPLIES LAW

A rebellious generation claims there is no law. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). Therefore, those who engage in sin are guilty of lawlessness. The same is true for those in the church today who seek to change God's immutable standard.

It was prophesied concerning Messiah,

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall be the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:10).

Moses was a lawgiver and spoke of another who would come, who was similar to himself. *"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken"* (Deut. 18:15). In every dispensation of man, God has given His divine law. Today, living during the Christian dispensation, man is under the law of Christ. Those who reject the notion of law under Christ need to read the New Testament again. Paul said, *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"* (Gal. 6:2). James speaks of the law of Christ in the following passage,

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:25).

Keep in mind that law is a rule of action. Christians are to remain within the confines of the law of Christ. Furthermore, one cannot have liberty without law. Law offers needed restraint, else chaos and anarchy occur. One who refuses to heed the law of Christ and one who is not restrained by the law of Christ will then be in bondage to sin.

How important is the law of Christ? Remember Jesus shed his blood for our sins (Matt. 26:28). Likewise, he died for the church (Acts 20:28). In addition to this, Jesus went to the cross to provide a new and better covenant. This covenant is parallel with His law.

And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth (Heb. 9:15-17).

The law of Christ is important because it was established through His precious blood! Therefore, one cannot take lightly what the New Testament teaches concerning the plan of salvation, the church, acceptable worship, faithful Christian living, etc. If a person respects the blood of Christ he will respect the law of Christ. Considering the New Testament is the law of Christ, it is, hence, the Lord's rulebook.

A RULE BOOK IMPLIES COMMANDMENTS

If the Bible is a rule book, and it is, thus, the rules

are equivalent to the commands of God. The idea that one must keep the commands of God to be saved is repulsive to the liberal mindset. Most liberals would rather be ruled by their subjective feelings, not the Bible. Yet God demands obedience.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying,
Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).

This statement, made by God, was His law, His commandment, and His rule. It is through the keeping of God's commandments one is made righteous (Psm. 119:172). Still, some suggest that one cannot know God by keeping His commandments. In reality, it is the only way we can truly know God. It is true that some do not worship and serve God with the heart, mind, and emotions. This is obviously wrong. Isaiah records the words of Jehovah,

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them (Isa. 1:13-15).

The problem among God's people was their refusal to worship God from the heart. Their worship, therefore, was legalistic and ritualistic. It did not come from a heart of love. Jesus excoriated the Pharisee by saying,

Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,
for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin,

and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Matt. 23:23).

So, even though God does not desire worship and service that does not come from the heart of man, obedience to His will is an absolute necessity. Remember, Samuel informed King Saul, "*Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken thou the fat of rams*" (1 Sam. 15:22).

How does one demonstrate his love for the Savior? Jesus said to His disciples,

If ye love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you (John 15:14).

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments (1 John 2:3).

Furthermore, commandment keeping leads to life eternal. "*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city*" (Rev. 22:14). God's commands are His rules and these commands must be carefully followed if one is pleasing to the Heavenly Father.

THE BIBLE ~ MEETS MY NEEDS

While many religious people are searching for something separate and in addition to the Word of God, the Bible is sufficient to take care of every spiritual need. Peter wrote, "*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*"

(2 Peter 1:3). Paul's classic statement on inspiration reads as follows,

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible is profitable for doctrine, which tells us what is right. The Bible is profitable for reproof, which tells us what is wrong. The Bible is profitable for correction, which tells us how to get right again. The Bible is sufficient for instruction in righteousness, which tells us how to stay right. What more do we need to help us regarding spiritual matters?

The Bible is sufficient to convert the soul and to keep one from sinning. David wrote,

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

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

Just as the Word of God is sufficient to meet our needs in this life, likewise, the Bible will sustain us on the Day of Judgement. Some books will be opened on that day. The Lamb's book of life shall be opened (Rev. 20:15). The book that each one of us are writing which records the deeds of our lives shall be opened (2 Cor. 5:10). Also, the Word of God shall be opened. Jesus said,

He that rejecteth me, and receive not my words,
hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have
spoken, the same shall judge him the last day
(John 12:48).

Implied in this statement is the fact some will receive His Word and therefore be saved. James admonishes, "*receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21). The victory is ours through our obedience to the Word. Therefore, those who heed our Lord's sayings are likened unto wise men (Matt. 7:24-25).

CONCLUSION

Just as parents are disappointed when their children disobey, so God is displeased by our rebellion to his prescribed will. Why is this so? Both our earthly parents and our Heavenly Father recognize the consequences that must be suffered by the disobedient. Keep in mind that every time God says "*Thou shalt,*" he is saying help yourself to happiness. When He says, "*Thou shalt not,*" He is saying such is not for our good.

The Word of God is our guide book and rulebook. Never neglect studying it and always seek to apply it. Yours and my soul's salvation depends on what we do with this precious product of inspiration.

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***Motivation
And
Treasured
Essentials***

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Chapter 5

Our Motivation Our Reason For Living

Curtis Cates



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Life is a precious gift of God, our Creator (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7; Acts 17:24-28); indeed, we are His offspring (17:28; cf. Heb. 12:9). And, compared with eternity, one's life is very brief. Job said, "*My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle*" (Job 7:6). Again he stated,

Man that is born of a woman, Is of few days,
and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower,
and is cut down: He fleeth also as a shadow,
and continuith not (14:1-2).

James correctly spoke of life as but "*a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*"; therefore, God must be foremost in one's planning (James 4:13-15).

In view of the brevity of life, the apostle Paul was extremely careful about how he lived his life:

...in nothing shall I be put to shame, but that
with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ

shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain (Phil. 1:20-21).

What folly it would be to live our lives and stand before the judge, Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31), never having accepted His gracious offer of pardon and of eternal salvation in heaven! So sad it is to hear the words of Paul to the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia, who foolishly,

...contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed....It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46)

...as well as to sad words of the disobedient Felix, "*Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me*" (24:25). To our knowledge, that "*convenient season*" never came. Felix was motivated by his love for a bribe (money), but he cared not at all for his precious, immortal soul. What a tragedy to close one's ears to the persistent, loving pleadings of the messenger of Christ! The world had won the heart of Felix, as it had the rich young ruler who, having heard the pleadings of a loving Savior, "*went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions*" (Matt. 19:22). He trusted in his riches instead of in the only begotten Son of God (Mark 10:22-24).

On the other hand, what motivated such Jews as those on Pentecost of Acts 2, who "*received his word [and] were baptized*" (2:37-41), or such Samaritans as those in Acts 8, who "*believed Philip preaching*" and "*were baptized, both men and women*" (8:12), or such Gentiles as Cornelius and his household, who were "*all here present in the sight*

of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord" and who were "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (10:33, 48), or the apostle Paul who was shown by Christ "how many things he must suffer for [His] name's sake" (9:16), who arose and was baptized and washed away his sins (22:16), and who "fought the good fight...finished the course...kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7), thus having a crown awaiting him "at that day," the day of judgment (4:8)? What caused these notables to be obedient to the heavenly calling? That is the burden of this study. If we can determine what motivated them to the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) and the eternal salvation of their souls, we can thus determine what is the proper motivation by which we can be among those who hear the welcomed pronouncement of our dear Lord, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

MOTIVATION A NECESSITY

Necessary For Action

Motivation is behind every purposeful accomplishment; it is what brings about action. It has to do with one's attitude, feeling, and interests. It grows out of a desire or need to get rid of tension, or to deal with a problem or a disturbing situation, or to seek pleasure or security. There is always a cause(s) for one's motivation, always that which is important enough in one's mind to produce determination, energy, and urgency to act. No one can be effectively taught, no one is going to change his or her life without disturbing the status quo, thus becoming motivated.

Defined

From the root work "*motive*," motivation is that attitude or need within which provokes one to expend the energies necessary to seek to accomplish certain worthy objectives or goals, which are felt to hold or promise certain rewards. The strength of the motivation is directly proportionate to the value one places on those goals and perceived ability to reach those goals in a timely manner. If those elements exist and become real to the person, then decisions are made and motion takes place toward the realization of the goals. Today's motivations become tomorrow's destinies.

Tied To Common Needs And Drives

All human beings have certain drives and needs, all of which must be taken into consideration when studying the subject of motivation. You, dear reader, are reminded of the old adage, "*You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.*" To seek to change a person's direction in life, which is our responsibility as Christians (Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; James 5:19,20; Gal. 6:1; et al.), an assessment must be made of his interests, values, attitudes, purposes, goals, and influences. The assessment must be made as to whether these are properly directed, not censorious, biased judgment (Matt. 7:1-5) but judgment for the purpose of leading one to the Lamb of God (John 1:29) or restoring him to his first love (Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; et al.), "*righteous judgment*" (John 7:24). If their values and perceived needs are not in congruency with the Word of God, then their motivations are not those which will bring true happiness and fulfilment and will not provoke them to good works.

For people to learn and to change their lives, they must be actively involved and be willing to examine their goals in life—and in eternity. It is always preferable if they can become self-motivated, seeking and becoming able through a study of the Scriptures to meet their own needs and solve their own problems. That self-motivation can be caught from others, but it needs also to be taught. Our goal is to create in others a continuous seeking to learn God's will, to personalize it, and to live it out in their lives, as we seek always to do in our own lives.

Some of the common needs of mankind are peer acceptance, affection, security, self-esteem, a reasonable amount of success, hope. The purposes and goals which seem to make sense to individuals in light of their perceived needs are what motivate them to action; they feel these actions will solve problems and bring about stability and equilibrium in their lives. However, most persons seek peace, satisfaction, and gratification in the ways of the world (1 John 2:15-17), which can never meet those basic needs and can never bring true fulfillment, happiness, or tranquility—which needs are found only in Christ. In order to help the lost to find true happiness, we must help them to assess whether their needs are being met and perhaps even disturb their perceived equilibrium. In other words, we must learn those whom we wish to lead to Christ. Our Lord knew what was in man; He knew the lives, motivations, and needs of those with whom He came in contact (John 2:24-25; 4:16-19). The personal worker must study those whom he would seek to convert, the Bible class teacher his pupils, the preacher his audience, as a physician his patients. The teaching-learning will be most effective and rewarded in the situation which contributes to the meeting of the person's basic needs and leads to the

solving of his problems. The learner must be brought to the place where he realizes that his past motivations and actions have been ineffective and that new motivations and actions must take place if he would have his needs met, problems alleviated, and peace achieved. Of course, one realizes that in the area of motivation, individual differences need to be considered as much as in any other area. Character is built when people personalize these principles and make decisions for themselves and act upon them (Heb. 5:12-14). And, they need to realize they can succeed and will be rewarded. Success begets success.

Self-Examination

Now that we have seen the tremendous value of motivation in the lives of ourselves as children of God and in the lives of loved ones and friends whom we wish to influence, let us realize that we ourselves can fail in applying these principles to our own spiritual lives. Luke wrote that "*Jesus began both to do and to teach*" (Acts 1:1). Paul urged Timothy,

Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching.
Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee
(1 Tim. 4:16).

He commanded those brethren in Corinth, "*Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves*" (2 Cor. 13:5). You and I, dear reader, of all people on earth, should be the most enthusiastic, dedicated, motivated. Enthusiasm is from the Greek **en** and **theos**, meaning "*God within you.*" Genuine motivation has as its source the principles found in God's Word (Rom. 10:17) exemplified in a Godly life,

the kind of motivation seen in the lives of Christ (John 3:2; Luke 19:10), the apostles (Acts 4:13), the Jerusalem church (2:42,46,47; 4:31-32; 5:42; 6:7), Stephen (6:10), the Ethiopian nobleman (8:26-39), Cornelius (10:24,47-48), the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 8:1-5), the Thessalonian church (1 Thess. 1:2-10), etc. It certainly behooves us to be certain we have valid, Scriptural motives which are producing activity in our lives; otherwise, we will be unfulfilled in life, will miss the abundant life promised by Christ both now (John 10:10) and eternally (Gal. 6:7-8). What motives will fail to bring salvation (Titus 2:11-12), all spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3), and a crown of life in heaven (Rev. 2:10)?

THINGS WHICH DO NOT CONSTITUTE PROPER, SCRIPTURAL MOTIVATION

In seeking to do God's will, one must realize that there are improper motives which produce certain actions in people's lives. These motives are condemned by God and lead only to failure, sadness, and ultimate ruin. They would include the following, among others.

Zeal Without Knowledge

First, a person may be very zealous in his desire to please God but lack the essential knowledge to serve God acceptably. Such characterized the youthful Rehoboam when asked by Israel to make their burdens lighter. He was guided by the young hot-headed fools rather than giving heed to the sage, level-headed advice of the older men (2 Chron. 10). This problem characterized the Jews who rejected the Messiah, of whom Paul wrote,

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God (Rom 10:2-3).

Some have much zeal but fail to take heed to Paul's inspired regulation,

And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name [by the authority, Acts 4:7] of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col. 3:17).

Such was the problem of the Jews of Christ's day who made void the Word of God by their traditions and established sects, or heresies (unauthorized acts of worship and doctrines and man-made religious groups). Note Christ's warnings in Matthew 15:9, 13.

Emphasis Upon Things

Second, a person may choose to become a child of God because he feels that he can become rich financially. In fact, this is the message often preached by televangelists and others; *"Send in your money, and the Lord will bless you with such a financial return that you will not even be able to count all your money,"* they say. Even some brethren have taken up this refrain. There are big problems with such promises. 1. The Bible does not teach it; that was the philosophy of Satan and the friends in the book of Job, but Job did not fall for this false teaching. 2. This encourages children of God to give for the wrong motive—out of selfishness instead of out of love for God and His cause. 3. God made promises of physical blessings to His chosen nation, Israel, in the Old

Testament; He has no such physical nation today. 4. God promises the greater, superior Spiritual blessings, for which each of us should be seeking (Eph 1:3). 5. Christ promised a sufficiency of physical blessings to keep body and soul together if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; He did not promise to make His children rich financially (Matt. 6:33); the blessing of such riches is "*icing on the cake.*" 6. What about those who served God spiritually and sacrificially all their lives and died in poverty? Did they have justification late in life for blaming God for not carrying out His promise of financial riches? 7. Did Christ's life without financial riches and having to be buried in a borrowed tomb indicate that He lacked spirituality and sacrifice, His having nowhere to lay His head? 8. Did brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr., miss it when he stated in a sermon that if God promises to give thirty, sixty, one-hundred fold **financially** to those who give sacrificially, one would be foolish to invest his money in a bank?

Insincerity

Third, a person may choose to become a child of God and yet be insincere in his work and worship, putting on a mere facade of hypocrisy. Joshua commanded the Hebrews by inspiration, "*Now therefore fear Jehovah and serve him in sincerity and truth*" (Josh. 24:14). Job showed the folly of hypocrisy thus: "*For what is the hope of the hypocrite [godless, ASV], though he hath gained when God taketh away his soul*" (Job 27:8, KJV). Our Lord stated,

And ye have made void the word of God,
because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did
Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people

honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men (Matt. 15:6-9).

James stated that *"the wisdom that is from above is...without hypocrisy"* (James 3:17). We must serve the Lord *"with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"* (1 Cor. 5:8), proving *"the sincerity of your love"* (2 Cor. 8:8).

Some even preach Christ out of a hypocritical heart, Paul warned.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel; but the other proclaim Christ by faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds (Phil. 1:15-17).

Paul exhorted Titus,

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned (Titus 2:7-8).

The hypocrites, Christ said, shall be punished in the place of destruction, where *"there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt. 24:51).

Considering God A Tyrant

Fourth, a person may choose to serve God solely motivated by fear; that is, he considers God an arbitrary despotic person who is seeking to destroy man. He has the attitude toward God which characterized the one-talent man, whose picture of God was warped.

And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth (Matt. 25:24-25).

Such a person sees God as capricious, who seeks to destroy man on a whim, who is impulsive and unpredictable, and who seeks to slap a person down just arbitrarily, at any time. His obedience is a matter of drudgery and necessity, not a matter of love and cheerfulness (2 Cor. 8:5; 9:7).

Desiring To Lord It Over Others

Fifth, a person may choose to be a child of God for power and control, the very opposite attitude of a Christian. John the apostle stated to Gaius,

I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth them out of the church (3 John 9-10).

This ungodly, illicit lust for and exercise of power is seen in many congregations in the United States and throughout the world. It destroys unity, makes the name of the church a mockery before the world, and is a stumbling block to both younger and older Christians alike. Among God's people, the greatest are those who **serve** (Luke 22:24-27). Those who lord it over the flock

are certainly not like the Lord, who *"came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:28). Elders are strictly forbidden to be lords, or dictators, over the flock of God, *"but making yourselves ensamples to the flock"* (1 Peter 5:2-3). Bondslaves of Christ are hardly in position to make themselves prideful despots. When appointing elders, strict attention should be given to the qualification *"not self-willed"* (Tit. 1:7). Of course, that sinful attitude is not limited to certain elders but can be seen in some preachers and in other children of God both men and women. This is not a noble motive for serving God. Let us be reminded that the authority of elders does not reside in one man but in the eldership, nor does it reside in one man in the absence of elders but in the faithful male members as a whole, nor is a preacher *"the pastor"* of a congregation.

Connected with this lordship, dictatorial attitude is the motivation of being factious, which the Lord condemns in no uncertain terms.

...make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others (Phil. 2:2-4).

Paul used the powerful example of Christ, who *"emptied"* and *"humbled himself"* to serve mankind and to go to the cross (2:5-9), which brought about His exaltation (2:10-11). A bitter, fault-finding, factious, chronic objector who thrives on strife and turmoil and those who form parties and cliques and keep things in

a turmoil and an uproar can hardly be described as having the spirit of Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Phil. 2:3). See also 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

Following Our Parents

Sixth, a person may serve God solely because that is what his or her parents did. The person whose mother and father faithfully served God is greatly blessed. However, each must make his service personal and have a first-hand religion, not second-hand. We need to realize that our parents could be wrong, though. If they were/are right in matters religious, then our study of the Bible for ourselves will bear it out; if not, then we need to obey the pure gospel and lead them into the way of truth, if possible. We cannot be saved on our parents' faith or lack of it, since each will be judged according to his own works (Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:11,12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12). A second-hand religion, will likely fail us in times of severe temptation, grievous persecution, and death. The old saying is based on Ezekiel 18:20, "*Every tub shall sit on its own bottom.*"

THINGS WHICH CONSTITUTE PROPER SCRIPTURAL MOTIVATION

Having learned that there are certain common needs and drives which bring about motivations in our lives, which themselves produce action (living the Christian life), let us examine those things. What a powerful example Enoch is:

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to

him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God (Heb. 11:5).

What will provoke us so to act that we may also be well-pleasing to God?

Love

One, everything the Christian does should be out of love—the overall law governing one’s motivation. Several times did Paul emphasize this to the church at Corinth. *“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love”* (1 Cor. 16:13, 14). Again,

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels....And if I have the gift of prophecy....And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing (13:1-3).

Christ stated, *“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). In studying our love for God, though, we need to realize what provokes that love in us: *“We love him [God] because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19).

Fear Of God

Two, the word *“fear”* carries with it different meanings both in the original language of God’s Word and in our language. For example, *“fear”* is defined in **The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language**, 1970, p.480, as

...a feeling of alarm or disquiet caused by the expectation of danger, pain, disaster, or the like; terror; dread; apprehension.

We need to realize that the love of God and the grace of God does not negate the fact that those *“who know not God”* and those who,

obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

Some have averred that we must not be afraid of God. However, note what the Scriptures say. *“Knowing therefore the fear [terror, KJV] of the Lord, we persuade men”* (2 Cor. 5:11). Why, Paul, were you motivated by terror to seek the lost? It was because we *“must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (5:10). His warnings to Felix made Felix scared. *“And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified...”* (Acts 24:25). Paul did not hold to the *“I’m o.k., you’re o.k.”* denominationalism of today, this positive, feel good, do not disturb anyone heresy in the church philosophy. When the Lord struck Ananias and Sapphira dead because they sought to lie to God, *“great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things”* (Acts 5:11). Paul warned that it is not healthy to *“provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?”* (1 Cor. 10:22). We had better go weigh before we take on the Lord and make Him angry by disobedience to His will. The Psalmist urged,

Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son [Christ], lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him (Psm. 2:11-12).

The Hebrews writer warned those who forsake God thus:

For we know him that said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31).

Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off (Rom. 11:20-22).

