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# Sermons of Truth and Reason



*Complete and Detailed Outlines You Can Preach*

**Volume VI**

Gene Taylor

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# The One Approved of God

**Text: 2 Timothy 2:15**

## Introduction

1. We are creatures who seem to constantly seek approval of who we are and what we do.
2. We seek the approval of:
  - a. Friends. (Peer pressure)
  - b. Parents.
3. All should seek to have God's approval. (2 Tim. 2:15)
4. The word of God plainly reveals who is, and who is not, approved of God.

## I. What the One Approved of God Is Not

- A. A sinlessly perfect person.
  1. If this were so, none could be approved. (Rom. 3:9, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10)
  2. Someone has said, "Perfection is our goal, forgiveness and hope our consolation."
- B. One who commends himself. (2 Cor. 10:18)
  1. This is the attitude of the self-righteous Jews. (Luke 18:9-14; Rom. 10:1-3)
  2. Subjectivism encourages self-commendation. (2 Cor. 10:12)
- C. One approved of others.
  1. Others can only look upon and base their judgments upon outward appearances. (1 Sam. 16:17)
  2. The Pharisees outwardly appeared righteous but inwardly were filled with evil. (Matt. 23:27-28)
  3. This attitude becomes the basis of a people-oriented religion rather than a God-oriented religion. (Luke 16:15)

## II. What the One Approved of God Is

- A. One who works at being approved: "a worker." (2 Tim. 2:15)
  1. "Be diligent."
    - a. Vine: "It signifies to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, endeavor, give diligence."
    - b. Diligence involves hastening and exertion.
  2. Hastening suggests urgency—something that is not to be put off or delayed.
    - a. Consider the example of the person bitten by a poisonous snake or that of a cancer victim.
    - b. Abraham, the friend of God (Jas. 2:23), when commanded to offer Isaac, rose early in the morning to obey God. (Gen. 22:3)

3. Exertion means working. (Phil. 2:12)
    - a. This proves man must do something to be approved.
    - b. How sad it is that many covet God's approval but few are willing to work.
  4. Our aim must be the same as that of the apostle Paul. (2 Cor. 5:9)
    - a. Such an aim motivates one to be diligent.
    - b. Such an aim promotes steadfastness and an abounding in the Lord's work. (1 Cor. 15:58)
- B. One who is "rightly dividing the word of truth."
1. Various translations of this phrase.
    - a. ASV. "Handles aright."
    - b. NASV. "Handling accurately."
    - c. Footnote in the ASV: "Holding a straight course in the word of truth."
  2. This suggests carefulness in handling God's word. It is not to be:
    - a. Twisted. (2 Pet. 3:16)
    - b. Perverted. (Gal. 1:6-9)
    - c. Misapplied, taken out of context, used for the wrong motive, etc.
  3. "Rightly dividing" includes:
    - a. Speaking it "in season and out of season," convincing, rebuking and exhorting. (2 Tim. 4:1-2)
    - b. Applying it to all circumstances and all people, including self. (Jas. 1:21; 1 Tim. 5:17-21)
    - c. Ever remembering its source, power and purpose.
- C. One who approves of God's ways.
1. He sees the inconsistency of seeking God's approval while not approving:
    - a. His terms of pardon.
    - b. His church as revealed in the New Testament.
    - c. His ways concerning the work and worship of the church.
  2. He approves "the things that are excellent." (Phil. 1:10)
    - a. He holds fast to the things that are "good." (1 Thes. 5:21)
    - b. He rejects all that God does not authorize.

## Conclusion

1. No religion is worth practicing that does not seek God's approval in every respect.
2. Why not seek God's approval in all things in your life?

# The Influence of Baal on Our Worship

## Introduction

1. At Mt. Sinai, after the children of Israel had worshiped the golden calf, God commanded the people to worship no other gods. (Ex. 34:10-17)
2. After the forty years of wandering, the generation which grew up in the wilderness was instructed to not “forget the Lord your God” and pursue idols or they would be destroyed. (Deut. 8:11-20)
3. Sadly, those who were supposed to be the people of God gave themselves to idols throughout their history.
  - a. They worshiped them even before entering the land of promise.
  - b. After the division of the kingdom, the Northern kingdom, Israel, went into a captivity from which they would never return because of idolatry and Judah, the Southern kingdom, was taken captive to Babylon for 70 years to purge them of their wickedness and idolatry.
4. One of the idols the Israelites pursued was Baal.

## I. The Worship of Baal

- A. Baal was the supreme male deity of the Phoenician and Canaanite nations (Asherah was their supreme female deity).
- B. The worship of Baal:
  1. Prevailed in the time of Moses among the Moabites and Midianites (Num. 22:41) and through them spread to the Israelites. (Num. 25:1-12)
  2. Was reintroduced to Israel during the reign of Ahab (874-853 B.C.). (1 Kings 16:29-32)
    - a. It became the religion of the court and people of the ten tribes. (1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:19, 22)
    - b. It appears to never have been permanently abolished among them, even though:
      - 1) Elijah had conquered the 450 prophets of Baal. (1 Kings 18:19-40)
      - 2) Jehu, successor to Ahab tried. (2 Kings 10)
    - c. Temples were erected to him, even in Judah (1 Kings 16:32) and he was worshiped with much ceremony. (1 Kings 18:19, 26-28; 2 Kings 10:22)
  3. Was undoubtedly attractive to the Jews because of its licentious character.
- C. The nature of Baal worship.
  1. “The emphasis of Baalism was on on psychophysical relatedness and subjective experience. The gulf between man and God was leveled out of existence by means of participatory rites. The terrifying majesty of God, His ‘otherness’ as assimilated to the religious passions of the worshipper. “The god of the bull

image, the god of wine, the god of the fertility figurine, was the god of relevance, fulfilling personal needs with convincing immediacy. The desires that inflame the soul were fulfilled in the cultic act of worship. The transcendence of the deity was overcome in the ecstasy of feeling." (E.H. Peterson, *Theology Today*, Vol. XXIX, July, 1972, 140)

2. The prophets accused the people of harlotry. (Jer. 3:1; Hos. 4:15)
  - a. Such had a literal reference to the "sacred prostitution" of the worship of Baal.
  - b. It also had an application to the entire rationale of Baal worship.
    - 1) Harlotry was worship that sought fulfillment through self-satisfaction, worship which was shaped and formed by the personal needs, desires and passions of the worshiper.
    - 2) Such is worship which says, "I will satisfy you." "Do you want a religious experience?" "I will give it to you." "Do you desire your needs to be fulfilled? I will do it and in the most alluring fashion possible."

#### D. Baal worship versus the worship of Jehovah God.

1. The revealed will of God sets itself firmly in opposition to the tastes, preoccupations and idiosyncrasies of men—those things exploited by Baalism.
2. In Baalism:
  - a. Worship is stripped to the personal desires of the worshiper.
  - b. Its rule is that worship must be interesting, exciting and "relevant."
3. In the worship of God:
  - a. Nothing is ever done simply for the sake of the "religious experience" involved.
  - b. No act of worship was ever authorized simply to allow someone to "feel good" about it alone.
4. "The distinction between the worship of Baal and the worship of Yahweh (Jehovah) is a distinction between approaching the will of the covenant God which could be understood and known and obeyed, and the blind life-force in nature which could only be felt, absorbed, and imitated." (Peterson, 141)

## II. Applications Today

- A. We might suppose we are far removed from idolatrous worship but we would be mistaken.
  1. Baalism did not die with the demise of the Canaanite civilization.
  2. Baalism resurfaces every time a new "Ahab" seeks to rectify the "emotionless, irrelevant and liturgical services" of "stale congregations" with new "relevant and meaningful innovations."
- B. There seems to be a certain subjectivism creeping in among brethren which elevates selfish "needs" and entertainment above the response of a thankful heart to the God of heaven.

- C. We must be careful or our worship can become, rather than a meaningful response to the true God, a show or performance which derives its motivation from will-worship. (Col. 2:18)

## **Conclusion**

1. Worship of this sort is a thinly disguised cover for self-seeking.
  - a. Its participants may be entertained by, excited about or ecstatic over such worship.
  - b. I sincerely doubt that such worship can be edifying to the whole church or pleasing to our God.
2. Let us prayerfully examine our motivation and objective in worship making sure that it is a Scripturally based offering we are presenting to God.
3. The challenge Elijah issued to Israel before his contest with the prophets of Baal remains relevant today: “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” (1 Kings 18:21)

# Blessings and Responsibilities

## Introduction

1. Being a member of a physical family brings blessings but it also requires certain responsibilities.
  - a. Blessings of a physical family.
    - 1) The love and care of parents.
    - 2) The daily necessities of life.
    - 3) Protection from dangers and disease.
    - 4) The blessing of a good name.
  - b. Responsibilities to a physical family.
    - 1) Obey parents. (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; Luke 2:51)
    - 2) Provide for your own. (1 Tim. 5:8)
    - 3) "Repay" your parents. (1 Tim. 5:4)
    - 4) Bring children up in the training and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)
2. A Christian is a part of God's family. (1 Tim. 3:15; Gal. 3:26-27)
  - a. Being a child of God and a joint-heir with Christ brings great blessings.
  - b. Being a child of God also carries with it certain responsibilities as well.
3. This lesson will consider both the blessings and responsibilities of being a child of God.