If you and I, dear reader, are not living in submission to Christ's will, we should be scared, terrified of the judgment. That terror should motivate us to "Kiss," bow before, the only begotten Son of God and seek His cleansing power! This is a powerful motive for obedience.

Reverence For God

Three, another meaning of the word "fear" is, "extreme reverence or awe" (**The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language**, p. 480). God is truly worthy to be feared; "He hath sent redemption unto his people; He hath commanded his covenant forever: Holy and reverend is his name" (Psm. 111:9). "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov.1:7).

Those persons who have deep reverence and awe for the Creator will obey Him and worship Him:

Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters (Rev. 14:7).

Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great (19:5).

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: In the midst of the assembly will I praise thee. Ye that fear Jehovah, praise him; All ye seed of Jacob, glorify him; And stand in awe of him, all ye seed of Israel (Psm. 22:22-23).

Reverence for God will motivate one to obey the gospel as did Cornelius, *"one who feared God with all his house"* (Acts 10:2). Reverence will motivate one to work righteousness and thus be *"acceptable to him"* (10:35). It will cause one to serve faithfully,

in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord: whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ (Col. 3:22-24).

Reverence provokes one to worship God, as noted above. God is worthy of praise! It causes the Lord's church to prosper; *"So the church...being edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied"* (Acts 9:31).

The Goodness And Love Of God

Four, the love of God is a powerful motive. Not only is He our loving Creator; His goodness is ever before us when one beholds the beauty of the earth, the blessings and freedoms in America, the blessings of family, health, and friends, and especially the all spiritual

blessings in Christ (Eph 1:3). Not only does *"the goodness of God"* lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), but it also produces gratitude, and gratitude generates enthusiasm (1 Thess. 5:9-11, 16-18). Contrast the nine ingrates with the one healed leper who returned to express gratitude to the Lord and was blessed immeasurably (Luke 17:11-19).

"God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16), and He inspires that love within us. *"We love, because he first loved us"* (4:19). *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..."* (John 3:16). *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is of God, and knoweth God"* (1 John 4:7). Those who love God seek to please Him, obey His commands, become His spiritual children, live lives that honor Him, talk to Him in prayer, heed His precepts in His Word, meet Him in worship services, love the brotherhood, lead others to the Savior, defend the truth, be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). Love rules out manipulating and *"using"* people; love rather serves and shows compassion.

The Love Of Christ

Five, when we realize what Christ did for us in leaving heaven with all its beauty and glory and emptying Himself in order to come to this earth and be grievously mistreated (Phil. 2:5-8), even giving His life for all mankind (Rom. 5:8; Heb. 2:9) and in making possible our eternal salvation in heaven (John 14:1-6), that unspeakable love should motivate us to make all necessary sacrifices and humble ourselves in gospel obedience (Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; Heb. 5:8,9; et al.). In fact, Paul spoke clearly of this powerful motivation:

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

Such amazing, overwhelming, sacrificial, unselfish love compels us to do right, if our hearts are tender at all, not hardened by the attractions, lusts, and pleasures of this world [which pleasures are lust for a season—and then **payday** (Heb. 11:25)]. Notice the **power** of Christ's love in Paul's life:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, **who loved me, and gave himself up for me** (Gal. 2:20).

God's people love to sing "*Tell me the old, old story*" and "*Tell me the story of Jesus,*" and we love to tell the old, old story of God's redeeming love! We relive the significance of Christ's unspeakable gift for us every Lord's day when we partake of the memorial Supper. It never becomes ordinary, mundane, and worn out to those who reciprocate Christ's love (as is falsely charged by the denominations who refuse to partake weekly as the Lord instructs). Faithful evangelists still preach Christ's crucifixion, shed blood, and resurrection as did the apostles, and they still give gladly that marvelous plan of salvation when they extend the gracious invitation of Christ at the close of their sermons, as did those faithful gospel preachers in the first century. As the song says, they "*lift Him up*"—His Word, His church,

His steps of obedience, His worship, His name, His divine mission, His grace, His compassion, His ethics and morality, His promises! The resurrected Savior is a tremendous motivation to us, as it was to the early church. It made the apostles bold men of God, willing to be tremendously persecuted and killed rather than turn their back on Christ and His saving message. Christ Himself said, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself"* (John 12:32).

The Value Of The Soul

Six, in a world so preoccupied with and which virtually worships things, we must realize that another motive for living the Christian life is the worth of our immortal souls. What a challenge was given by Christ!

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life [lose his own soul, KJV]? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life [soul]? (Matt. 16:24-26).

The rich farmer preached himself right into hell because he convinced himself that life was made up of things; he ignored his soul. Note: *"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry"* (Luke 12:19). But, what was God's terrifying pronouncement?

But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things

which thou has required, whose shall they be?
So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and
is not rich toward God (12:20-21).

So, what is the lesson? *“Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (12:15). He should have preached to himself, *“My soul is my most valuable possession.”*

You, as I, dear reader, are an immortal soul. What the Lord said in Matthew 10:28 should reverberate in our minds and get our attention—*“And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”* We should think more seriously about where we shall be in eternity than we have ever thought before. Eternity shall never end, and to be writhing in the fires of gehenna must be terrible beyond description—No hope, without God, eternal darkness, for ever and ever, because of our sins! What a motivation to flee from Satan into the loving, outstretched arms of the risen Savior! *“For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom. 6:23).

The Meeting Of Our Common Needs In Christ

Seven, earlier we noted the needs and drives that are common to us all. Only in Christ are these able to be met and fulfilled. Not only did God create mankind, but He knew and knows our deepest needs, how man can be truly happy and fulfilled, and how man can reach his greatest potential. Let us notice how being in Christ satisfies these common needs and drives.

Man needs peace and security. Christ, being the

Prince of Peace, shed His precious blood in order to give us peace from the guilt and penalty of sin (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7; Matt. 11:28-30). *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:7). *"...he is our peace"* (Eph. 2:14). The apostles were given the message of peace in Christ; *"Peace I leave with you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful"* (John 14:27). The world brings trouble, strife, temptation, and turmoil; Christ brings the peace that passeth understanding. Think of the security of the faithful saint, who cannot be separated from the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39).

Further, we need personal affection. *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). Other friends may fail the faithful child of God, but Christ never will. The one who knows every sparrow which falls to the ground and the number of the hairs on each person's head truly knows each of His children and provides for their needs (Matt. 6:25-34). With God, we are not just numbers. Note the greeting by the angel Gabriel to Daniel: *"...thou art greatly beloved"* (Dan. 9:23). We can *"rejoice that [our] names are written in heaven"* (Luke 10:20); it mattered not that the world would reject the Sacred Message of the Christians and persecute them. God knew the name of the poor beggar, Lazarus, but knew not the name of the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). Through our obedience of faith in Christ, God forgives every sin, makes us His dear children, and records our name in the Lamb's book of life. One can never experience greater acceptance than that! At last to the faithful, He will say *"Well done!"*

Still further, man needs peer acceptance. When one is born again led by the Spirit through the Word and baptized in water into the family of God, he is added to the church of Christ (Acts 2:47), born into the family of God, *"the house of God, which is the church of the living God"* (1 Tim. 3:15). Christians are family, of one heart (Acts 2:46), closeness and fellowship (2:44), watch for each other's needs (4:32), are *"tenderly affectioned one to another"* (Rom. 12:9), come to the *"necessities of the saints"* (12:13), *"Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep"* (12:15), *"Bear...one another's burdens"* (Gal. 6:2), meet the needs of the widows and orphans (James 1:27), *"consider one another to provoke unto love and good works"* (Heb. 10:24), *"pray one for another"* (James 5:16), and mourn the death of the saints (Acts 8:2).

Yet further, man needs to feel a degree of success and justification for living. The Christian is assured that he or she can live faithfully the Christian life; God does not demand and expect the impossible. In the Great Commission, God commanded that we **teach** every creature, not **convert** every creature (Mark 16:15,16). We can do that; we can talk to others about Christ. God realized that no mere human being is perfect; thus the provision of the blood cleansing the faithful as we walk in the light (1 John 1:7-10). God demands faithfulness (Rev 2:10). I am not a perfect husband, but I am a faithful husband. Though we are not able to achieve *"sinless perfection,"* we are able to be faithful. Through the precious provisions of the cleansing blood, we can live righteous and blameless lives before God (2 John 4; 3 John 2-4). Some in Sardis *"did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy"*

(Rev. 3:4, 5). “...for thus shall be **richly supplied** unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11).

Even further, man needs to realize there is hope, both now and beyond this life. When persons contract a serious disease, the physician is often asked, “*Is there any hope?*” Sometimes we hear the statement, “*While there is life, there is hope.*” Hope is the mainspring of life. Mankind needs to have a sense of optimism, of positive thinking. The Word of God is the source of true optimism, of genuine hope. God is optimistic. He is “*not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). He “*would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim. 2:4). All of us are beset with problems in this life (Job 14:1); but God helps us face and surmount those problems. With the Word as our guide and comfort (1 Thess. 4:18), with God’s wonderful providence, and loving brethren at our side, and with the blessing of prayer (James 5:16), we can optimistically face the future and live the abundant life (John 10:10). See Matthew 6:25-34.

We hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the fact that He was “*the firstfruits of them that are asleep*” (1 Cor. 15:20). His resurrection proved Him to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4) and guarantees our own resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13-17). Dead is no dead-end street. “*It is impossible for God to lie*”; therefore,

...we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us (Heb. 6:18-20).

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (Rev. 22:14).

We "*shall reap if we faint not*" (Gal. 6:9,10); our "*labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Cor. 15:58). "*And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*" (1 John 3:3). Is there any hope? Indeed! It is found in Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

"...*thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 15:57). The all-powerful Word of God (Heb. 4:12; Acts 20:32; Rom. 1:16) gives us,

all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises (2 Peter 1:3-4).

The Bible is a marvelous book. Its ability (because God is its author) to anticipate every problem man would ever have and have the answer to that problem before it ever arose, its ability to anticipate every need and genuine, healthy desire that man would have and to motivate one to achieve those needs and desires makes the Bible a truly unique book and the Christian religion absolutely unique in this world. No other religion serves and praises a living, resurrected Savior, no other religion honors the sacredness of human life—all of it, born and unborn, no other religion elevates such decency, ethics, and morality, no other religion so challenges

mankind to achieve our greatest potential and fulfillment, and no other religion promises such a glorious hope of eternal life in heaven with the redeemed of all the ages, as does New Testament Christianity. Praise be to our great God!

Chapter 6

The Value Of Fellowship With Those Of Like Precious Faith

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



Robert Taylor has been preaching the gospel for fifty years. He is appreciated and loved by the faithful brotherhood for holding to the “*old paths*,” his thorough and exhaustive study of any subject; his excellent writings in journals, books and magazines. He continues his work with the good church at Ripley, TN (now twenty-five years). Robert and Irene have two children and four grandchildren.

It is always a joy supreme to come for the East Hill Lectures as I have done for all of them except one. East Hill is a sound and solid congregation with excellence in elders, deacons, preachers and membership. You are truly a beacon on a hill reflecting light to all beholders. Genuine gratitude is expressed to Paul for the invitation to speak and write a chapter in the book.

Terms in the title are worthy of definition. **Value** is something of worth, importance and benefit. **Fellowship** derives from the great Greek term *koinonia* and is one of the most beautiful words in Heaven’s Volume of Inspiration. It is association, community, communion, joint participation, joint sharing, contribution, distribution and partnership. These are

derived from Thayer, Bagster, Vine and Woods as they have dealt with this rich, comprehensive word in the beautiful and precise Greek language. **Those** refer to Christians or people who have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered them (Rom. 6:17-18). **Like precious** means of equal value both to Gentiles and Jews. In matters of redemptive riches Jewish Christians held no advantage over Gentile Christians. Luke and Titus were Gentiles or Greeks. They had every spiritual blessing as those of Jewish extraction possessed. **Faith** is not used subjectively here but objectively. It is a reference to the gospel much like Paul's usage of the term when he preached the faith which once he destroyed (Gal. 1:23). Jude does more of the same when he counseled Christians to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to saints of the most high God (Jude 3). The faith is the gospel with its facts to be believed, commandments to obey, promises to enjoy, implications to accept and warnings to heed. An attractive acrostic of the gospel is:

G od
O bey
S aints
P owerful
E verlasting life
L ove

God gave us the gospel. He intends that we obey it. When obeyed, it produces saints or saved people. It is powerful. Paul, in Romans 1:16-17, considered it to be dynamite, a dynamo and dynamic in accomplishing heaven's will with men. Its regal power permeates Hebrews 4:12 as well as James 1:18, 21. Its rich reward is everlasting or eternal life. Our loyal attitude toward it must be love. God loves the gospel; so do Jesus and the Holy Spirit; so do angels; so have all loyal soldiers of Christ; so does every Christian now who loves his own soul and the souls of the lost.

VALUABLE FELLOWSHIP IS VERTICAL IN ITS NOBLE NATURE

It reaches up to heaven itself. The aged apostle of love, John, captures this for us in beauty of language minus parallel. Early in his first epistle he wrote,

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ....If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:3, 6-7).

Paul captures the same beautiful concept by assuring troubled saints at Corinth. *"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Cor. 1:9). Jesus is mentioned some ten times in the opening ten verses of 1 Corinthians 1. What a powerful refutation this was of those who had begun to

say, *"I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ"* (1 Cor. 1:12). These religious partisans with a fondness for human names had lost sight of real and rich fellowship with their Lord on heavenly high.

The Holy Spirit is not omitted from this coveted circle of heavenly fellowship. Paul wrote the precious people at Philippi these words of wisdom and weight,

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love; if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies.... (Phil. 2:1).

Hence, our rich and treasured concept of fellowship reaches up to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Their rich fellowship descends to every child of God. It is not one-sided. It is fully reciprocated. This is an attractive aspect of fellowship we dare not overlook. Heaven and earth's redeemed are thus joined. Paul's beautiful statement to the Ephesians comes readily to mind, *"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"* (Eph. 3:15).

Rich and regal Christian fellowship is victoriously vertical. What a precious thought this is!

VALUABLE FELLOWSHIP IS HORIZONTAL IN NOBLE NATURE

In the previous section of study emphasis was given to the vertical. This would be **upward** in direction. In this section we have the horizontal which is **outward**. It is not without limitations. It is not extended to the devil or demons. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:20,

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God:

and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils [demons, ASV].

It is not to unbelievers. It is not to those in religious error such as Catholics, Protestants, Judaism, Islam or any of the other World Religions that compete with Christianity for the minds of men. We live in such a tolerant world filled with political correctness that would bar practically no one from the circle of fellowship.

Who has fellowship with the Godhead? Only those who have obeyed the gospel at a point in the past. This made them sons and daughters of God. Paul wrote,

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

Were they in fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit prior to their baptism into the Lord? The answer is an obvious no. But there is another fellowship imperative that needs to be considered. There must be a continuation of obedience to God and Christ. This is the intense import of 1 John 1:6-7 wherein we read,

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

To walk in the light is the eloquent equal of walking in the truth. Truth is our North Star or polestar in all religious matters. These are the essentials of vertical fellowship.

The perimeters of horizontal fellowship are the same

precisely and preciously. We may only fellowship those who have obeyed the gospel at a point in the past. But this is not the fullness of fellowship boundaries. There is also a present imperative. We may only fellowship those who are walking in the light or the truth of God's Word. People may have obeyed the gospel forty years ago. Yet for the last ten years they have become unfaithful to God and immoral within human relationships. Quite obviously, we could have fellowshipped them for thirty years while they were faithful but not the last ten years while they have been unfaithful. In this matter of fellowship we have both the past and present to consider.

I think of a fellow once connected with our prison ministry with which I have worked for about twenty years. He was young, energetic and growing as a Christian. He would read the Scriptures, lead prayers and officiate at the Lord's table. The Black Muslims, a very militant group with whom we have had to contend, got to him and converted him. As an Islamic convert he came to our Sunday services just once more. He interrupted our service and insisted on having his say. I allowed him his say and then answered him point by point. I have never heard or read a more blasphemous or railing speech against Jesus Christ than the harangue he prattled before our stunned assembly that Sunday. My past fellowship with him turned into a present disfellowship from that moment onward. He never returned again. His holy heart had turned into a hardened heart with hatred toward the very One he had once confessed and into whose fellowship he once came in the waters of immersion. It was a sad day for all the inmates and myself who had come together to praise God and honor His only begotten Son.

Horizontal fellowship is set forth in the very first mention of that kingly term in the New Testament. Luke reports of the earliest converts in Jerusalem. *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). Fellowship is a joint-sharing. We read of their beautiful brand of benevolence.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need....Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35).

Barnabas is singled out by Luke for specific mention in this beautiful benevolence (Acts 4:36-37).

A precious portrait is painted to perfection by Paul of the marvelous Macedonians in the opening verses of 2 Corinthians 8. They gave bountifully out of deep poverty (v. 2). They even exceeded Paul's expectations of them (v. 3). Paul continued:

Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God (2 Cor 8:4-5).

Horizontal fellowship is reflected at the Jerusalem Council when the Jerusalem apostles and leaders gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship. The

former evangelize among the Jews; the latter would evangelize among the Gentiles (Gal. 2:9).

VALUABLE FELLOWSHIP IS COMPREHENSIVE IN ITS NOBLE NATURE

Mention fellowship and many restrict it to food and fun. There is fellowship when Christians meet together for a potluck or covered dish meal. There is also fellowship when young people associate for a recreational venture spending treasured time together. The love feasts in the first century and fellowship in their meals together were no doubt very pleasant but this was only a part of the wider scope of their fervent fellowship.

There is a fellowship linked with suffering. Jesus desired the fellowship and loyal support of the eleven apostles as they accompanied Him into Gethsemane for His prelude in prayer before the arrest, trials, condemnation and crucifixion. He took Peter, James and John to be closer to Him while He prayed with such feeling and fervency. They **slumbered** while He **supplicated** (Matt. 26:36f). Later they entered wholeheartedly into sufferings for their Saviour. After being beaten mercilessly by the senseless Sanhedrin Court Luke reports,

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts 5:41).

The remnant of Acts and the various epistles reflect a lifetime of suffering fellowship for their beloved Master on God's own right hand in heaven. Each of them had his own baptism or immersion of suffering even as Jesus said of James and John in Matthew 20 and Mark 10.

To the precious Philippians Paul penned these words of weight,

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

In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Paul specifies just how deep was this fellowship of sufferings. Incidentally, he penned this catalogue of Pauline sufferings a full decade before his death at the hands of persecuting Rome. To the Colossian Christians he wrote,

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church (Col. 1:24).

The faithful mother and her Christian children who suffer insults and slander from an irreligious husband/father are drinking deeply of the fellowship of suffering. Some years back I baptized a Catholic mother and her Catholic children. We had to do it secretly due to the husband/father who bitterly opposed such. They began almost immediately their own fellowship of suffering but stayed faithful according to my last contact with them.

Christians in the first century had fellowship with the apostles as per John's assessment in 1 John 1:3.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We are not deprived of this treasured fellowship even though we live in 2002 and they all lived in the first century of this era. As we imbibe their teaching and live

in harmony with the same, we have fellowship with them. We experience a joint-sharing and spiritual partnership with them. How utterly wonderful is such a concept.

Fellowship permeates our worship. There is fellowship as we **sing** psalms, hymns and spiritual songs together (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Paul and Silas had fellowship as they sang and prayed in a Philippian prison in Acts 16:25. There is fellowship in **teaching** and **preaching** (Acts 2:42). Proclaiming truth and the reverent reception of it means we are drawing closer to the heavenly authors of truth and toward our brethren who are listening and learning. Fellowship increases as we make proper application of the words of life. There is fellowship in our **prayers** as we pray for the sick, for those who are negligent, for elders, deacons, teachers, preachers, and for missionaries in foreign fields. Prayers afford a joint-sharing. There is fellowship around the **Lord's Table** as we remember His sufferings and connect with His sacrifice on Calvary. There is fellowship in our **giving**. Paul touched that very comprehensive concept in 2 Corinthians 8-9. Luke does more of the same in Acts 2, 4, 6 and 11.

There is fellowship in marriage between a Christian husband and wife and between Christian parents and their offspring who are being trained to obey the gospel and be faithful to the Lord.

There is fellowship among those who travel on a missionary trip or go to help a congregation conduct a VBS or door-knocking campaign. As I write this one of our Ripley elders, Dr. Joe Hunt, is on a medical mission trip to Panama. We have congregational fellowship with him on this trip.

In 3 John the well-beloved Gaius had fellowship

with traveling teachers of truth. John the apostle wrote, *"We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth"* (v. 8). This is evangelism and Christian fellowship at their finest.

VALUABLE FELLOWSHIP IS ENRICHING IN ITS NOBLE NATURE

There is no way we can lose in these excellent endeavors. Words of ardent assurance occur in Hebrews 6:10,

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

In a vivid judgment scene in Matthew 25:34ff we see a remembering Jesus ready to reward those who have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, taken in strangers, clothed the naked, visited the sick and who did not forget those imprisoned. Jesus considered such beautiful benevolence as having been done to Him personally. Doing good for the sake of goodness and not expecting a quick reciprocation will be richly rewarded. Jesus stated:

...When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:12-14).

In the early church those who sold lands and houses to help those in need were enriched spiritually. Barnabas was made richer by what he did in Acts 4:36-37. Ananias and Sapphira were made poorer at death by what they did in Acts 5:1-11. They died in total poverty of spirit and as hypocritical conspirators against the beautiful, benevolent bride of Christ.

The generous Antiochians in Acts 11:27-30 and the marvelous Macedonians who gave so generously did not lose. They gained by the enriching fellowship characteristic of them. Likewise, we enrich ourselves when we partake of Christian fellowship at its finest. We can be an example of generous Christian fellowship and giving as the Antiochian and Macedonian people have been through the centuries.

VALUABLE FELLOWSHIP IS VICTORIOUS IN ITS NOBLE NATURE

This fits right in with our key verse for this lectureship. *"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 15:57). Fellowship is based on faith and faith is to be victorious.

John wrote:

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4).

A lovely lyric we often sing states in the chorus:

Faith is the victory!
Faith is the victory!
O glorious victory
That overcomes the world.

We face a world that is becoming more hateful and hostile toward Biblical Christianity with each passing day. False religions, modernism, postmodernism, existentialism, atheism, agnosticism and the aggressive World Religions like Islam are feeding this aversion to true Christianity. It is intently incumbent on all of us to help each other keep our faith strong. Fellowship enters in at this vital spot. Malachi 3:16 offers words of great encouragement,

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

Paul frequently acted upon this very principle of personal interest in others. He suggested to Barnabas in Acts 15:36 that the two of them "*visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.*" He made frequent trips personally to keep check on his converts. When he could not go personally he sent one or more of his trusted helpers such as Timothy, Titus, Tychicus or Crescens to aid the struggling saints in difficult fields. He wanted all saints to be victorious and not fail in vital Christian fellowship and friendship toward vibrant Christianity.

VALUABLE FELLOWSHIP IS NEVER- ENDING IN ITS NOBLE NATURE

It does not end when we are separated personally in this life. Paul was in Rome as a prisoner when he penned Philippians. The Philippians were hundreds of

miles to his east. Yet there was fellowship between the Philippian people and the incarcerated apostle. The banished prophet on Patmos, John the beloved, still had fellowship with his dear brothers and sisters among the Asian congregations mentioned in Revelation 2-3 though miles of the Aegean Sea separated them personally.

Fellowship does not end with earthly demise. There will be fellowship among the saved in Hadean paradise. Abraham and Lazarus enjoyed fellowship in the account given in Luke 16:19-31. The saved from patriarchy, the Mosaic period and the Christian age will be in sweet fellowship prior to judgment and on into eternity. Speaking of the latter the sweetest of fellowship is reserved for those going to heaven. There will be fellowship with the Godhead, the angels who kept their first estate and did not rebel and the redeemed from all three dispensations of Divine dealings with mankind. There is no way we can fathom the delights of heavenly fellowship. We have a foretaste of it here but the fullness is reserved for that upper and better kingdom on heavenly high.

CONCLUSION

True fellowship will increase the joy of being a Christian. It will find us as a band of brothers and sisters. It will help produce the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3).

It will make us grateful heirs of heaven in the sweet by and by.

Thanks be to God, Christ and Holy Spirit for the value and victory of Christian fellowship.

Chapter 7

The Value Of Prayer In Being Victorious

Mark Mosher



A 1987 Graduate of Memphis School of Preaching • B.A. degree in 1991 from Southern Christian University • Son of Keith and Dorothy Mosher • Has served in local work in Mississippi, Florida and presently working with the Pine Street church in Crossett, Arkansas • Mark and Beckye have three children.

It is a tremendous honor to be able to speak at the **Truth in Love lectureship** and I would like to extend my deep appreciation for the invitation. I have known Brother Paul Sain and his family and of their great work for the cause of Christ for many years and consider it a great privilege to be a part of this great work.

INTRODUCTION

It was a normal day. People were going to work, dropping their kids off at school, taking care of business. All of a sudden that normal day, known to us now as 9/11 changed forever. A plane crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center. Panic ensued in the building and streets of New York City. Soon the whole world would be glued to the television sets wondering in disbelief and asking the question, "What has

happened?" People trapped in the building filled with fire and smoke began to call loved ones on their phone. They left messages any way they could for fear that they may not live.

As the world watched the first Tower burn, another plane crashed into the other Tower filling it, too, with fire and smoke. Rescue workers from many places were trying desperately to get people out of the buildings. While we watched these scenes in horror someone being interviewed by phone at the Pentagon announced there had been what seemed to be an explosion at the Pentagon. We soon learned that another plane had crashed into that building as well. People in desperate acts plunged from the Twin Towers risking instant death rather than being trapped and burned too death. While we were in shock over the devastation of these horrific acts, it was not yet over. Firefighters, possibly as many as 200, along with rescue workers and police officers who had unhesitatingly gone into the Towers to save lives ended up giving their own instead. They were trapped inside the collapsing towers with no time to run to safety. They were brought into the melee by simply trying to do their duty and they died while trying to save others.

For the first time in history, all air traffic was halted, there were no ballgames to watch, no comedy shows to make us laugh, even the shows who continued to fill their normal time slots were filled with interviews of people trying to help or telling of the impact this horrific event had on their lives. The comedians we depended on for nightly humor suddenly became somber as they added their thoughts on these happenings. The world as we knew it came to a halt as we watched the lives of

people torn apart at the thought that they will never see their loved ones again. People reported messages from their loved ones who had used cell phones to contact their loved ones from the air. Many left messages of love for their families, knowing they were about to die but wanting to be sure those left behind knew how much they loved them. Others left not only messages of love but also those of resolve to change outcome of the plans made by the hijackers. They left messages such as, "We have been hijacked. We don't know what were going to do, but we must do something." One said, "We know we are going to die, so we plan to overcome the hijackers." We learned there was a fourth plane that never reached its target because brave people overtook the hijackers. Last words of "I love you, Goodbye" was heard. In New York smoke is now filling the city along with dust and asbestos. Workers must wait before they can go in to search for the survivors. Hospitals wait for multitudes of injured victims to come but relatively few show up. It begins to become clear exactly how great the loss of lives must be in the rubble left behind. People prepare for the worst.

At the Pentagon no one can get close to the building for the fire is out of control. If there were any survivors it is thought they could never survive this. Military personnel, workers, and a children's day care facility were all located in the area of the destruction. Men, women, and children have died. People wander the streets of New York with pictures of loved ones frantically searching for any information about them, clinging to the hope they will be found alive. You cry as you hear them say, "have you seen my brother", "have you seen my sister, my husband, my wife, my

child, my father, my mother." Others flock to the hospitals to wait in hopes of hearing their loved one is there. We were going about our daily lives and destruction came quickly.

It was said that June 7, 1944, the day following D-Day, led to a nation in prayer. People began to call on God. "God Bless America" was heard abundantly. Prayers were made collectively and individually. The President of the United States quotes a part of the **23rd Psalm** and calls for a moment of silence for prayer. Many of these same occurrences took place after September 11th. President Bush quoted from the Bible and people began singing patriotic songs and gathering for prayer. Not long after September 11th I remember hearing someone on television say that the events of 911 and the call to prayer and patriotism seemed to be of tremendous importance now but that in six months people would be back to living as they were before this calamity. At the time he was severely castigated for his comment, but now, it appears his observation was correct.

Even as I write this there is very little, if any, mention of prayer from our government and newscasters. You see few flags being worn or flown and patriotic items have been deeply discounted at most stores. People have gone on with their lives and except for the reminders on the news that a war is still taking place many again feel secure and comfortable and have quit praying. There is a poem circulating on the internet entitled "Was Your Flag Flying High on September 10th?" It begs the question of how the world reacted to their neighbors, firemen, policemen, etc. on the days preceding 911.

The last stanza reads:

It was tragic what happened to our Nation
on September Eleven.
We saw a glimpse of hell;
for answers we looked up to heaven.
We found the lining behind the cloud
and made some good from that fateful day.
The questions remain:
What did we learn
and how long will it stay that way?

The author of this poem seems to understand how people are. It seems that when all is right and secure in life we tend to forget the One Who helped us through it all, God. How often are there mass prayers when everything is right? How often do we, as victors in Christ, simply pray to God in thanksgiving?

PURPOSE OF PRAYER

Prayer from *erotao* means to Ask.¹ Yet the purpose of that asking is to show our dependence upon God. God does not need for us to tell him of our needs. He is our Creator; He knows our needs. Instead, God is desiring a communion with man, a fellowship. A man whose life is prayerless is missing something in life. He is not merely missing a little conversation with God. He is not merely failing to be thankful to God. He is not merely failing to praise God. He is not merely failing to be penitent. A prayerless man is failing to be a man of faith. The early church did not just say prayers, they prayed "fervent prayers" (James 5:16; Col. 4:2). A man's spiritual life then can be no greater than his prayer life. Out of all the blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3) prayer is a great privilege. Through prayer the Christian can obtain forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Through prayer the

Christian can obtain peace (Phil. 4:4-6). Through prayer the Christian can obtain strength from God (Eph. 3:14-16).

PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER

Prayer that is acceptable unto God is prayer that is offered in faith. *"And all things, whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive"* (Matt. 21:22). When one approaches God in prayer there can be no doubt that God will answer.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:5-8).

One can never doubt God in prayer but must lay his burden at the feet of God and leave knowing God will take care of it. We cannot continue to pray with the thought that God has not or will not answer the prayer. Many times God answers prayer and His answer is to wait awhile. Other times God answers prayer and the answer is no.

Prayer that is acceptable to God is prayer that is given in humility. Without proper humility in prayer one simply prays *"with himself"* (Luke 18:11). In a contrast between the Pharisee and the publican, the publican would not even lift his eyes toward heaven but smote upon his breast, saying, *"God be merciful to me a sinner"* (Luke 18:13). The Psalmist declares, *"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as he*

of a contrite spirit" (Psm. 34:18). God will therefore resist the proud and give grace to the humble (James 4:6).

PARTS OF PRAYER

Paul divides the general subject of prayer into four parts.

I exhort therefore that, first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Supplication, from *deesis*, occurs nineteen times in the New Testament. In the King James Version it is translated "*prayer(s)*" twelve times, "*make request*" one time, and "*supplication*" six times. This type of prayer is an asking or an entreaty which grows out of need.² During difficult times we make our request known unto God. Prayer, from *proseuche*, emphasizes the element of communion with God.³ Prayer is simply spending time with God. Inter-cession, from *enteuxis*, simply means to make a petition. Intercession is requesting on the behalf of others.⁴ When our relationship with God is what it should be then we begin to think of other people. We see the greatness of God through our prayer and realize that others are made in His image. I therefore pray on behalf of another made in His image. Thanksgiving, from *euchoristia*, is the expression of gratitude and grateful praise to the Lord for His blessings (Col 3:15). Out of thankful hearts comes true service to God. Prayer then is directly related to my work and service to God. One, who truly loves to be a part of the work of the church, prays.

PARTICIPANTS OF PRAYER

As was discussed earlier prayer was designed to acknowledge man's dependence upon God. In times of stress and despair, one has a desire to call upon one higher than himself. Therefore is one taught in Holy Writ to address God with terms of respect. "*Our Father which art in heaven Hallowed by thy name...*" was taught as a model for the disciples (Matt 6:10). We are taught to depend upon God for our daily food (Matt 6:11-12). God is not concerned about hearing our "*list of things*" but rather a desire to fellowship the one who asks. He desires communion not competition. He desires faith not faithlessness. A prayerless man is failing to be a man of faith. The man of faith will develop himself not just to say words but to pray fervently (James 5:16). A man's spiritual life can be no greater than his prayer life. Peter declared, "*...The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*" (1 Peter 3:12). A sinful man will soon quit praying yet a praying man will quit sinning. Simon the Sorcerer was told to "*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee*" (Acts 8:22). As a Christian one is not in the business of sinning. A Christian does not let sin reign in his mortal body (Rom. 6:12). Prayer therefore is the avenue that helps shape our lives as we commune with God. As we commune with God we become more God-like.

We live in times of despair and grief. Some experience this more than others. We cannot change the circumstances that surround us, but we can change ourselves in order to face the circumstance. Thus do we read concerning prayer,

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen (Matt 6:13).

Again our Lord prayed, "...*Not my will, but thine, be done*" (Luke 22:42). Prayer does not try to move God to us but rather change our own lives to be closer to God.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: (1 John 5:14).

Prayer then will cause one to humble himself before God. For one to depend upon God comes the realization the he does not have the strength within himself to overcome.

PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

Prayer is the privilege of the righteous. Under Judaism there was a struggle to get close to God. The system of the Law of Moses did not provide for full grace, full access to the glory of God. The priesthood was limited to the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron (Exod. 28:1). For one to pray to God would require the mediation of the priesthood. There was not direct access to God through a perfect high priest. Even those who were far from Jerusalem were required to pray toward the Temple, whether they were of Israel off to war or whether they were a Gentile living in a far country. They were accessing the priesthood of God. Solomon in his prayer for the dedication of the Temple proclaimed this.

Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray

toward this house; Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name. If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, withersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause (1 Kings 8:41-45).

Daniel, while in captivity, prayed this way,

Now Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into the house; and his windows being opened in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime (Dan. 6:10).

Yet today those who are in Christ are Priest before God (1 Peter 2:5,9) and have the privilege of praying to our father through the mediation of the son. The privilege of prayer is only extended to those who are in Christ. In every dispensation God has had a place where he would meet man in worship. Abraham built an altar and there *"called upon the name of the Lord"* (Gen 12:7-8). Under Judaism there was first the tabernacle and later the temple and the permanent place for the House of God. Today we do not have a physical altar but rather the tabernacle is the body of Christ (John 1:14; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). For one to be in the place of worship and thus pray to God one must be in Christ. One cannot call God

his Father if he is not His child (Rom 8:15). The only example we have of an alien sinner praying to God is found in Acts 22 when Saul was on the road to Damascus. He asks the Lord what to do and is told to find Ananias who told to get up and wash away his sins (Acts 22:16).

To fully understand the privilege of prayer one would need to understand the struggle of living under the Law of Moses. Paul helped us some in this area by the information recorded in Romans 7. Under Judaism God gave the pattern for the building of the tabernacle. The tabernacle became the place for the dwelling of God's glory (Exod. 40:34-35). As Israel traveled, the glory of God was in the cloud by day and fire by night (Exod. 40:36-38). The only one allowed in the Holy of Holies was the High Priest and only one time a year (Heb. 9:7). The priest officiating at the table of shewbread, candlestick, and altar of incense could enter the holy place and yet, they came short of the place of glory (most holy place). This was not to remain so though as Isaiah prophesied of the coming of glory to mankind. Peter recorded this, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11). The people must have been constantly searching and enquiring from the prophets about salvation and the glory that would follow the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 1:9-12). Paul helped the people of his day to find the harmony between the two. Paul was answering the false teachers of the day who were accusing Paul of disharmony between the Gospel he preached (Rom. 1:16) and the law given by Moses. Paul therefore addresses the

condition of the Gentile before the cross (Rom. 1) and the condition of the Jews before the cross (Rom. 2) and concludes that all are under sin (Rom. 3:23). Paul then answered the Judaizing teachers by showing that those under the Law of Moses find salvation in the same source as those under the Law of Christ; that source is Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24-25). Paul concluded that those under the Law of Moses also sinned and came short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). They did indeed! They were never allowed in the place of God's glory. Yet today there is now, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh (Law of Moses) but after the Spirit (law of Christ) (Rom. 8:1). If you are in Christ Jesus today you are the place of God's glory. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21). We have access to full grace and we thus represent the glory of God. Today we can get close to God for He is just one prayer away.

PERSISTENCE OF PRAYER

Prayer is mentioned in the Bible five hundred and forty-five times in five hundred and eleven verses. Jesus is mentioned in conjunction with prayer sixty-two times (e.s. Matt. 14:23; 26:36, 39, 42, 44; Mark 1:35; 6:46; 14:32,35,39; John 14:16; 17:9-11, 20). Jesus was known to have prayed on at least twenty-two different occasions. Jesus manifested the need for persistent prayer and taught two parables that teach the need for persistent prayer. Luke records,

And he said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For

a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you, seed, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened (Luke 11:5-10).

Again in Luke 18 he records the persistence of the widow. There is great virtue in persistent prayer. Paul was able to get through the difficulty of his "thorn in the flesh" realizing through prayer the sufficient grace of God. The early church was drawn closer together having one heart, one soul, and one mind through persistent prayer (Acts 2:42). Therefore is the command given toward the righteous to "*Pray without ceasing*" (2 Thess 5:17).

PERILS OF PRAYER

When trouble comes it is natural for the man of God to cleave to God. In Ezekiel 1 Ezekiel describes a vision of a whirlwind coming out of the North (Judgment). Fire was within it and yet in the midst were four living creatures which had the likeness of man. Ezekiel knew there was trouble for the children of Israel but within that trouble Ezekiel saw God. Others however could only see terror. Trouble can be all around us yet the way one views that trouble will be determined by

his faith. God asks us to call upon him in the day of trouble (Psm. 20:15). God does not save us from trouble but rather through trouble. The life in which we live is filled with many nights. There is the night of sin, the night of despair and grief. Yet the Psalmist proclaimed that "*weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*" (Psm. 30:5). For every night in life there is a morning of joy. The Lord is described as the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16). The Lord can help us overcome the night of sin and despair. Yet we must be focused on Him. Peter on one occasion saw the Christ walking on water. He got out of the boat and began to walk toward the Christ. The wind became boisterous and the sea began to billow. All Peter could do was look at the trouble. "*And he began to sink*" (Matt. 14:30). Notice he did not sink but rather began to sink. Christ was there to help him through it. All acts of worship (preaching, partaking of the Lord's supper, giving, singing, and prayer) are designed to help us depend upon God. Temptations and trials of life are common to mankind (1 Cor 10:13) yet the way of escape is the faithfulness of God. In times of trouble, in the night of life we depend upon the Morning Star. We pray to our father through the mediation of the son, Jesus Christ

There are various terms in Holy Writ given to God. One particular term is *Shaddai*. It occurs forty eight times in the Old Testament and thirty one of those times is in the book of Job. *Shaddai* means Almighty⁵ and is used ten times in the New Testament. It is used five times with the compound *El Shaddai* and occurs five times in Genesis, one time in Exodus, and once in Ezekiel. When Abram was in Ur of Chaldees God called him out of the place to go to the land of Canaan. In connection with

that command came three promises: Land, Seed, and Nation. Yet when Abraham was eighty-five years old he did not have the child of promise. Abraham took it upon himself to fulfill that promise and through Hagar conceived Ishmael. Yet God waited another fourteen years till Abraham was ninety-nine to fulfill the promised son and Isaac was born. When Abraham had about given up hope God appeared to him and said, *"I am God almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect"* (Gen 17:1). God then reminded him of the covenant he promised. God Almighty became a declaration of God's power and ability to keep His promise. It is without doubt in the Hour of Trial we have an almighty God who is able to deliver us. We must depend upon Him as we pray.

PEOPLE OF PRAYER

"When Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem for the last time Luke tells us he wept over that city" (Luke 19:41). He went into the temple and watched as the money changers were exacting interest on the people. They were clearly violating the law. Our Lord watched this and became angrier and angrier until he drove them out saying, *"It is written, My house shall be called the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves"* (Matt. 21:13). No congregation of the Lord can be what God wants them to be if they are not a *"praying people."* How often do we have times when God's people come together just to pray? If we are the church of Christ then do we not follow that Christ? Luke records twelve references to the prayer life of our Founder: He prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21), He prayed when the multitudes sought him

(Luke 5:16), He prayed before naming the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12), He prayed before the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:16), He prayed before He asked His disciples who He was (Luke 9:18), He prayed as he was being transfigured along with Moses and Elias (Luke 9:28,29), He prayed when He rejoiced before the seventy (Luke 10:21), He prayed when His disciples asked Him to pray (Luke 11:1), He prayed for Peter's faith (Luke 22:32), He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:41-44), He prayed on the cross (Luke 23:34), and He prayed before eating bread with the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24:30).

We see in these passages that Jesus prayed before making major decisions. Should not the church pray during such matters? Jesus prayed when facing trials. The church facing difficulty should pray. Jesus also prayed on days when all was right. Many times we fail to pray when all is right. We simply call on God in times of crises. Would it not be good to have prayer in thanksgiving to God? As God's people may we learn the lesson to "always pray and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

PREVAILING IN PRAYER

Luke tells us that Jesus began His ministry with prayer (Luke 3:21-22). When one becomes a Christian he should begin a life of prayer. Preachers should begin every day with prayer. Elders should begin every meeting with a prayer. The Bible also teaches that Christ ended his ministry with prayer. The battle had been fought and won. He endured six mock trials (three Jewish, three Roman). He was led to Golgotha to die between two thieves before a crowd yelling to crucify

Him. As He completed that ministry in death He prayed an intercessory prayer for His enemies, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34). His final words were, *"Father into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this, he gave up the ghost"* (Luke 23:46). The prayer of intercession later changed to mediation. The same crowd stood before Peter and the apostles as he preached the sermon of the death burial and resurrection of Christ. They, being pricked in their heart, asked Peter what they needed to do to be victorious. Peter tells them the command of repentance and baptism for the remission of their sins. They obtained forgiveness thus giving an answer to the Lord's prayer on the cross.

As a Christian I have the opportunity to secure forgiveness through repentance, confession, and prayer. Through prayer I have a Mediator able to pay the price for my sins. Therefore I live in victory.

CONCLUSION

Jesus taught us a lesson on prayer through the parable of the unjust judge. He concludes with the question, *"shall he find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8). How many begin the Christian life only to quit and fall away because they failed to heed to the admonition of prayer? How often do delinquents pray? There are those in the church who have lost sight of the victory in Christ. They have forgotten God's goodness (Rom. 2:4). As a result they fail to pray and depend on God and mold their lives after His.

One of the greatest dangers we face in the church is to fail to pray to God at the close of the day. We

almost always resort to prayer when we are in need. When we feel that life is too burdensome and we just can't make it, we call on God. Yet in times of success in life and victory is ours we tend to feel self sufficient and fail to pray. We are also in danger of living without God. In John 16 after Jesus fed the multitude they wanted to take Him by force and make Him a king. His popularity is overwhelming. The world is following after Him. It was at such a time when He withdrew to pray to His Father (John 16:15). It is at times when we think we are the strongest we so desperately need to pray to God.

ENDNOTES

1 W. E. Vine, **Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company,), P. 881.

2 Ibid., p. 882

3 Ibid., p. 881.

4 Ibid., p. 607

5 Homer Hailey, **Prayer and Providence**, (Louisville, Ky: Religious Supply, Inc., 1993), p. 95

Chapter 8

Unity Of God's People; Essential To Our Being Victorious

Daniel F. Cates



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INTRODUCTION

It is a great honor to be speaking on the 12th annual **Truth in Love Lectureship**. I, as a student at the Memphis School of Preaching in the early nineties, was impressed by the work done here in Pulaski when I, along with my schoolmates-including Kelly Webb, one of the fine elders here, was able to attend one day. I have long appreciated Paul Sain and his family. I am further honored to speak on the subject at hand: Unity of God's People/Essential to Our Being Victorious for, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*"¹ As we deal with this subject we shall notice the connection between unity and victory, shall see with whom we are to be united, and finally observe the scope of unity. We shall accomplish this

purpose by looking at examples, Biblical and secular, of men who were united and victorious as contrasted with other men who were not united and were, as a direct result, defeated. We shall note that those who side with God will be victorious. We shall see, further in developing our thoughts on the subject, that unity is exclusive.

UNITY AND VICTORY

Victory is that which we all want. We seek to be victorious as a nation, in the classroom, in the workplace, and even in our sports and hobbies. Victory is the *"successful ending of a struggle or contest."*² To be victorious we unite with others: our comrades, our classmates, our fellow workers, and our teammates. Without unity there is no victory. Unity is *"an un-reduced or unbroken completeness or totality," "the quality of being united into one."*³

While not showing approval of many of his other songs, I am reminded of the lyrics of one Billy Joel song, *"Goodnight Saigon,"* where he sang, *"And we would all go down together/We said we'd all go down together/Yes we would all go down together."*⁴

The song pictures the unity of soldiers in battle, unity that has been found throughout history in places such as Issus, Masada, Waterloo, Bull Run, and Iwo Jima. This unity has shown up as a key in planning military, either offensive or defensive, tactics to achieve victory. Unity in battle was the driving force behind the Macedonian phalanx as described by Polybius.

Many considerations may easily convince us that, if only the phalanx has its proper formation and strength, nothing can resist it face to face or withstand its

charge...if only the phalanx is properly formed and the men close up properly both flank and rear, like the description in Homer: "*So buckler pressed on buckler; helm on helm; And man on man; and waving horse-hair plumes. In polished head-piece mingled, as they swayed In order: in such serried rank they stood.*" [Iliad, 13.131]...With this point in our minds, it will not be difficult to imagine what the appearance and strength of the whole phalanx is likely to be, when, with lowered sarissae, it advances to the charge sixteen deep. Of these sixteen ranks, all above the fifth are unable to reach with their sarissae far enough to take actual part in the fighting. They, therefore, do not lower them, but hold them with the points inclined upwards over the shoulders of the ranks in front of them, to shield the heads of the whole phalanx; for the sarissae are so closely serried, that they repel missiles which have carried over the front ranks and might fall upon the heads of those in the rear. These rear ranks, however, during an advance, press forward those in front by the weight of their bodies; and thus make the charge very forcible, and at the same time render it impossible for the front ranks to face about.⁵

Likewise, unity led to such tactics as the circling of wagons, the massing of artillery fire, and the grouping together of ships and planes in such ways as would make them as a unit less vulnerable than they would be individually. As the great military leaders of history honed their strategies over the chess board did they not rely upon all of the pieces seeking to serve a common purpose and using their varied talents to achieve such?

Even nature shows a need for unity, for as Proverbs 30:27 records, "*The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.*" Witness animals that hunt in packs-

as the wolves that inspired the U-boats of Germany. Consider the bees that work together for the good of the hive—even at the expense of individuality.

The home also is to be an institution marked by unity, for Genesis 2:24 records, *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* Jesus also attested to this in His strong statement against divorce in Matthew 19. Notice especially His words in the latter part of verse 6, *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."*

Do we not in business speak of *"being on the same page,"* and in sports proclaim *"there is no I in team"*? How often have we heard John Dickinson's *"By uniting we stand; by dividing we fall"*?⁶

In the pages of the Bible we see examples of unity being key to victory, whether physical or spiritual. We see this example in Saul and his son Jonathan (*"Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions"* [2 Sam. 1:23]), and in Jonathan and David (*"the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul"* [I Sam. 18:1b]).

The example is also seen in the desire of Elijah to return to a united Israel as Elijah upon Mount Carmel erected an altar to the Lord using neither two stones (reminiscent of Judah) nor ten (reminiscent of Israel), but rather twelve stones, for

...Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made

a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed (1 Kings 18:31-32).

Note the phrase *“as one man”* as it appears in the Bible with reference to men united in their fight on God’s behalf. *“Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak...”* (Num. 14:15). *“And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man”* (Judges 6:16).

Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpeh....And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house....So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man (Judges 20:1, 8, 11).

They fought together and they served together!

And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem (Ezra 3:1).

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel....And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law (Neh. 8:1, 3).

In the New Testament we even read of Jesus as He prayed for His people to be united,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:20-26).

This prayer for unity expressed two things: the desire Jesus had for unity, and the necessity of believers to be united in Christ! In Matthew 23:8b Jesus plainly expressed this unity among believers-and instituted a practice continued today (the calling of our fellow Christians brothers and sisters)-as He said, "*and all ye are brethren.*"

This example of the early church being a brotherhood is seen in Acts 4:32,

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of

them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Paul admonished Christians to "*Be of the same mind one toward another*" (Rom. 12:16), and wrote in Romans 15:5, 6,

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Precepts regarding unity are first plain, and second plentiful.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

Numerous other passages stress this precious precept (Eph. 4:3; Phil. 1:27; 3:2, 16-17; 1 Peter 3:8). This unity is one that yields rewards, "*Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you*" (2 Cor. 13:11).

The Bible does not stop at showing the blessings of unity, but goes on to show the danger of disunity. God may have been the first to use the popular "*divide and conquer*" strategy, for He inspired David to pen, "*God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth*" (Psm. 60:6). Proverbs 17:14 records concerning the roots of disunity, "*The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.*" Jesus said, as recorded in Luke 11:17b, "*Every kingdom divided against*

itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth."

This danger is likewise shown using Bible examples. Consider the division of the kingdom under Jeroboam and Rehoboam (1 Kings 12). Concerning the treason of Zimri one reads,

Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri (1 Kings 16:21).

God, Himself, will divide those who go against Him. Genesis 11:6-8 reveals the division at Babel,

And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

He so divided Simeon and Levi for their wickedness, *"Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel"* (Gen. 49:7). David, in an imprecatory Psalm (one that invoked evil, on behalf of the righteous, on those who opposed righteousness), wrote, *"Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city"* (Psm. 55:9). Other passages as well deal with the division of peoples who stood not with God (Dan. 2:41; 5:28; 11:4). In other passages it is even seen that Truth will divide the enemies of God (John 7:43; 9:16;

10:19; Acts 23:7).

There is a place for unity, and likewise, a place for division. The difference is that only in unity is there victory, and only in God is there the unity that leads to victory.

WITH WHOM ARE WE TO BE UNITED?

Since only in God is there unity, it follows that man must be united with God. God will be victorious (Rev. 6:10, 11; 12:10-11; 17:14)! In fact the theme of this lectureship is "the Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ." Simply stated man who is not united with God will not be victorious. Benjamin Franklin intimated that those who do not hang together will hang separately.⁷ We must be united with God, and that is accomplished only through obedience to Him (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matt. 10:32, 33; Gal. 3:27).

If we are truly united with God, then we will be united with others who are united with God. This unity is found in the aforementioned brotherhood, the church. Ezekiel 37:22 prophesied such,

And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.

Acts 2:42, 44 show that such unity was found from the day the church was established,

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And all that believed were together, and had all things common.

Paul spoke of the "*unity of the Spirit*," "*one body*," and the "*unity of the faith*" (Eph. 4:3-4, 13). Such unity is not questionable nor is it unachievable, for we read,

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Consider again the Macedonian phalanx. While only the first several rows could do harm to the enemy, the unity of the phalanx seen in the following rows pressed the phalanx through the enemy. When Christians fight temptation, sin, or error, they do so as one. If we, as Christians, do not fight as one we are vulnerable and can be defeated.

The Bible also teaches that each Christian must have unity in himself. David requested of the Lord,

Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name (Psm. 86:11).

Hosea wrote of the weakness of Israel,

Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images (Hosea 10:2).

Jesus said,

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light (Matt. 6:22).

James warned concerning disunity within one's self, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*" (James 1:8).

To be victorious man must be united with God, with His brethren, and within himself. Anything less than unity will end in defeat and separation from God

and heaven for eternity.

THE SCOPE OF UNITY

As men are to be united with God and there must be a common ground. That common ground is Truth. God cannot be found apart from Truth (John 17:17), and those united in Him will be united in Truth.

If there is a common ground for unity, there is of necessity a place where there is no unity: apart from Truth. This means that unity is exclusive. As has been seen, when there is no unity with God, He will divide. Lamentations 4:16 has recorded,

The anger of the Lord hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.

Jesus said, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*" (Matt. 12:30).

In Luke 12:51-53 shows that in Jesus there is unity, but outside, or without, Him is division,

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

The exclusivity is seen also in such passages as Acts 14:4 and James 3:16 and its context.

Those following Christ must respect the limits God

has placed on unity. We must not be united with evil.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret (Eph. 5:11-12).

God warned Israel,

Thou shalt make no covenant with them (the inhabitants of Canaan-DFC), nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee (Exod. 23:32-33).

The Psalmist penned,

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful (Psm. 1:1).

Solomon speaking as Wisdom personified wrote,

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood (Prov. 1:10-16).

Other such passages abound (Exod. 34:12; Num. 16:26; Deut. 7:2-4; 12:30; 13:6-11; Josh. 13:6-7, 13; Judges 2:2; Ezra 9:1-2; 10:11; Prov. 4:14; 9:6; 14:7; 2 Cor. 6:14-17).

One united with God must not be united with those

who are AWOL (absent from God without leave). Again notice the curse upon Simeon and Levi, this time is Genesis 49:6,

O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

Consider Matthew 18:17,

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

There is a time when those united to God must disunite from those who are AWOL.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us....And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15).

Because of His justice God is called in the same context *"the Lord of peace"* (2 Thess. 3:16).

Notice that there can be no fellowship in diversity! 1 Corinthians 1:13 plainly teaches this principle through the rhetorical questions, *"Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"* Romans 16:17 calls for those facing elements promoting disunity,

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the

doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them
(cf. 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Peter 3:17; 2 John 9-11).

There can only be unity with God and with our brethren when Truth is upheld. There must be unity in the cause.

CONCLUSION

The Scriptures show the need for unity, and the relationship between unity and Truth. Having seen secular and Biblical examples of both unity and disunity, having noticed the sphere of unity (with God, our brethren, and within ourselves), and having shown the scope of unity, we have seen unity as God desires and demands, and which kind, only, God rewards with victory.

Nathan Bedford Forrest, one of the great generals of the South in America's dark Civil War, inspired his troops with these words,

Men, if you will do as I say I will always lead you to victory. I have taken every place that the Federals occupied in West Tennessee and North Mississippi except Memphis, and if they don't mind I'll have that place too in less than six weeks.⁸

If we will do as God says, He will lead us to victory. He has taken every place in which Satan has entrenched himself. Will we not be united and be rewarded with victory?

ENDNOTES

1 All Bible references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 "Victory," WordNet database by Princeton University, available online at www.wordweb.co.uk, 1997, 2001.

3 "Unity," *ibid.*

4 Lyrics found online at gunther.simplenet.com/v/data/goodnigh.htm.

5 Ancient History Sourcebook: "Polybius (c.200-after 118 BCE): *The Roman Manipule vs. The Macedonian Phalanx*" available online at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/polybius-maniple.html>.

6 Tyrone Edwards, C.N. Catrevas, Jonathan Edwards, eds., **The New Dictionary of Thoughts**, (New York: Standard Book Co., 1955), p. 671.

7 **Webster's 21st Century Book of Quotations**, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers, 1992), p. 289.

8 Jack Hurst, **Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Biography**, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993), p. 174.

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***The War
Rages On!***

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Chapter 9

In The Thick Of Battle

Cliff Goodwin

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It seems that so many people are oblivious to what is really happening in this life. This can be said of folks both without and within the Lord's church. One must realize that, in a sense, each day we live is a life-and-death struggle. While it is true that physical life itself is frail and fleeting and that many struggle day by day just to stay out of the cemetery, the immortal souls of humanity are also "*on the line*" everyday. Satan has waged an all out war against God and His creation, and the souls of men will be the spoils of victory. The battle between good and evil rages everywhere at all times, and so many have no idea that they are involved in the fight of their lives—their spiritual lives! Many are in the thick of spiritual battle and do not even realize they are serving the most evil and malicious being in existence. Eternity holds suffering and sorrow, anguish and

despair, for those pitiable persons who fail to recognize the spiritual battle that surrounds them.

Such unawareness is but to be expected from those in the world, for they are yet under the power of darkness (cf. Col. 1:13). Satan is doing his best to blind their minds to the fact that there is a life-and-death struggle at hand and that they are participating combatants (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). However, there is no excuse for so many within the kingdom of God's dear Son to live as if there were no spiritual war raging. By inspiration, Paul wrote the following words of vigilance and sober-mindedness.

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation (1 Thess. 5:4-8).

The day to which Paul is referring is the Second Coming of Christ. His emphasis in this particular context is preparedness. Christians are to be prepared for the return of their Lord. His coming, though unannounced, should not catch a single one of God's children off-guard. But why? Because God's children are partakers of the light, not of the darkness (cf. 1 Peter 2:9; Eph. 5:13-14). The truth and knowledge of light dispels the ignorance and error of darkness. In short, God's children should know better than to be caught unawares by the return of Christ

because of the light they have been given in God's word. By the same token, it is without excuse that God's children in the thick of battle give way to indifference and lethargy, knowing that the Bible commands, "*Fight the good fight of faith...*" (1 Tim. 6:12).

In keeping with another of the figures Paul used in writing to the Thessalonians, there are people in these modern times also who seem to be sound asleep in the thick of battle. These lack any sense of urgency whatsoever about human souls and spiritual things. Many are blind to the various assaults of the devil, whether they be the damnable doctrines of false teachers within the flock or the worldly trends adopted by many members. The devil could doubtlessly be happier when children of God let their guard down or look the other way, refusing to believe that something is wrong when in actuality it is. Others, as in physical sleep, have their senses so dulled that they could scarcely detect error or wrongdoing even if it slapped them in the face. Many are like the Hebrew Christians of the first century who had been children of God long enough to be teachers of others—yet they themselves needed to be taught again (Heb. 5:12-14). They had not exercised their spiritual senses so as to be able to discern right from wrong. All of these vices make for deadly weakness in the thick of spiritual battle. As Paul wrote almost 2000 years ago, it is high time that many awoke out of sleep (Rom. 13:11).

Each day we live is a day spent in the thick of battle. We make decisions regarding our attitudes, words, and deeds. We exert influence on those round about us—whether knowingly or unknowingly, whether for good or for evil. As evening brings the rest of night, each one of us logs another day spent either in service

to the King of kings and Lord of lords or in service to the terrible adversary. As members of the Lord's church, following the Captain of our salvation (cf. Heb. 2:10), let us note some considerations of vital importance while we live in the thick of battle.

WAR IS CONFRONTATIONAL

In the "*politically correct*" American society of this modern time it most often seems taboo for one to be controversial, much less confrontational (and this is especially true when pertaining to matters of religion). Tolerance has become a buzzword adopted and heralded by so many. Under the detrimental influence of moral relativism we are pressured to believe that there really is no absolute right or absolute wrong, and therefore, everyone is essentially "*okay*" spiritually. Such a groundless philosophy plays right into the devil's hand, for he knows that if the church can be deceived into thinking that all the masses of the world are spiritually accepted of God as they are, then we will see no need to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-16; cf. Rom. 1:16).

The "*politically correct*" thinkers of this present world would have no one to oppose the beliefs and practices of another, that is, no one to do so on the grounds of an absolute standard such as the Bible. They would much rather that the status quo be maintained and no waves be made. As mentioned just prior, this philosophy is a trump card for the devil and his agenda and, therefore, it comes as no surprise that servants of the devil advocate such passiveness and compromise. Sadly, however, there has been a seepage of this notion

into the ranks of the Lord's church. In many places there are some who have adopted the philosophy of being "*non-confrontational*." Such individuals include elders who "*rein down*" the local preacher, forbidding him to preach on so-called controversial issues such as the one church, instrumental music, divorce and remarriage, etc. Since when are these subjects and others like them controversial among the true children of God? The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one true church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6), that instrumental music is contrary to acceptable New Testament worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:17), and that fornication is the only grounds on which a person may put away a living spouse and then remarry without living in adultery (Matt. 19:9; Rom. 7:2-3). These matters are only controversial inasmuch as we allow the devil to make them so. Remember, it was not controversial when God forbade Adam and Eve from partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, until the devil came on the scene and made it a controversial subject (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-6).

The fact of the matter is this: there is sin in the world and it must be rebuked by the word of God so that the sinners might repent (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 4:2). Paul wrote the following about sin and its rebuke.

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:10-13).

It is for the good of sinners that their evil deeds must be rebuked. We certainly must present the word lovingly and tactfully (Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:6), but we must also present it with authority (Titus 2:15; cf. 1 Thess. 2:13). The nature of true love is such that it rejoices not in iniquity, but rather in the truth (1 Cor. 13:6). After all, the truth may be unpleasant at first (cf. Gal. 4:16), but when believed and obeyed it will surely make one free (John 8:32, 34). One of the most loving things a Christian can do is to confront another person regarding sin and to do this with the proper spirit. God help us not to shy away from confrontation in the thick of battle, for we may recruit one from the other side and save a soul from death (cf. James 5:19-20).

WAR IS CHALLENGING

A likely reason why some soldiers of the cross fall away soon after enlistment is the underestimation of the challenges, or difficulties, involved in living the Christian life. While it is true that the Christian life is the highest, noblest life a person could ever live upon this earth (John 10:10; cf. 1 Thess. 5:15), it is equally **untrue** that such a life is the easiest (cf. John 15:18-20; 16:33). There are inherent difficulties in living a life of righteousness in a world of sin. Paul instructs us not to be of this world even though we are in this world (Rom. 12:1-2). The forces of this world attempt to mold us into sinful conformity, at times applying severe pressure in varied ways. It is a great challenge, indeed, for one to withstand such pressures and to overcome such opposition. However, through the strength of Jesus Christ we can overcome (Phil. 4:13).

It has been said that the Christian life is a marathon—not a sprint. There is much truth in this statement, for Christianity must be lived from the point of conversion to the point of death (cf. 1 Peter 1:13; 2 John 8). All the while one is submerged in the thick of battle, his faith being tested through fiery trials and difficulties. Peter wrote these words regarding challenging trials.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Peter points out that trials can be grievous at the present, but that they are working out joyful results in the future. In the thick of battle we must remember how to react to trials and difficulties as they befall us. We can allow such to weaken our faith and push us away from God, or we can strengthen our resolve on the assurance that we serve a God who will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5b). Peter is pointing out in the above passage that trials offer an opportunity to refine our faith, burning out the dross of double-mindedness and doubt. This is why James instructs, *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptation; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience”* (James 1:2-3).

Paul described a Christian’s faith as a shield (Eph. 6:16) and said that with it one would be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. It is a well-known fact today that if a person goes to combat, then he should expect to be shot at. War involves at least two sides and

the other side is the enemy! They will be shooting at you! Well, in spiritual terms this is certainly true of the devil. He will definitely be hurling his fiery darts at us, hoping to mortally injure our eternal souls. Our objective should be to let the shield of our faith absorb the flaming missiles of the enemy so that we might endure and even overcome such trials. Paul urged young Timothy, "*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (II Tim. 2:3). The word rendered "*hardness*" conveys the ideas of evil, hardship, affliction. In the thick of battle, the good soldier of Jesus Christ endures the hardships the devil and his servants send the Christian's way, clinging tenaciously to God and His word.

Perhaps one of the most challenging trials for a Christian soldier to withstand is that of discouragement. Discouragement can come in varied forms, but that stemming from seemingly failed efforts can be especially difficult for some to overcome. When a Christian works hard in teaching another the gospel only to have that soul pulled away from the truth by friends or family it can be very discouraging. When one works very hard in planning and organizing a special gospel endeavor only to have very few to show up in faithful support that, too, can be devastating. Satan hopes such discouragements as these will cause us to think that our labors are useless and futile. This is where we must cling to a faith that is rooted and grounded in the word of God (cf. Rom. 10:17). God's word tells us to do the work and to rely on God for the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). God's word tells us not to grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not (Gal. 6:9). But perhaps this Pauline passage best offers strength to avoid discouragement when efforts seem to fail.

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

Another challenging trial is that of disappointment. Many souls are setback by the weakness, mistake, or even betrayal of another in whom much trust had been vested. Paul is a fine example of one who suffered disappointment in his brethren but never allowed the downfalls of others to bring about his own. In the last chapter the aging apostle ever penned, he mentioned at least two specific persons who had turned their back on him or in some other way did him evil. Demas is said to have forsaken Paul because he loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10), and Alexander the coppersmith is said to have inflicted much evil upon Paul (2 Tim. 4:14-15). Then Paul wrote that at his first defense (as in a trial) all his brethren and co-laborers forsook him, leaving him to stand alone (2 Tim. 4:16). So much harm and disappointment inflicted upon one man, even by his own brethren, yet he was still able to pen the stirring valedictory of 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Indeed, Paul is a wonderful example of one who was able to overcome trials of disappointment, because he placed his faith in the Lord and not in men (cf. 2 Tim. 4:17-18).

When the going gets tough in living the Christian life, many are sadly seen to get going-going away from God and faithful service. Remember, we are in the thick of battle. Expect the enemy to come at you, because he will. Expect there to be hardships, difficulties, trials, and challenges, because there will be. But also expect the Lord to be with you, because in the thick of battle He

will be right by your side as you trust in Him and follow His word.

WAR IS CONCENTRATING

Our Lord made it very clear that man cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). Yet in spite of His warning, this is exactly what many within the Lord's church are trying to do. Many children of God are in the thick of battle and doing more harm to the cause of Christ than good. This is because they cannot focus their efforts to be spiritually beneficial and productive for all the distractions they allow the world to bring into their lives. Instead of watching for the enemy, many are inviting the enemy into their homes, their jobs, and their lives. Instead of trying to win souls, many are trying amass earthly wealth. To the astute soldier, war will have a very concentrating effect—it will concentrate your attention on the battle and the danger at hand. This is easily enough seen in physical combat, yet many fail to see the importance of proper concentration and focus as we fight our spiritual war against the devil.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:4).

These words of Paul present a choice to all soldiers of the cross. We must choose either **distraction** or **dedication**. In the thick of battle a distracted soldier is a peril to himself and to his comrades. For his own good and the good of his fellow-soldiers, he must choose to focus on the war at hand and not on matters of little or no consequence. A soldier at war is not focused on a

hobby or on a second job. He is not hindered by laziness and slumber. He dedicates himself to the fight and desires to please the one who has enlisted him in this service.

The cause of Christ would be far advanced if only brethren would let go of the distractions that hinder them from waging a good warfare (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18). Attendance would go up in all the assemblies of the saints, especially the Bible classes (cf. Heb. 10:24-25). Gospel meetings would be honored by scores of visitors who had been brought by the members (cf. John 1:45-46). Works of the church would never go slack or die for lack of involvement, because there would be plenty of volunteers to step up and to lead (cf. Neh. 4:6). The succession of elderships from one generation to the next would be a smooth process as faithful men grew in the word and prepared themselves for greater service (cf. Josh. 1:1-9). So much more could be accomplished; congregations could be so much stronger, if only children of God concentrated on the battle that is at hand. Nonetheless, the devil knows this as do we, and he is working extra hard to keep so many distracted.

The apostle John instructs us to love neither this world nor the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17). As the Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount, John pointed out that it is impossible to love this world and the Father at the same time. James put it very pointedly,

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

Surely, if many members of the church only allowed this verse to sink into their hearts and minds they would make needed changes. A soldier of the cross who is entangled in the affairs of this present world has become the enemy of God! That is a very serious predicament indeed. Yet it comes as no surprise, for Jesus taught:

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad (Matt. 12:30).

A distracted soldier is certainly not gathering souls into Christ's kingdom; therefore, he is guilty of scattering abroad. This is something we all must remember in the thick of battle: we are either part of the solution, or we are part of the problem!

In a sense, the concentration, or focus, of one's life has everything to do with a person's perspective. How does one look at life in general? What are his values? What is the standard by which one measures success and failure? Two Pauline passages perhaps sum up the right answers to such questions. The first reads,

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).

The best things in life really aren't of this life. Yes, God blesses us with innumerable physical blessings, with our families and even children, but our ultimate focus has got to be on heaven. How can I use my blessings to get to heaven? How can I help my family/children to get to heaven? Going to heaven and avoiding hell is most important. The second passage elaborates this point.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

From the point of our conversion, we should be looking toward heaven. We should lay up our treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21); it should be our number one goal. All the sacrifice and suffering, all the pain and persecution, all that we endure in living the Christian life will certainly be worth the glory that will be ours when Jesus comes back for us (cf. John 14:1-4; 1 John 3:1-3; Rev. 22:5). In the thick of battle, when the devil seeks to distract us from fighting the good fight of faith, we must remember that heaven will surely be worth it all!

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Chapter 10

God's People: Adequately Equipped By Jehovah To Make Success Possible

Andy Cates



A graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching (2000) • Presently preaches for the Palestine, Arkansas congregation (since 1999 graduation) • Son of Curtis and Annette Cates • Father-in-law also a gospel preacher (Rod Cicchetto, a 1977 MSOP graduate) • Involved in the U.S. Coast Guard for a three year term • Andy and Michelle have two children (Curtis A. III [Trey] and Caitlin Annette).

The theme for this year's **Truth in Love** Lectureship is timely. This past year the world has undergone many conflicts and changes. It would seem to some that Satan has been in many ways victorious. But, the Bible still says that we, as faithful Christians, have "*The Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 15:57). What an honor it is to be a part of this outstanding lectureship. Thank you to brother Sain and the faithful elders of the East Hill church of Christ for the invitation. Also, I appreciate the opportunity to be on the lectureship with my father and brother and the other speakers.

God's people, soldiers in the Lord's army, do not fight a physical flesh and blood battle, but rather a spiritual battle.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) (2 Cor. 10:3, 4).

No sensible country would send its troops to the front line of battle without proper training and equipment. It is that way with God, therefore we now notice the vital subject "*God's People—Adequately Equipped by Jehovah to Make Success Possible.*"

EQUIPPED WITH THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

Paul, the great soldier of the cross, spoke of this armor in Ephesians 6:10-12.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

"The whole armour of God" is the armor that God has provided for His people. It is the armor to be put on, carried, and used by the Christian soldier. If Christians were not soldiers, no armor would be needed, but Christians are soldiers, actively enlisted under the royal banner. Paul told Timothy, "*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Tim. 2:3). In having this armor, it is not by our own strength that we

have success, but by the strength of the Lord. When we apply this armor, we are "...strong in the Lord; and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10). Many people trust in themselves or that which they have provided for themselves, but "...let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). God has thought of our well-being and has provided the equipment we need to make success possible. It is our responsibility to take it, put it on, and apply it in our lives. We cannot simply purchase this armor, but just as soldiers in the United States Armed Forces receive their battle needs upon enlistment, the Gospel armor is given to all who enlist in the Lord's army. There are many people who have no such equipment. They are not Christian soldiers. The Lord only provides those in His service with this armor. We learn from 2 Peter 1:3 that,

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.

This equipment is described as the **WHOLE** armor, referring to its completeness. It is sufficient for the Christian in every way. It is both offensive and defensive. God has provided equipment to answer every attack. The Christian soldier is covered from head to toe, except that there is no armor protecting the back. The soldier of Christ is protected only when actively engaging the enemy, not when in retreat. The one who runs from Christian duty is defenseless and will fall.

We are to put on "*the WHOLE armour of God,*" not just the parts we want to wear. Many people would put on only the pieces of equipment that agree with their lifestyle, but one cannot be successful in living the

Christian life if he is only partially armed with that which God has issued, and partially with that which man has appointed. Putting on "*the whole armour of God,*" the entire armor, takes effort on our part and doing all that our Lord commands. We are not clothed with this armor automatically. If any part of the armor is neglected, defeat is forthcoming. All of the equipment God has supplied is necessary if we are "*to stand against the wiles of the devil*" (Eph. 6:11). The devil's "*wiles*" are his methods, his cunning, his arts, his ruthless skills. He is a coward, moving in secret; he gains ground in the dark. He is the master betrayer. Our "*adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8), thus when we apply the whole armor, every piece will be needed. With Satan's cunning methods (2 Cor. 11:3) we do not know when he may attack; therefore, we must be armed at all times, "*twenty-four/seven.*" We cannot afford to lay our armor down even for a minute. Armor will do no good if it is not used.

We always need to be fully protected with the Christian armor and have in hand the weapons Jehovah has furnished if we are to have success and gain the victory. Thanks be to God for this spiritual armor.

EQUIPPED WITH THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH

"*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...*" (Eph. 6:14). The girdle, which was like a belt, was an important part of the soldier's equipment. It passed around the loins and kept the other parts of the armor in place. With the girdle firmly bound, nothing would be loose, garment-wise or armor-wise. This would

give the soldier added freedom of movement and would strengthen the soldier in the battle against the enemy. Likewise, the Christian soldier must be strengthened with the girdle of truth, the truth of God's Word. God has equipped His soldiers with His inspired Word.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

In our battle against Satan and his evil forces of sin, vice, and error, we must know the truth of the Gospel and apply it to our lives, and be convicted by it, so that rather than falling victim, we can be "*more than conquerors*" (Rom. 8:37). If we do not don the girdle of truth, or if we don some other girdle such as a girdle of indifference or of worldliness, we will not be capable soldiers in combat.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:4).

If we put on the girdle of truth, we will not be "*tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine...*" (Eph. 4:14). We will have success as soldiers in the Army of God. As faithful Christians, we can be so thankful to God for the girdle of truth.

EQUIPPED WITH THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

"...and having on the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph. 6:14). The breastplate was a highly important piece of the soldier's defensive armor. It was worn to protect the

vital organs in the area of the chest, such as the heart. Just as the breastplate guarded the soldier's vital organs, a life of righteousness will defend the Christian from the attacks of Satan and his followers. The person whose life is characterized by righteousness cannot be harmed spiritually by Satan's assaults. This is the breastplate God has provided those faithful to His will. The darts of the enemy may be hurled, but cannot penetrate this piece of armor. Righteousness is doing God's will.

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

One puts on righteousness by going in the way God has directed. "...he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (1 John 3:7). Concerning righteousness, we are reminded of the integrity of Job, who "*feared God, and eschewed evil*" (Job 1:1). Because of Job's righteousness, he did not give in to the devil. Today, thousands of years later, it is still the case that only the righteous can overcome temptation. A defective breastplate will be rendered useless, as will the one cast to the side though originally meant to be only a temporary decision. Since obedience to God is the breastplate of righteousness, may we all always be adorned in such. We are grateful to God that to this valuable piece of armor we have access.

EQUIPPED WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15). The shoes worn by soldiers were bound firmly and were often studded with nails or

spikes. This allowed the soldier to stand firm. Since so much of the fighting was hand-to-hand combat, the soldier had to be sure-footed and standing secure. Also, soldiers who had shoes fitted with spikes had the capability of moving in any direction and could move with alertness.

Paul admonishes in Ephesians 6:14, "*Stand therefore....*" Since the Christian soldier must stand (1 Cor. 16:13), his footing, like that of the military soldier, must be settled and sure. The idea here is preparation or readiness, preparation of the mind to be kept from fear. The Gospel of peace supplies this preparation. It is the good news of peace. This peace is mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:7, "*And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*" The faithful Christian has the assurance of God's boundless love and enjoys the peace of knowing that the Lord is always with him. That Paul knew this peace is evident in 2 Timothy 1:12,

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

The soldier's shoes would hold to the ground firmly even if the ground were slippery or not level; likewise, the Gospel of peace keeps God's people upright and firmly entrenched knowing that "*if God be for us, who can be against us?*" (Rom. 8:31).

Furthermore, the Christian soldier is always moving forward, and with his "*feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,*" he is always prepared, ready, and willing to do his part in spreading the good news of the Gospel

(Rom. 1:13-15). The Israelites were to have on their shoes when eating the passover (Exod. 12:11). This would enable them to be ready to be on their journey. Likewise, the Christian is to be prepared and ready to be on his way in spreading the Gospel. Today, the Christian soldier, as he carries the Gospel to others, may cross unfriendly and hostile territory, but he has confidence in every step and makes progress because he is dug in and established spiritually. "...How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:15)!

EQUIPPED WITH THE SHIELD OF FAITH

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16). "Above all" may refer to the shield's being the soldier's main defensive armor; or, it may refer to the fact that it covers the body and the other armor. The shields that the soldiers carried for protection were about four feet long and two and one half feet wide. They were capable of protecting the entire body. The shield was carried with one hand and could be turned in different directions without movement of the entire body being effected. These shields were made of wood and were covered on the outside with thick leather. The surface was curved to match the shape of the body and was slick and smooth. This often caused darts and arrows to bounce off; however, if they did penetrate the surface, the oil-anointed leather would extinguish the flame of a fire-tipped weapon. Troops would sometimes join their shields together making a wall behind which

they could find refuge from the opposing troops' arrows and darts. "*The fiery darts of the wicked*" refers to the darts and arrows having had combustible points, which were set on fire, and grew hotter as they traveled through the air. As the shield protected the entire person and armor, faith is the shield that fully protects the Christian soldier. It covers all of the Christian's character, as does the shield to the other parts of the soldier's armor. It defends him from the fieriest of attacks. It cannot be pierced through by the hottest darts of the enemy. They simply bounce off or are extinguished immediately upon impact. The fire-tipped arrows of hatred, malice, persecution, pride, evil thoughts, temptation, doubt, etc., aimed at our minds, fall away without causing harm, even though they come quickly, like arrows from a bow, or unexpectedly from Satan's deceiving ambush. The only way to defeat and overcome these is by the shield of faith. How does one acquire this faith? "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). This faith does not come by believing in our own strength, but by putting our faith in Almighty God, the assurer of success, and the supplier of this strength. Without the shield of faith, fiery darts pierce the soul and set it on fire. One must have this faith in order to be pleasing to God;

But without faith it is impossible to please him:
for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,
and that he is a rewarder of them that
diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).

As Christian soldiers we must "*fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...*" (1 Tim. 6:12). When a soldier in the Lord's army gives up in the midst of the enemies' attack it is due to his weak faith, and defeat is

forthcoming.

In the battles of long ago, when the soldier had his shield, he was secure. Likewise, as long as the Christian soldier is bearing his shield of faith, he is safe. As God's people we can be thankful for this wonderful shield, supplied by God, which makes success possible.

EQUIPPED WITH THE HELMET OF SALVATION

"And take the helmet of salvation..." (Eph. 6:17). The helmet was the armor that guarded the soldier's head. This helmet was made of brass or thick leather, with the top adorned with a figure, either for decoration or for the purpose of bringing fear to the enemy. The soldier's helmet protected the head from the strikes of battle-axes, swords, and clubs and served as protection from arrows and darts hurled by the foe. It was this piece of armor that brought the soldier great confidence. The *"helmet of salvation"* protects the Christian soldier and brings him great courage and joy. Just as the helmet protected the soldier's head, so the helmet of salvation protects the soul. No battle-axe, or other implement of war, wielded by Satan can penetrate the Christian's helmet. The soldier with this helmet of protection will rise from the fiercest battle successful and unscathed. The members of the Lord's army have Scriptural assurance of salvation. *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began"* (Titus 1:2). With this hope of salvation there is no reason to dread, but every reason to rejoice. The soldier who has enlisted under the banner of the cross, by heeding the conditions whereby salvation can be attained and remaining faithful (Rev. 2:10), has the Lord's promise of eternal life.

Jesus said,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

Our Lord has done His part; it is up to us to do our part. Paul knew he would receive this great reward as a faithful Christian soldier:

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

If we live faithfully to God on earth, we will live eternally in heaven.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The helmet of salvation is the last piece of armor mentioned by Paul in this text, but it is certainly not the least. It is the case that the helmet of salvation is put on when one responds to the truth of God's Word in

trusting and obedient faith. The helmet that the soldier would wear was very heavy, and one could not forget that he was wearing it.

Though not heavy, the helmet of salvation serves as a reminder to every Christian that he is a soldier in a daily battle, on the side of Christ, *"the Prince of Peace"* (Isa. 9:6), and against Satan, *"the prince of this world"* (Matt. 12:31). He is not clinging to Christ with one hand and to Satan with the other. He knows that whoever *"...will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (James 4:4).

In battle, a blow to the head would be a terrible thing. Many people put the emphasis on comforting and soothing their hearts, but not protecting their heads. We need to make sure both our heads and hearts are right.

We all know the saying *"the mind is a terrible thing to waste."* Salvation is a terrible thing to waste (Matt. 16:26). Let us possess it and be thankful to God,

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13, 14).

EQUIPPED WITH THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

"...And the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). Swords carried by soldiers varied in size but were usually short. They were often two-edged and in the most ancient times were made of brass. They were a very important weapon for the soldier along with the spear, the bow, and the battle-axe. Without a sword,

the soldier often viewed himself as insufficiently armed. With sword in hand he was confident and brought fear to his enemy. The "*sword of the Spirit*" is the Christian soldier's offensive weapon against the enemy. This sword is the inspired, "*God-breathed,*" Word of God. It is that which the Holy Spirit has furnished. "*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (2 Peter 1:21). It is the wisdom and power of God, His offensive weapon against Satan and sin, in the hands of His soldiers. This sword is infinitely sharper than any physical man-made sword.

For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Today, the Holy Spirit operates on the heart of a Christian only by the means of the written Word, the Bible. In the Bible, we have "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness...*" (2 Peter 1:3). Our Lord met Satan's temptations head-on with this weapon (Matt. 4:1-11) and God's Word was the only weapon He needed. This should serve as an example to people today. We are reminded of Psalm 119:11, "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" Satan and his wicked temptations which war against the soul can be defeated and will flee from us, but the only way this will happen is if we submit to God and His Word (James 4:7). If we put down our sword, it would be the same as fighting our enemy Satan with only our bare hands. We would be no doubt defeated. We as Christians, individually and collectively, must not rely on our own

wisdom or the wisdom of man, but the wisdom that is from above.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil (Prov. 3:5-7).

We would be better off meeting Satan's temptations with one passage of Scripture than we would be meeting temptation with all of the philosophy of man from all of the books of all of the libraries of the world.

We need to "...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). This sword is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). We need to exercise with this sword. We need to have a command of Scripture. We must study God's Word. Paul told Timothy,

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

Someone may say, "Oh, but I cannot understand the Bible!" They cannot understand because they do not pay it the attention they should. They do not apply their minds to its study. Paul said, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4). God would not have us obey something we could not understand. After all, Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

The figure of a sword is clearly seen in the fact that the battle against Satan, temptation, and sin is one of close contact; it is not a long distance skirmish. With a knowledge of Scripture and our obedience to it, this

sword is always in our possession and victory is ours.
Solomon wrote,

Train up a child in the way he should go: and
when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov.
22:6).

We must train our children from a very young age properly to handle the sword. Nothing will do them more good in providing future, eternal security. The Apache Indians trained their children in warfare at a young age. They trained their children to run at the enemy in a swaying motion when being fired upon. This would frighten the enemy, throw off the enemy's aim, and enable the warrior to dodge the bullets or arrows. Because of this early training the Apaches rarely lost a war. We need to bring up our children in being students of the Word, in being faithful soldiers in the army of God, so that they will be victorious in their battles against Satan. Let us bring our children "*up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:4).

Satan and his wicked followers shudder at the one wielding this sword. Against it they have no ground in the battle and will certainly fall. Thanks be to God,

...the word of the Lord endureth forever. And
this is the word which by the gospel is preached
unto you (1 Peter 1:25).

CONCLUSION

There is a tremendous battle going on between everything that is good and everything that is bad, between light and darkness, between the forces of righteousness and the forces of wickedness, between Christ and Satan. We do not have to wait until the dust

ADEQUATELY EQUIPPED BY JEHOVAH TO MAKE SUCCESS POSSIBLE

settles and the final battle is over to know what forces are going to win. Jehovah has supplied His soldiers with the equipment to make success possible. The triumph of Christ over evil is assured. May we so conduct ourselves as soldiers of Christ that we are among the victors and win the glorious crown that awaits the faithful.

Chapter 11

Satan: The Threat To Victory

Dave Miller



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Volumes have been written about Satan. Where did he come from? What was his relationship to Deity in eternity prior to the creation of the universe? Why and how did he sin? Can he repent and rectify his lost condition? Why is he singled out from the other fallen angels as if he is above or superior to them (Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:9)? Many of our questions cannot be answered this side of eternity (Deut. 29:29). However, Christians would do well to study his ploys and intentions in order to be alert and prepared to deal decisively with his assaults upon us.

God wants us to achieve the victory! We should have no doubt about that! God has done everything He can possibly do to make it possible for every human being to overcome this life and be with Him forever (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). However, every human being

must exercise free choice and make his own decision (Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15). God created this world to serve as the proper environment in which humans have the opportunity to decide their eternal destiny. This life is designed to offer each of us choices. We must exercise our free will and willingly choose good over evil (Rom. 6:16). But it is our choice.

I. DESIGNATIONS OF SATAN

Within this appropriate environment, variables exist that cause us to have to choose. Perhaps the major variable is Satan. He is the Devil (i.e., "slanderer"). He is represented in Scripture as the archenemy of humans (Matt. 13:39). He is the adversary (1 Peter 5:8). He is the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). He is the evil/wicked one (1 John 5:18-19). He is the tempter and hinderer (Matt. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:18; 3:5). He has been a sinner from the beginning (1 John 3:8). He is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44).

He is the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4) and the prince/ruler of this world (John 12:31). He is the prince of the power of the air—the spirit who operates in disobedient people (Eph. 2:2). He is called Beelzebub¹ (Matt. 10:25; 12:27) and Belial (2 Cor. 6:15). He is depicted as a snake (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9), a dragon (Rev. 12:3), and even an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Though powerful, as a created being, he is neither omniscient nor infinite. He is ultimately subject to the power of God (Job 1:12).

II. DESIRES OF SATAN

His intention is to ensnare as many people as

possible to keep them from achieving the ultimate victory with God in Heaven. He, and his angels, will one day be consigned to Hell (Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10). In the meantime, he would like to take with him as many people as possible.

Peter declared that Satan "*walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). Hence, it is Satan's desire to capture people, i.e., to cause them to be spiritually condemned. He tempted Jesus for the sole purpose to cause Jesus to sin (Matt. 4:1-11). He tries to prevent the word of God from penetrating human hearts (Luke 8:12). He played on Judas' evil motives to arrange for the betrayal of Jesus (John 13:2). Judas' own heart "*gave place,*" i.e., gave an opportunity, to the devil (Eph. 4:27). Satan wants to get us! He is looking for any inroad he can find to penetrate our spiritual defenses.

Job's suffering provides an incredible example of Satan's intentions. Job was a faithful, righteous individual. Satan goaded God by insisting that Job's righteousness was due to the protection and provision afforded by God which resulted in Job's prosperity. Satan challenged God to allow him to remove Job's possessions. He claimed that Job would then show his true character (Job 1:6-12).

What followed was a series of unbelievable misfortunes perpetrated upon Job's finances and family (Job 1:13-19). A Sabean raiding party confiscated his oxen and donkeys, killing the servant attendants. An electrical storm destroyed his herd of sheep and accompanying servants. Three Chaldean raiding bands stole his camel herd and killed his attendants. Then

the worst event of all occurred: the death of all ten of his children at one moment when a tornado-like wind collapsed the house where they were celebrating. Job had to face the devastation of his economic standing while mourning the loss of his children. When Job weathered his adversity by maintaining his spiritual integrity (Job 1:20-22), Satan received permission to launch a second assault upon Job. This time he arranged for Job to contract a deadly skin disease (Job 1:7-8). In all of these doings, Satan had as his singular intention to cause a righteous man to be lost.

III. DOINGS OF SATAN

Notice that all of Job's hardships and adversities were attributed to Satan. Satan was the author and instigator. Yet the hardships were non-miraculous occurrences. Hostile enemies and storms are things that occur in the normal course of human existence. Just as God can work in this world in non-miraculous ways (what we call "*providence*"), so Satan can manipulate the circumstances of life in an attempt to discourage the righteous from obeying God. He can so operate through natural, ordinary circumstances, that humans will not attribute the circumstances they face to Satan's activity. Neither Job nor his three friends ever linked the adversities of Job to Satan. What all of us need to understand, then, is that Satan is alive and well even in our day! He was not confined to Bible times! He is still operative and after us! He uses the normal, ordinary circumstances of life to try to deter us from being faithful to God. Satan can use any event to discourage us and to prod us into backing away

from our spiritual responsibilities and our pursuit of a righteous lifestyle. These events, incidents and circumstances are alluded to frequently in the New Testament.

a. Devices/Thorns

In admonishing Corinthian Christians to be obedient in all things, including forgiving the penitent, he warned that we must do so *“lest Satan should take advantage of us;”* then he added, *“for we are not ignorant of his devices”* (2 Cor. 2:11). Paul was indicating that Satan has *“devices”* or schemes that he employs in an effort to fool believers. These devices are things that come our way in daily life.

Later in the same book, Paul spoke of the *“thorn in the flesh”* that he was enduring, apparently a specific physical malady. He labeled it *“a messenger of Satan”* (2 Cor. 12:7). Three observations are in order. First, a physical illness or affliction can be the direct result of Satan’s activity (just like Job’s), even though the ailment is contracted in the course of ordinary, everyday circumstances. The illness will be indistinguishable from any other illness that is *“common to man”* (1 Cor. 10:13). Second, even though Satan is the author and instigator of the illness, God in His overriding providential care can allow the ailment and even use the ailment ultimately to aid the Christian. In Paul’s case, the affliction assisted Paul in keeping a proper perspective concerning his own importance to the kingdom. He had been selected by Christ to be a great apostle and to receive from God inspired revelation (vs. 7; Acts 9:15). The thorn helped to keep him humble. Third, God allowed the thorn to

remain in Paul's life even though Paul prayed for its removal (vs. 8).

This third observation brings us to another incredible realization. Satan will come after us for the sole **negative** purpose of causing us to sin against God. God can allow Satan to do this, but in His great providential wisdom and outworking, He can use the exact same occurrence for the **positive** purpose of promoting our spiritual growth, development, and well-being! Our suffering may be so great that we will repeatedly plead with the Lord to eliminate the suffering from our life. Yet He knows best and we would do well to supplement our request with the qualification that His will be done (Matt. 26:39, 42; James 4:15).

b. Wiles/Darts

When addressing the Ephesian Christians, Paul called attention to the "*wiles*" of the devil (Eph. 6:11). I remember as a child watching the cartoon about the roadrunner who was constantly stalked by "*Wile E. Coyote*." He lived up to his name. He was "*wily*." That meant that he was crafty, clever and shrewd. He was always thinking of new ways, sneaky means, by which he could ensnare his prey. Do we understand that Satan is doing precisely the same thing? He wants us so bad he can taste it! He is very busy seeking incidents in our lives that he can use to trip us up.

Further in the same chapter, Paul again referred to Satan's activity. He said that the Christian is the recipient of Satan's "*fiery darts*" (Eph. 6:16). Imagine the picture that this comment conjures up! As we live our daily

lives, we encounter difficult circumstances and unpleasant happenings that discourage us and cause us to reconsider our commitment to God. Paul depicts these occurrences as "*fiery darts*"—flaming arrows—that Satan flings at us.

In the 1800s, westward bound wagon trains were occasionally the target of marauding Indians. The pioneers would "*circle the wagons*" in an effort to afford as much protection as possible while they fended off their attackers. The Indians would shoot flaming arrows at the wagons, arrows whose tips were wrapped with cloth and set on fire. The arrows would in turn set the wagon canopies on fire, burning possessions and means of transportation, while simultaneously wreaking havoc on the travelers' plans and bringing them to the brink of discouragement and despair. In like manner, Satan pelts us with daily discouragements designed to deter our dedication to God.

c. *Snare/Works*

When Paul listed the qualifications of bishops for Timothy, he stressed the necessity of the prospective elder having a good testimony from those on the outside of the church "*lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*" (1 Tim. 3:7). What a tragedy when a man is placed into the eldership without sufficient screening to determine how the man has conducted himself in his daily affairs. Members sometimes assume that a man's character and conduct may be accurately ascertained by the occasional contact afforded by Sunday and Wednesday assemblies. But a man who lacks integrity in his daily business activities will

inevitably bring harm to the church and fall prey to Satan's snare.

Paul gave similar instruction to Timothy in his second epistle. Among other duties, the servant of the Lord should endeavor to reclaim the lost *"that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will"* (2 Tim. 2:26). The alien sinner thinks that he is living a free life in which he does whatever he chooses. He indulges his fleshly passions in sinful ways, convinced that he is his own master, unhampered by any external governing force. In reality, people who are living their lives out of harmony with God's will are caught in Satan's trap. They are doing **his** bidding and achieving **his** will. They think they are free when, in reality, they are enslaved (Rom. 6:16; Luke 16:13).

An incident in the life of Jesus illustrates this danger posed by Satan. On one occasion, Jesus announced to His disciples the fact that His ultimate intention was to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Peter took the Lord aside and actually rebuked Him! He said, *"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"* (Matt. 16:22). Surely we can identify with Peter. We, too, would not want to see our Lord executed. We, too, would be concerned for His safety. We would want to risk our own lives in order to spare His life. But what did Jesus say to Peter? He said,

Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me,
for you are not mindful of the things of God,
but the things of men (Matt. 16:23).

Unbelievable! Jesus called Peter—*"Satan"*! Did Jesus mean that Peter was temporarily, miraculously possessed by

Satan? Surely not. He meant that when we live life, make decisions and see the world around us through our own eyes rather than through the framework of God's word, we will be spiritually blind. Peter was responding to Jesus on the basis of **his own feelings and inclinations**. He should have resisted natural inclination and allowed his mind and rationale to be guided by **God's** perspective. Only then could he have avoided the snare of the devil. Jesus urged the Christians at Smyrna not to fear the things that they would have to suffer under the Domitianic persecution of the Roman Empire. He warned,

Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested (Rev. 2:10).

The Roman authorities who would persecute Smyrna Christians, even imprisoning them, were performing Satan's will and accomplishing his wishes. Satan's activity has been ongoing throughout human history as he has continually attempted to bring people under his control and prevent them from rendering obedience to God.

IV. OUR RESPONSE TO SATAN

Jesus came for the expressed purpose of destroying the "*works of the devil*" (1 John 3:8). His redemptive acts made it possible for Satan's influence to be counteracted. However, we humans have free choice and must make the decision to enjoy the benefits of Christ's redeeming work. We must choose freely to follow Jesus and to reject Satan in our lives. What is the appropriate response to Satan? First, we must decide to resist the devil. James

said submitting to God includes resisting the devil (James 4:7). Doing so will result in the devil fleeing from us. Some people make no attempt to resist Satan. Others resist temporarily but tire and give in. The time frame varies from person to person and occasion to occasion. But God desires that we resist as long as necessary, even when the stress seems unbearable. Paul said that the temptations that we will face will be the same that anyone faces. He also said that God will not allow the Christian to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear. He will, in fact, provide circumstances that will enable us "to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). But we must choose to resist by staying faithful and hanging on as long as necessary:

resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world (1 Peter 5:9).

When we've come to the end of our rope, we must tie a knot in the end and hang on a while longer. Relief is on the way.

Secondly, we must be about the business of putting on the whole armor of God "that you may be able to withstand in the evil day" (Eph. 6:13). In other words, we must embrace truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith and the word of God (vs. 14-17). We must be frequent in prayer (vs. 18). It's not enough to eliminate Satan and sinful living from our lives. We must replace the void with wholesome, virtuous substitutes (Matt. 12:43-45; Phil. 4:8). Avoiding the snares of Satan entails growth, development and increase in spirituality and righteousness. We must be about the business of making preparation. The primary way in which we make

preparation to resist Satan is by absorbing and inculcating the words of God. Jesus deflected Satan's assault every single time by responding, "*It is written*" (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).

Thirdly, we must be aware of the ploys, devices and schemes that Satan can use against us. We must not be spiritually naïve (Rom. 16:18—"*simple*"). We must not be "*fainthearted*" or "*weak*" (1 Thess. 5:14) We must be insightful and shrewd. We must develop wisdom (James 1:5). We must cultivate discretion and discernment (Heb. 5:14). We must be sensitized to the fact that Satan is ever attempting to sneak up on us and ensnare us by means of everyday circumstances. We must not be "*ignorant of his devices*" (1 Cor. 2:11).

Fourth, our realization that Satan will use his wiles on us should cause us to be alert:

be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Watchfulness is imperative. Self-control and conscious anticipation are critical to dealing with Satan's activities. Being on guard will make it easier to recognize Satan's attacks when they come.

CONCLUSION

Satan is the master of delusion. He has been very successful in blinding people's minds to the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4) and snatching the word of God from their hearts (Luke 8:12). He'll do all he can to hinder us and tempt us (1 Thess. 2:18; 1 Cor. 7:5). However, help and hope is on the horizon. Hell is awaiting Satan and his angels (Matt. 25:41). We can derive the

spiritual sustenance to survive his onslaught and make it safely into the eternal realm. May God bless us to that end.

ENDNOTES

1 The term, meaning "*lord of the flies*," originally referred to the guardian deity of Ekron—one of the five Philistine cities (2 Kings 1:2, 16). In time, it was adopted by the Jews as an epithet for Satan.

Chapter 12

Enemies Of The Cross Seek To Prevent The Victory

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May our Father bless the East Hill elders and that great congregation during this year's lecture series. May His loving strength be with Paul Sain as he edits this book.

INTRODUCTION

In a series of sermons on "*Victory In Christ*" one might be surprised to read one entitled "*Enemies Of The Cross.*" However, it is vital that Christians be made aware that there are multiple external and internal hindrances to gaining the **victory** that is the goal of the Christian life. Paul wrote, for example,

(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that

they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: (Phil. 3:18).

It probably seems odd (and should) to faithful disciples of Christ that anyone would be an enemy of God or Christ or the cross. But Paul knew many who were and such enemies have continued to be legion throughout the history of Christianity. In fact, even under the Patriarchal and Mosaical covenants there were a multitude of those who were God's adversaries (See, for example, Nahum 1:2, 8; 3:11, 13).

This brief essay will approach the subject, "*Enemies Of The Cross*" from three angles: (1) A word study of the biblical term, enemy. (2) A discussion of the external forces opposed to the cross (i.e., God and salvation). (3) A review of the kinds of individuals who have become enemies of Christ and His cross.

A WORD STUDY

In the Old Testament six words are translated **enemy**.² The Hebrew term **oyev** is used at least one hundred and eighty-five times and carries the meaning of an adversary or oppressor who **delights** in accomplishing his evil.³ **Oyev** is used of the enemies of God and His people and also of God when He intends to punish His people or some nation.⁴ A careful analysis of the foregoing term is quite disconcerting, for this enemy of God delights or takes some satisfaction in his evil. Perhaps he is like those of whom Jeremiah spoke who "...when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest" (Jer. 11:15).

A second Hebrew term, **ar**, is used just three times at 1 Samuel 28:16, Psalm 139:40, and Daniel 4:19.⁵ This little word designates an enemy who watches for an opportunity to make another destitute as God did to

Saul when God **stripped** the kingdom from that evil king (1 Sam. 28:16).⁶

In the third place there is the Hebrew word **tsar** which means to distress or afflict and is found about thirty-eight times in the Old Testament. Those who troubled Israel became God's enemies (e.g. Num. 10:9) and themselves were distressed (Psm. 60:12). The sense of **tsar** is that this enemy is an oppressor. A cognate term, **tsarar** carries the same meaning.⁷

A fourth term found in the Old Testament is **qum** and indicates one who stands against another.⁸ Interestingly, this participle is only used once in the Bible (Exod. 32:25).

In the fifth place there is found the word, **shur** which could be used of one who lies in ambush or watches to injure another.⁹ It, too, is found just once in Psalm 92:11, but its cognate, **sharar**, is used five times and only in the Psalms (5:8; 27:11; 54:5; 56:2; 59:10). It is notable that the Psalmist was delighted to know that God would let the Psalmist see "...his enemies" (Psm. 59:10).

The final, or sixth term, investigated here is also used just once at Exodus 23:22. This word is **ayav** and means one who is at odds with another. Moses writes in this latter passage that God will be **enmity** against Israel's enemies.

The New Testament term translated **enemy** is **echthros** and implies something akin to the English, **opponent**.¹⁰ The adjectival form of **echthros** can be translated as **hostile** or **hating** and New Testament writers used **echthros** to describe enemies of men, enemies of God, and the devil as the enemy (Luke 1:74; Rom. 5:10; Luke 10:19).¹¹ The last enemy (**echthros**) of man is

death (1 Cor. 15:26). In Philippians 3:18, which verse was used at the start of this essay and wherein is found the phrase "*enemies of the cross*," **ecthros** is a genitive of the thing which is the object of its hatred.¹² That is, the enmity and the thing hated are conjoined because the hostility is so intense.

From the above Old Testament and New Testament word studies several thoughts become obvious. One who is hostile toward anything belonging to God or Christ is automatically God's or Christ's enemy. Also, God's enemies appear to be **diligent** in opposing that which is right and holy. (Perhaps one might infer that the "*smile will be wiped off such faces*" at judgment!) And, evidently, those who are enemies of the cross and thus enemies of God, do not realize how their hatred has been so joined to the thing hated that their efforts are enflamed against that which they claim has no effect on their lives. The very thing hated becomes the obsession of the enemy as implied especially by the Greek term, **ecthros**. Perhaps this latter idea accounts for the mindset of those who oppose the Bible, believing it not to be the inspired Word of God, yet spending their whole lives trying to denigrate the very Book they reject! This latter idea would also implicate those among the church of Christ who want to change explicit and implied biblical teaching and who even hate "*churches of Christ*" doctrine (as they see it)!

When one becomes an enemy of the cross, it is truly that one who is being damaged. It is no wonder that Paul would weep over those who lived their lives in an obsessive hatred of all things right and good (Phil. 3:18).

EXTERNAL ENEMIES

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both the Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor. 1:18-25).

The major external enemy facing God's children today is **relativism**; which doctrine teaches that truth is subjective. As Paul put it, such are "*Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (2 Tim. 3:7). When Dave Miller and I attended a seminar at Harding Graduate School in Memphis, Tennessee in the 1980's, a professor (who is one of the authors of the change-agent book **The Crux of the Matter** and now is at Abilene University) said that "*after all, no one can know truth absolutely.*" I asked that professor (at that time a young seminary graduate who had an earned doctorate) if he were "*absolutely sure*" about his statement. Brother Miller, however, had a more profound response. He said to me that we were not very smart for studying under a professor who did not know anything. Jesus

said that one **can** know the truth and that such knowledge sets one free (John 8:31-32).

When one applies the doctrine of **relativism** to knowledge, nothing is ever absolute. In fact liberals charge that one who says he knows anything is arrogant and is not evincing a Christian spirit. Such enemies of truth try to use 1 Corinthians 8:2 as a "proof-text" for their positions. However, the Corinthian passage which reads, "*And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing as he ought to know,*" is in a context dealing with **scruples** about meat offered to idols. Both not eating and eating meat offered to idols were neither right nor wrong in any absolute sense (1 Cor. 8:4). So, if anyone thought he was the final judge of such a matter he was as one "*knowing nothing.*" 1 Corinthians 8:2 cannot contradict Jesus' plain statement that revealed truth or doctrine can (and must) be known (John 8:32).

When relativism is applied to morals no absolute standard of right conduct is allowed. Relativists do not believe that they exist in a world guided by God but are living "*adrift in a relativistic universe.*"¹³ Relativists are enemies of the cross because the cross symbolizes man's need for forgiveness of sins. If there is no moral absolute, there is **no** need for Christ's sacrifice.

A second major external enemy of the cross is materialism. Jesus explicitly warned of this danger as applying to those who "*received seed among the thorns...and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and he becomes unfruitful*" (Matt. 13:22). Paul wrote Timothy:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having

food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts., which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

A third, major external enemy of God, is **hedonism**. The party-life of the American culture is much hated by eastern and third-world nations, especially in the Muslim countries.¹⁴ Eat, drink, and be merry is so “*American*” that a vast majority in this nation can not have “*fun*” without alcohol and sex as the major activities. The apostle Paul described such practices as sin and insisted that hedonistic practices prevented one from entering heaven (Gal. 5:19-21).

A fourth, major, enemy of the cross of Christ is **denominationalism**. Based on the idea that one’s sincerity can atone for not obeying God’s Word, denominationalism is, perhaps, the all-time enemy of truth and of God and of the cross. And, every denomination must bear a major portion of blame for the moral relativism in the world. When a child can hear from a preacher that sincerity counts “*no matter*

what doctrine is believed;" when a nation can proudly promote "*fellowship*" between Muslim, Jew, Catholic, and Protestant (all claiming to be God's children); and when truth takes a back seat to men's creeds and wishes; the cross is shoved to the background and Christ is mocked as if He never gave any instructions at all as to who really is a child of God (See John 14:6).

Children of denominational parents are all reared with the idea that "*one religion is as good as another*" and thus faith is **relative**. There is no logical difference, then, between a moral relativist and a religious relativist. Both can believe anything and be right in their own eyes. It is no wonder that it is so difficult to convert folks, especially in this country, to the truth of the cross. Every false teacher and every false doctrine contribute again and again to the moral decline of all peoples.¹⁵ As it happened to the Gentiles who left truth so it is happening once more in every generation (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). Pointing people to the cross requires pointing them to absolute truth, but the world **hates** absolutes and, thus, it hates the cross.¹⁶

INTERNAL ENEMIES

It has been **assumed** in this essay that men (at least most of them) desire an after-life in heaven. It has been **proved** that the Bible speaks of those who are enemies of God and that world-forces, which are very powerful, prevent multitudes from obeying the demands of the cross of Christ. Sadly, there are internal forces at work that cause many who once obeyed Christ to become His enemies! Peter wrote:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of
the world through the knowledge of the Lord

and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, then, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22).

What reasons might be given for one to apostatize from truth?

First, there is that one who becomes emotionally excited and on impulse obeys the truth (Matt. 13:20-21). Eventually, this person loses interest in things spiritual and begins to find fault with the church, the preacher, the Bible—the cross! (Some of these folks are being “*re-excited*” by Community church advocates; but the jury is out on how long they will endure when they become bored with contemporaneous worship.) Usually, this enemy of the cross has done little, if any, investigation of God’s Word and hates Bible preaching as did his fellow-heirs in Isaiah’s day (Isa. 30:8-12). One would hope that this apostate would not tell anyone that he once was a member of the church of Christ.

Second, there are those who, because of lust, break up their marriages and re-marry in violation of the Lord’s teaching (Matt. 5:32; 19:1-12). Literally thousands of “*Christians*” are living in adultery and are presenting a worldly example of indifference towards Christ’s doctrine. Many godly parents live tormented lives because their child has divorced and married (unscripturally) another; thus placing that child’s soul

in the camp of God's enemies and in danger of eternal hell-fire. Again, moral relativism and "*wanting to be happy*" in this world are damaging homes by the millions and souls forever. Evidently adulterers must have convinced themselves that their sin is going to be overlooked by the One who suffered extreme humiliation so that...? What? They can do whatever is pleasing selves **or** so that all who would go to heaven must obey Him (cf. Heb. 5:8-9)?

A third group who are enemies of the cross of Christ are those who are able to put everything imaginable before the work of the church (cf. Titus 3:1). Attendance at worship or other spiritual activities is a **secondary** matter to these brethren and their indifference violates an explicit command from Christ, Himself: "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...*" (Matt. 6:33a). The "*kingdom of God*" is the church (Matt. 16:18-19) and the church is "*sought*" with all love and strength by those who actually love the cross (Matt. 22:37).

Christians who have studied Old Testament typology know that the Mosaic tabernacle had two rooms. The first was the holy place and the second was the most holy (Heb. 9:1-7). Such Bible students also know that the **holy place** was a type of the church and the **most holy place** was a type of heaven (Heb. 9:8). No one could enter the most holy place except that one (in the ancient tabernacle, the high priest) go through the holy place. The typology, then, signifies that one not faithful in the church cannot enter heaven. One not in heaven is, by definition, an enemy of God. Perhaps the indifferent should be encouraged to re-study Hebrews 9, for the indifferent are God's enemies.

A fourth group who are enemies of the cross are

the backbiters and the contentious. The apostle Paul wrote, *"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience"* (Eph. 5:6). Paul condemned the Corinthians for the *"contentions"* among them and told Titus to avoid *"foolish contentions"* (1 Cor. 1:11; Titus 3:4). Such *"contentious"* folks will face *"Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile"* (Rom. 2:8-9). The complainers that God is *"too strict;"* the whiners who *"want more exciting services;"* the backbiters who denigrate the preachers and their sermons; the gossipers who gender strife; and the generally disobedient are all counted as enemies of God.

Just recently a fine, sincere preacher student filled in for a local preacher and taught the Sunday morning auditorium Bible class. The second-year MSOP student happened to mention (as an illustration) that the apostles would not drink intoxicating wine as a matter of example. After the class a *"brother"* confronted the student and argued for social drinking. When the student defended the Bible position of abstinence, the contentious brother remarked that *"this is just like the other baloney we hear from this pulpit."* On another occasion, after this writer had preached a sermon on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, he overheard a sister remark to two visitors that, *"That is just what the preacher and elders believe, but we don't."* Preachers know all too well how many enemies of truth there are right in the pew. Sadly, these kinds of rebellious folks have **always** been amongst God's people. One prays that such enemies of God would repent, but their long history does not indicate that they will. Recall that the Israelites murmured and complained about their leadership from

the birth of that nation until her death (Jer. 31:31-33).

A fifth, internal group, who are enemies of the cross are the liars (Rev. 21:8). Psychologists would label such as "*image-makers*." Jesus called them hypocrites (cf. Matt. 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). Such folks have fine "*Sunday-go-to-meeting*" clothes and are able to be very pleasant in public. However, there is no Bible study in their homes and no prayer in their private lives. Their financial giving is weak and their abilities to spend on themselves strong. The story is told of a couple and their son who were driving home from worship services. The father remarked that the preaching had been horrible and the mother chimed in that the song-leading had also been less than satisfactory. The boy piped in with, "*Well, I don't know. I thought it was a pretty good service for one dollar!*" Some must think that their public image is at stake if they "*don't go to church*" but what will really be helpful is when they **stop** being "*church members*" and **start** being real, dedicated, New Testament Christians who are willing to lay down their very lives for the cross of Christ.

In the sixth place, some enemies of the cross of Christ do not even realize that they are. In a study done at Gragg Avenue church of Christ (now Stage Road) in Memphis, Tennessee in 1979, twenty-seven long-term delinquent (non-attending) baptized persons were interviewed as to why they had left the church. Not one said he had left God and, in fact, each one said he "*probably*" would return one day. When asked what he would do differently if he did "*leave God*" each one responded in stunned silence. How far-reaching such thinking is, is undetermined, but certainly those twenty-seven had **never** made the connection between Christ

and the church. Enemies of the cross want to love God and leave out the church. Saul tried this (Acts 8:1; 9:1). But Jesus let Saul know quite quickly that what Saul had been doing to the church was **equivalent** to persecuting Christ (Acts 9:4-5). When a man says he is committed to the cross, he must also understand that he is committed to the church.

A seventh enemy of the cross is the liberal who denies plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible and who detects no pattern for Christianity in the Word of God. This religious relativism and subjectivism is the doctrine of many who fill pulpits in Churches of Christ. These latter folks mock at the idea that the Bible's message is literal unless the context is figurative and they argue that the text is nothing more than edited "*stories*" written by men who had deeper, spiritual intuition than most. Such liberals fill high positions in "*our*" schools and are influencing countless young people with their "*Bultmannian secret*" teaching. (Bultmann taught that the New Testament writers had to "*make up*" some stories about Jesus once they realized He had actually been resurrected.) Faithful brethren who love the Christ of the cross believe that "*All scripture*" is God-breathed and that "*holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

CONCLUSION

This brief essay has included a word study of the Bible term, enemy; which study resulted in the discovery that God's enemies delight in being so and are obsessively committed to attacking the very cross they reject. Also, external evils and internal sins all contribute to the making of enemies of the precious cross of Christ.

May this study prevent at least one soul from turning in rebellion to God and to becoming God's enemy (James 4:1-4).

ENDNOTES

1 **The Holy Bible, King James Version** (Grand Rapids, MI: World Publishing, 1973). All scripture references are to this version unless otherwise specified.

2 William Wilson, "*enemy*," in **Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies** (MacClean, VA: MacDonald Pub. Co. n.d.), p. 145.

3 Ibid.

4 See Exodus 23:22; Lamentations 2:5; Isaiah 63:10; et al.

5 The counts in this essay are based on Robert Young, **Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, reprint 1973).

6 Wilson, **Word Studies**, p. 145

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Walter Bauer, "*echthros*," in **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature**, ed. Wm. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago: Univ. Press, 1979), p. 331.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Paul Johnson, **Modern Times** (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), p. 48.

14 See F. Lagard Smith's, **When Choice Becomes God** (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Pub., 1990), a discussion of how hedonism is the reason for abortion!

15 A multitude of evidence exists among churches of Christ that such doctrine is rampant. See Carroll Osborne's **The Peacable Kingdom** and the recently published **Cruc of the Matter**, for example. This writer personally heard a number of "*our*" professors deny verbal inspiration.

16 This writer was laughed at in a seminar at Harding Graduate School of Religion for proposing that the Bible is a pattern. A Methodist preacher in that seminar told me that he was resigning from the school because it was "*too liberal*."

***The Victory
Awaits
God's Faithful***

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Chapter 13

“Then Comes The End”

Dave Miller



Dave Miller is the director of the Brown Trail School of Preaching, Bedford, TX • Holds three Masters degrees as well as a Ph.D. (Southern Illinois University) • Extensive writer • Speaker on numerous lecture programs • Hosts a nationally televised TV program • Author of “*Piloting The Strait*” and other valuable works • Dave and Debbie have four children and four grandchildren.

The church of Christ in Corinth was experiencing considerable disruption and division (1 Cor. 1:10ff). They were divided over moral/sexual/marital matters (chs. 5-7). They were confused about pagan practices pertaining to food and idols (chs. 8-10). They were experiencing disruption in the assembly over the role of women, the Lord’s Supper and the use of miraculous gifts (chs. 11-14). Clarification was also needed regarding the first day of the week collection (ch. 16:1-3).

Perhaps the most pressing issue that confronted the church was confusion regarding the resurrection (ch. 15). The resurrection is the foundational principle of Christianity. If the resurrection did not occur, then all other issues are irrelevant and one might as well abandon the Christian religion.

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL (15:1-11)

As Paul addressed the issue, he began by pinpointing the heart of the gospel. He declared that the gospel which he preached to the Corinthians had been received by them, they were standing in it, and they had been saved by it (15:1-2). However, they needed to hold it fast lest their initial reception come to naught (15:2). The central features of the gospel which Paul preached consisted of the death of Christ for sin, His burial and His resurrection (15:3-4). Christ's resurrection was verified by large numbers of eyewitnesses, including Paul himself (15:5-10). Consequently, the Corinthians were recipients of the truth regarding the resurrection, and they had believed it (15:11).

THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL (15:12-19)

Paul then employed a logical argument form (known as **modus tollens**) to walk the Corinthians logically through the issues that clarify the reality and hope of the resurrection. Apparently some were troubling the Corinthians with denials of the general resurrection. Paul's response may be simplified by the following syllogistic propositions:

1. If there is no general resurrection, then Christ was not raised.
2. If Christ was not raised, then (1) Paul's preaching was vain, (2) their faith was vain, (3) Paul and the apostles were false witnesses, i.e., liars, (4) the Corinthians were still in their sins, (5) deceased

Christians had perished, and (6) they were of all men the most pitiable.

3. But, the Corinthians were in complete agreement and knew that (1) Paul's preaching was not vain, (2) their faith was not vain, (3) Paul and the apostles were not false

witnesses, (4) the Corinthians were not still in their sins, (5) deceased Christians had not perished, and (6) they were not to be pitied!

4. Therefore, Christ was raised!

5. Therefore, there is a general resurrection.

Paul did not have to prove the six items that comprise the consequent of premise #2. The Corinthians already believed those things. Therefore, he simply showed the logical correlation between those items and the reality of the resurrection. In so doing, he recalled the brethren to their senses regarding what they already knew and believed.

THE SEQUENCE OF THE END (15:20-34)

Next Paul discussed how the resurrection fits into the final events of history. Christ's resurrection constituted the "*firstfruits*" (15:20). It served as a prototype and precursor to all subsequent resurrections even as the firstfruits of harvest signaled the remainder of the entire harvest under Mosaic practice (Lev. 23:9-14). When Adam became the vehicle through which sin and death was introduced into the world, it was necessary that life and resurrection be made available through Christ (15:21-22).

When Christ returns, the general resurrection will

occur (15:23; John 5:28-29; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). At that time, all people will be called to account at the Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46; Rom. 14:10; Heb. 9:27). Christ will have put down all opposition to Him, including the last enemy-death (15:24-27). Then Christ will turn the kingdom over to God (15:24,28). God will be “*all in all*” (15:28).

Paul then advanced two questions. If the resurrection and these end time events are not to occur, then (1) why are they baptized for the dead? And (2) why do the apostles stand in jeopardy every hour? (15:29-30). The “*baptism for the dead*” has spawned multiple interpretations and explanations. The most notorious is the one advocated by mormonism that people who are alive can be baptized and the efficacy of that baptism is offered to those who have already died and are in the spirit realm. This view is in direct contradiction to what the Bible teaches from beginning to end. We have only this life in which to make our decisions and when we leave this life we have no further opportunities to repent (Luke 16:25-31; Heb. 9:27).

Another explanation is that it refers to those who are baptized on the basis of the preaching and teaching done by those who had since died. Another interpretation is that when a person is baptized, he is putting off the old man of sin (Rom. 6:6). Why be baptized and put off the old man of sin if there will be no resurrection? One further view is that “*they*” refers to the apostles and “*baptized*” refers to the baptism of suffering that the apostles endured in order to make known the gospel to the world. Why do the apostles subject themselves to overwhelming suffering on behalf of the spiritually dead people of the world if, in fact,

there will be no resurrection?

In any case, Paul brought up the subject for one reason: to reaffirm the reality of the resurrection. He wanted the Corinthians to face the fact that many things Christians do have meaning only if resurrection is an anticipated and ultimate objective. If when we die, that's it—no future conscious existence—why take risks living the Christian life as the apostles frequently did? If this life is all there is, forget Christianity and live it up (15:32)! But resurrection is coming! So do not live this life indulging the flesh and mingling with those who will influence you to do so (15:33). Live righteously and get your mind straight in view of your knowledge of the coming resurrection (15:34).

THE RESURRECTION BODY (15:35-50)

The next question Paul addresses concerns the nature and essence of the resurrection body (15:35). He uses three illustrations in an attempt to conceptualize the resurrection body for our finite minds. The resurrection body will differ from our current physical bodies: (1) like a seed of grain differs from the plant that results when the seed is planted (15:36-38); (2) like the flesh of humans, animals, fish and birds differ from each other (15:39); and (3) like the glory (brilliance/luminescence?) of the earth, sun, moon, and stars differ from one another (15:40-41). I certainly do not question Paul's illustrative explanation. By inspiration he presented to us the best explanation that can be offered on the matter. But my finite mind has difficulty making sense of these comparisons. Ultimately, they do not

clarify for us the nature of a nonphysical, eternal body. No wonder John said, *“it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him”* (1 John 3:2). Paul said that Jesus *“will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”* (Phil. 3:21). That’s enough for us to be reassured concerning the nature of the resurrection body!

Several contrasts are given to expound further on the distinction between the physical body that will be placed in the grave and the future resurrection body: corruption vs. incorruption; dishonor vs. glory; weakness vs. power; natural vs. spiritual (15:42-44). He compares Adam’s physical body made from dirt in Genesis 2:7 with Christ being a life-giving spirit (15:45). We, too, must bear the image of the natural, dust, the earthy before we can bear the image of the spiritual and the heavenly (15:46-49). Paul flatly states that our flesh and blood physical bodies cannot enter the kingdom of God, i.e., the heavenly realm (15:50). A transformation must and will occur.

THE FINAL VICTORY (15:51-58)

Paul brought his discussion of the resurrection to a climax and close by divulging some of the details of the end of time. When Jesus returns, not everyone will have died—some people will still be alive on earth (15:51). A trumpet will sound (the trumpet of God—1 Thess. 4:16). The deceased will be raised from the dead incorruptible and those who are still in their physical bodies will be changed into incorruptible bodies (15:52-53). Once this transformation has taken place, the institution of death

will be finally vanquished (15:54; Isa. 25:8). Its sting will be eliminated along with the Hadean realm where our human spirits go when they vacate our physical bodies at death (15:55; cf., Rev. 20:14). Death stings us when we sin because the penalty of sin is death. We earn death when we sin (Rom. 6:23). Sin is violation of law and in that sense law gives sin its strength (15:56).

In light of these great eternal verities, two significant realities emerge. First, victory is available! Victory over sin and death is within our grasp! But it is only available through Jesus Christ and His gospel. The Corinthians had obeyed the gospel and become Christians by hearing the gospel, believing it and being baptized in water (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14). If they remained faithful to Him, He would provide them with the ultimate victory of overcoming this life and entering into the heavenly realm to be with deity forever (15:57). So victory is available—provided courtesy of our Lord!

Second, Christians have the responsibility of living a life of service (15:58). We have to be steadfast, i.e. persistent, perpetual and consistent. We must be immovable, i.e., unbending, unyielding, unwilling to be displaced from our course of faithful Christian living. We must always abound in the work of the Lord, i.e., vigorously pursue our tasks and responsibilities, never tiring of our daily walk with Jesus. We must never grow weary in well-doing (Gal. 6:9). We must continue to demonstrate a pattern of good works (Tit. 2:7). We can be absolutely and completely assured: our labor is not in vain in the Lord!

CONCLUSION

If we will stay with the battle, continually seeking

“THEN COMES THE END”

forgiveness for our failings, remaining faithful to Him through all of life's adversities, we have a grand and glorious finale to look forward to. A major motivation for remaining faithful is the glorious opportunity to be with God and Christ in eternity (Rev. 3:21). We can be certain of the victory which we have through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Chapter 14

Endure To The End Press On Toward Heaven

Perry B. Cotham



Perry B. Cotham was born in Murray, KY • He began preaching the Gospel in 1929 • He attended Freed-Hardeman College and then Murray State College where he received a B.A. degree • Full-time local work with congregations in OK and TX • Full-time evangelistic work since 1972 • Has traveled extensively preaching the Gospel • Authored sixteen tracts • He and his wife Teresa (deceased) have three children.

After a person becomes a Christian it is extremely important that he understands that he is to hold out faithfully in living the Christian life unto the end of his earthly journey. The New Testament Scriptures, in many of its epistles, exhort and encourage God's children to endure and to press on in living the life as a member of the Lord's church. Our eternal salvation is directly dependent on our faithfulness. We shall note a few of these passages in our study at this time.

James exhorts Christians in these words:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [who perseveres under trial, NASB]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (James 1:12).

So the word "*temptation*" here may likewise be rendered "*trial*," denoting any trials or afflictions that may come to test or try the Christian's faithfulness to God. If one bears up and holds on under these trials or afflictions, pressing on in his loyalty to the Lord, he will finally win the crown of life. James definitely states that "*when he is tried*," if he bears up under these trials and endures "*he shall receive the crown of life*." What teaching could be any clearer that affirms that the child of God must bear afflictions and persecutions faithfully and not shrink back until death in order to go to heaven (cf. Heb. 3:12-14; 10:38-39)?

BARNABAS EXHORTED CHRISTIANS

Soon after the church was established in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the Gentiles had come into the church (Acts 10:1-48; 11:1-18), some brethren went to Antioch in Syria, and there "*spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 11:20).

And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord (Acts 11:21-23).

The brethren in Jerusalem knew the importance of encouraging the new converts to "*endure to the end*" and "*press on*" in living the Christian life, so they sent this "*good man*" (Acts 11:24) to do this work. As Barnabas taught and lived among them the church was

strengthened and many souls were "*added unto the Lord*" (v. 24). Thus, a great congregation of disciples was established at Antioch, and this church soon became a strong radiating center for the spread of Christianity in other parts of the world. Barnabas was certainly a most proper man to send to this young church to encourage them to cling to the Lord. Such an attitude should be formed in the minds of all Christians, especially those in the beginning of the Christian life. We often sing when one is baptized,

I have decided to follow Jesus
I have decided to follow Jesus
I have decided to follow Jesus
 No turning back!
 No turning back!

PAUL AND BARNABAS EXHORTED CHRISTIANS

Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, preached and established churches in the cities of Antioch (of Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. After preaching the gospel in Derbe,

they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation [many tribulations, ASV] enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:21-22).

This means that they encouraged them to remain steadfast in the faith.

The opposition and trials that many of us have at times in living the Christian life makes us desire that world where "*the wicked cease from troubling*" (Job 3:17).

Then there shall be eternal joy and happiness with the redeemed of the ages. Here on earth we often tread a path that has been watered by the tears of the saints. Thus, to avoid apostasy, young converts need to be told to always adhere to Christ regardless of whatever it may cost. The hardships that we may be called upon to endure may often strengthen our faith. Paul said to the Romans: "...but we glory in tribulations also knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (Rom. 5:3). Some things we may think are bad may actually turn out to be good for us. God knows. He is in control. We have Christ as our great High Priest.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:15-16).

THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL

Paul endured many trials and afflictions in his work of going and preaching the gospel of Christ. His life should be of great encouragement to all preachers as well as to all Christians. He once said to the Corinthians:

Be ye followers of me ["Be imitators of me," ASV], even as I also am of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

Let us look briefly at some of his trials as he mentioned in his second letter to the church at Corinth, written about A.D. 57:

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once

was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches (2 Cor. 11:24-28).

Many times preachers often endure great deprivations in going and preaching the gospel. But faithful brethren are willing to do this for the salvation of souls. Paul, in his two letters to Timothy and in his letter to Titus never did say that going and preaching the gospel was a work of ease. Neither is that true today. Paul also wrote that *"all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Tim. 3:12). The persecution may take different forms in different ages and in different countries. But a faithful and devoted life of living for Christ and teaching His word will always evoke some form of opposition from the wicked and ungodly people. This has always been true and always will be.

Nevertheless, should we not be willing to suffer for the Savior's sake? A former president, Harry S. Truman, had a saying, *"If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."*

One thing that can be said of Paul and his trials is that **he never gave up**. He kept on keeping on to the end of life's journey. Writing to his dear friends from

his prison cell in Rome, he said:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14).

When Paul was closing his third missionary journey and was enroute on the ship sailing for Palestine, he made a brief stop at Miletus and from there he called for the elders of the church at Ephesus. In the moving speech he made to them, among other things, he said:

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:22-24).

Then after he reached Caesarea, and prior to going on up to Jerusalem, being warned of the prophet Agabus not to go to that city, he replied:

Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13).

What was the motive that caused the apostle to endure his trials and to even face death for the cause of Christ? We know the answer is: he loved the Lord who died for him on Calvary's cross to pardon his

sins. He had been forgiven by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:12-16). He knew what the Lord wanted him to be and to do (Acts 26:9-20; 2 Tim. 1:11-12). When he, as a penitent believer, was baptized by Ananias in Damascus for the washing away of his sins in the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; cf. 9:1-18; 2:37-38; Rom. 6:3-4), he never looked back. If one truly loves the Lord he will keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23; 1 John 2:3-5).

After many years of faithful service, enduring trials and pressing on, Paul in prison at Rome, wrote his last letter to his beloved son in the gospel, Timothy. In closing this epistle, he stated:

For I am now ready to be offered ["I am already being offered," ASV] and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

According to secular tradition, shortly after writing these words, Paul was led from his prison cell by the Roman government to his death. It is said that in A.D. 68 that Nero ordered Paul's head to be placed in the death block and severed from his body with a sharp axe. As his spirit left his body, it went to be with the Lord on the other side, "*which is far better*" (Phil. 1:21-23). May we be able to say what Paul said at the close of our journey through life. By the grace of God and our love for Him, we can say it.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Sometimes, due to its highly figurative language, the Book of Revelation is omitted in one's study of the Holy Scriptures. But it is a very valuable book. We know that at least one reason the Lord had in mind for giving to those early Christians the Book of Revelation was to encourage them to remain steadfast in the faith and never give up. The Savior meant that if you want to come over you must overcome, those who overcome will come over. What could be clearer than this? We know that Revelation is a part of the Divine record, so it must have had a purpose in the mind of God. "*All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable...*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Although the Book of Revelation is often neglected by members of the church today, we should not refuse to study it. In the introduction of the book, John, by inspiration, wrote:

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

If it was important for those early disciples to "*hear the words of this prophecy*" surely it is essential for Christians now to hear the words. Although we may not be able to fully understand all about the signs and symbols in the book, we should not refuse to study it. We believe that the main purpose of the revelation is to encourage saints to steadfastness in their struggles against the enemies of the truth of the gospel (cf. Jude 3).

The book gives a pictorial history of the church

from soon after John's day to its ultimate victory in heaven. It views the struggles and triumphs of the church, from both within and without, until all is over and heaven is won for the faithful. But those who do not "overcome" will be lost. This is a very important lesson for all Christians to learn if we want to receive the "*Victory In Jesus.*"

"HE THAT OVERCOMETH"

The expression "*he that overcometh*" or "*to him that overcometh,*" is found eight times in the Book of Revelation. It is found after each letter to the seven churches of Asia and then the expression is used at the close of the Book. Let us note these references:

1. Ephesus	"To him that overcometh"	2:7
2. Smyrna	"He that overcometh"	2:11
3. Pergamos	"To him that overcometh"	2:17
4. Thyratira	"And he that overcometh"	2:26
5. Sardis	"He that overcometh"	3:5
6. Philadelphia	"Him that overcometh"	3:12
7. Laodicea	"To him that overcometh"	3:21
8.	"He that overcometh"	21:7

This, indeed, is the thought that is expressed in this sacred volume of Holy Writ. To this we might add the familiar words of the Lord to the suffering saints of Smyrna: "...*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10). "*Unto death*" here does not mean throughout their existence to death (although this is necessary, cf. Matt. 24:13), but it means up to the endurance of death if it becomes necessary to die as a martyr. Jesus meant that even death itself should not move Christians from their steadfastness. Christ once said to His disciples:

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28; cf. Luke 12:4-5 and Matt. 5:10-12).

Those who kill Christians because of their faith have no power to injure the soul, the immortal part of man. Physical death is a very slight thing in comparison to the eternal death that awaits the wicked and all those who give up their faith and die as lost souls (Luke 8:13; Rev. 3:5; 20:15; 21:8, 27).

Indeed, *“Winners don’t quit, and quitters don’t win!”*

So, the proper attitude for all Christians to take to win the *victory in Jesus Christ* is to press on and endure, regardless of the trials and tribulations in life, never giving up. The enemies at their worst can only *“kill the body,”* but they cannot *“kill the soul.”*

POLYCARP AND OTHERS

Writers of early church history tell us that Polycarp was of Smyrna, and suffered death at the age of eighty-six. He was contemporary with the apostle John, who wrote the Book of Revelation in about A.D. 96. Polycarp was a personal friend of John. According to tradition, he was burned at the stake because he would not deny Christ.

In the letter to the church at Pergamos (Pergamum, ASV) Christ referred to Antipas, *“my faithful martyr, who was slain among you”* (2:13). Hence, already some had been called upon to die for the cause of Christ. But they knew that a life laid down for the Lord would be rewarded with another and much better life that shall be

eternal (Rev. 22:14).

Justin Martyr was a Christian. He was born in Shechem in Samaria (the present name is Nablus), about A.D. 103, and was converted to Christianity in about A.D. 133. He likewise suffered martyrdom in about A.D. 165. He was partly contemporary with Polycarp. He resided sometimes at Ephesus where John lived the latter part of his life. So he was not far removed from the apostle in time, having lived in the very city where John lived.

Iranaeus was another early disciple, probably a Greek, but knew Polycarp, and who was, as already stated, a contemporary and friend of the apostle John. He, in his writings, bore testimony that the Book of Revelation was written by John.

All of these, and many others of that early age of the church, realized that if they were faithful unto death, a crown of life awaited them. They understood what the apostle Peter wrote a few years earlier:

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf [or, "*in this name,*" ASV] (1 Peter 4:16, cf. Acts 11:26 and 26:28).

Stephen goes down in history as the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:58-60), and James, "*the brother of John,*" as the first apostle to die as a martyr (Acts 12:1-2). These all knew what it meant to be faithful to the Lord.

CONCLUSION

From this study we learn the importance of being faithful to the end of life's journey as a child of God. We know that by the grace of God, if we try, we can endure

and press on in living the Christian life. Others have, and we can (cf. Heb. 12:1-2). Then heaven will be our home.

Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

A Psalm Of Life, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

Only one life,
'Twill soon be past,
Only what is done
For Christ will last.

Chapter 15

Heaven ~ The Home Of The Soul

Dave Miller



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Every faithful Christian possesses a deep, passionate desire to get through this life in order to arrive at the final destination—heaven. Whatever else life is about and regardless of the variety of activities to which we must apply ourselves, our ultimate goal is to be with God in heaven for eternity. Everything that faithful Christians are called upon to endure are bearable in view of the reward that lies ahead.

What will heaven be like? This question has certainly occupied the attention of countless authors, books, sermons and songs. Surprisingly, the Bible is rather nondescript and vague in its treatment of the nature and essence of heaven. Two observations are in order: (1) an eternal, infinite realm cannot, in the final analysis, be explained to a finite human mind, and (2) God provides sufficient information for the intended

purpose. Any rational person would want to go to heaven.

REST¹

The Bible depicts the heavenly realm as a place where the saved will rest from their labors. John was told to write: *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors'"* (Rev. 14:13). Jesus soothed the apostles by His reassurance that in His Father's house are many rooms and that a place was prepared for them (John 14:1-2). *"Rest"* is not necessarily a cessation of activity. But it will entail a glorified existence that excludes the negative aspects of earthly labor.

The writer of Hebrews focused on this aspect of the heavenly rest (Heb. 4:1-11). He compared it to the sabbath rest under the law of Moses, wherein man and beast was graciously permitted a day of rest once a week. He also compared it to the Promised Land of Canaan wherein the Israelites eagerly anticipated the day they would take possession of the land inheritance promised to Abraham. Of course, that first generation out of Egypt did not make it due to their disobedience. Therein lies the *"kicker."* *"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God"* (Heb. 4:9)—i.e., heaven! But we must be dedicated, faithful and devoted to living the Christian life if we wish to enter that rest. Jesus invites everyone: *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt. 11:28).

REVERENCE

One aspect of our heavenly existence will entail displays of adoration, worship and reverence toward

deity. Nehemiah spoke of the entire population of heaven worshipping God (Neh. 9:6). Revelation chapters four and five depict both God and Christ as being the recipients of worship in the form of praise, singing and expressions of gratitude. As we cultivate our spiritual appetites in this life, deepening our interest in extolling God, we are merely preparing to engage in a level of worship in the heavenly realm that will be incomparable and unsurpassed in its relation to the here and now. *"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night"* (Rev. 7:15).

One writer² has summarized the activities of our heavenly existence in the following phrases: (1) we will **worship without distraction** (i.e., it will be spontaneous, genuine, uncontrived); (2) we will **serve without exhaustion** (i.e., service without tiring or feeling pressure or burdened); (3) we will **administrate without failure** (i.e., reign with Christ—2 Tim. 2:11-13; Rev. 3:20-21; 22:5; Matt. 25:21); (4) we will **fellowship without suspicion** (i.e., commune with deity as well as with all those who lived faithful on earth without any of the prejudice or personality conflicts that plague us here); and (5) we will **rest without boredom** (i.e., no more trials or temptations nor fatigue).

RENEWAL

Heaven is described under the expression a *"new heaven and a new earth"* (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). The first human beings were blessed with a beautiful paradise in which to live (Gen. 2:8-15). But their sin resulted in their expulsion (Gen. 3:24). The cursing of the ground meant that humans would be condemned to exhausting, arduous toil in order to provide the necessities of life

for themselves (Gen. 3:17-19). Their expulsion from the garden was permanent. In contrast, those who make it to heaven will enter into the ultimate paradise of God (Rev. 22:1ff). Paradise lost will be paradise regained and restored. The saved will have every need supplied and their existence will be complete and fulfilled.

RESERVED

Heaven is a place that requires a reservation! Previous preparation is necessary. One has to plan to be there. Jesus said He departed earth to prepare a place for us (John 14:2). Listen to the words of Paul to the Colossian Christians:

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven (Col. 1:3-5).

Listen to the words of Peter to the Dispersion Christians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Heaven's not for everyone! You have to have a reservation! God has made a reservation for those who render obedience to His Son!

HEAVEN IN THREE PORTRAITS (Rev. 21:1-22:5)³

The most extensive information given in the Bible regarding heaven is in the book of Revelation. Of course, the fact that Revelation is written in apocalyptic imagery

means that the descriptions of heaven are not literal. However, the symbols selected by the Holy Spirit are able to give us impressions and inklings of what heaven will be like.

AS BRIDE

One portrait given of the heavenly realm is that of a bride prepared for her husband (Rev. 21:1-8). The thrilling aspect of this picture is that God will **live** with her:

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God (Rev. 21:3).

Can you imagine a place where you will actually be in the presence of Deity on an ongoing, perpetual basis? Can you imagine actually sitting with God and Christ? Jesus declared,

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne (Rev. 3:21).

Heaven will entail the saved living with, dwelling with, Deity forever! Such an arrangement will mean complete, perfect, ultimate, intimate fellowship with God!

This extreme level of intimacy with God will naturally mean the exclusion of certain features of human existence with which we deal constantly. For example, sorrow and tears. How often do we weep and mourn due to the hardships and tragedies of this life? The nearness to God that we will enjoy will mean the end of tears and crying. It will likewise mean the end of pain and the end of death! Can you imagine that?

Indeed, in that realm, "*the former things have passed away*" (Rev. 21:4)!

AS CITY

A second portrait of the heavenly realm is that of a city (Rev. 21:9-27). This city is described as radiating the glory of God, reflecting light like a jasper stone, i.e., crystal clear. The city is surrounded by great, high walls with twelve gates—three gates on each side with an attending angel at each gate. The city is situated on twelve foundations, each foundation made from a different substance—the most precious, rare and expensive substances known to man. The crystal clear appearance of the walls is accentuated by pure gold appearance of the city itself, though it too appears like clear glass.

The size and shape of the city is that of a perfect cube, i.e., it has the same length, width and height—a city foursquare (cf., 1 Kings 6:20). If the numbers of Revelation were to be taken literally, the city would measure about 1500 miles long, wide and high! Each of the twelve gates are gigantic pearls. The street of the city is pure gold, like transparent glass. No church building or no temple is there since God and Christ are its temple. No street lights nor sun or moon are necessary since the glory of God and Christ illuminate it. In fact, there is no night there! The gates are never closed—unnecessary since only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life are in its vicinity.

This portrait of heaven stresses the perfect security and protection that heaven will afford. Those who enter heaven will be freed from all of the fears and anxieties

that plague us in this life. The average American is assailed with fear—fear of criminal behavior (like gangs, muggers and thieves), fear of international terrorism, fear of natural calamities (like tornados, hurricanes and fire that can destroy personal property in a moment), fear of sickness and death. All of these threats will be absent in the perfectly secluded, secure environment of heaven.

AS GARDEN

A third portrait of heaven in the Revelation is its depiction of a garden (Rev. 22:1-5). This garden is the “Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). It is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. You remember how Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and consequently cut off from access to the Tree of Life. Heaven is depicted as reinstatement to the Tree of Life! A crystal river flows from the throne of God. On either side of the river is the Tree of Life which bears fruit twelve months out of the year. Healing power is in the leaves. We are informed that in this garden, we shall see God’s face!

This garden imagery spotlights the provision that God will provide in heaven. We will have no concerns, no worries, no cares. All our needs will be supplied. God will see to it that we are contented and happy throughout all eternity.

CONCLUSION

Heaven will surely be worth it all. In the meantime, *“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18). *“If we endure, we shall also reign with Him”* (2 Tim. 2:12).

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21).

We are waiting for *"the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"* (Heb. 11:10). *"For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland"* (Heb. 11:14).

But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them (Heb. 11:16).

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matt. 25:34).

Listen carefully to the words of John Clements:

In the land of fadeless day
lies the city foursquare;
It shall never pass away,
and there is no night there.
All the gates of pearl are made
in the city foursquare;
All the streets with gold are laid,
and there is no night there.
And the gates shall never close
to the city foursquare;
There life's crystal river flows,

and there is no night there.
There they need no sunshine bright
in the city foursquare;
For the Lamb is all the light,
and there is no night there.
God shall wipe away all tears;
There's no death, no pain, no fears;
And they count not time by years
for there is no night there.

Add to these lyrics, the words of Love Jameson:

There is a habitation built by the living God,
For all of every nation who seek that grand abode.
A city with foundations firm as the eternal throne;
Nor wars nor desolations shall ever move a stone.
No night is there, no sorrow, no death, and no decay;
No yesterday, no morrow but one eternal day.
Within its pearly portals angelic armies sing
With glorified immortals the praises of its King.
O Zion, Zion, I long thy gates to see;
O Zion, Zion, when shall I dwell in thee?

ENDNOTES

1 The four "Rs" used in this portion of the lecture are adapted from Joseph Meador's article, "Heaven: Our Home Age Without End" in **Insights**, vol. 53, no. 47: Nov. 19, 1989.

2 Mike Vestal in a series of bulletin articles entitled "What Will We Do In Heaven?" from the Eisenhower church of Christ bulletin in Odessa, Texas.

3 Drawn from Ray Summers' commentary on Revelation—**Worthy Is the Lamb**.

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