## I. The Blessings

### A. Having God as one's Father.

1. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He had them address the prayer to "Our Father." (Matt. 6:9)
2. 1 John 3:1-2 states that Christians are children of God.
3. God is Father to those who are:
  - a. Separate from the world. (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 John 2:15-17; Jas. 4:4)
  - b. Led by the Spirit. (Rom. 8:14)

### B. Wearing the greatest name.

1. It is the name of Christ. (Phil. 2:9-10)
2. His disciples are to wear the name of Christ. (Acts 11:26) Wearing the name of Christ:
  - a. Speaks of their salvation. (Acts 4:12)
  - b. Tells that they belong to Him. (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:17-19)
3. One must be baptized "in His name" in order to rightfully wear His name. (1 Cor. 1:10-14)

### C. Enjoying the protection of God.

1. The child of God does not have to fear others. (1 Pet. 3:13-14)
2. Even if a child of God has to suffer, he is blessed. (Matt. 5:10-12)
3. Jesus gives assurance of the Father's watchful protection. (Matt. 10:27-31)



- D. Receiving the proper spiritual provisions. The child of God receives:
  - 1. Water unto eternal life. (John 4:10-14)
  - 2. The bread of life. (John 6:51; Acts 20:32)
- E. Enjoying the promises of God.
  - 1. Those of the faith have been given great and precious promises. (2 Pet. 1:1-4)
  - 2. These promises are sure. (2 Pet. 3:9)
  - 3. These promises include:
    - a. Remission of past sins. (Acts 2:38)
    - b. Access through prayer. (1 John 2:1-2)
    - c. Eternal life. (Titus 1:1-2)

## II. The Responsibilities

- A. Respecting the authority of God.
  - 1. Consider the command God gave to the children of Israel under the Old Law in Exodus 20:3-4.
  - 2. Similar principles and commands to honor the authority of God are given to the children of God today.
    - a. Worship and serve God alone. (Matt. 4:10)
    - b. Since Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), all should be done in His name. (Col. 3:17)
- B. Defending the cause of God.
  - 1. The Christian must be set for “the defense of the gospel.” (Phil. 1:17)
  - 2. The child of God must put on the whole armor of God. (Eph. 6:10-17)
  - 3. Christ’s disciple must not be ashamed of the word. (Rom. 1:16)
  - 4. The Christian must be willing to wage warfare (2 Cor. 10:1-6)
- C. Learning the will of God.
  - 1. God’s child must put forth diligent effort to be approved before Him. (2 Tim. 2:15)
  - 2. One must be filling himself with the word of God. (Col. 3:16)
  - 3. One must be longing for spiritual nourishment. (1 Pet. 2:1-2)
  - 4. One must be hungering and thirsting for righteousness. (Matt. 5:6)
- D. Obeying the commands of God.
  - 1. Consider the teachings of 1 John 5:1-3.
  - 2. Keeping God’s commandments expresses:
    - a. One’s love for God and Christ. (John 14:15)
    - b. One’s faith in the word and promises of God. (Jas. 2:18)

## Conclusion

- 1. As children of God, we should not expect to enjoy the blessings of being in the family of God without shouldering the responsibilities.
- 2. May each of us determine to be a responsible member of the family of God

# Growing As a Christian

## Introduction

1. Spiritual growth is:
  - a. Commanded. (2 Pet. 3:18)
  - b. Accomplished by:
    - 1) The word of God. (Acts 20:32; 1 Pet. 2:1-2; Matt. 5:6; Col. 3:16)
    - 2) Experience. (Heb. 5:12-14)
    - 3) Association with other Christians. (Heb. 10:24-25)
2. In this lesson, we will:
  - a. See the directions in which a Christian is to grow.
  - b. Examine some of the measurements of growth.
  - c. Present some practical suggestions for growth.

## I. Directions of Growth

- A. Upwardly.
  1. Toward Christ. (Eph. 4:15)
  2. It involves developing one's character so as to be like Christ. (1 Pet. 2:21-22; Phil. 2:5)
  3. One is to develop Christ's virtues so as to be like Him when He comes again.
- B. Inwardly.
  1. Consider 2 Timothy 2:15.
  2. One has the obligation to know Christ and His will in order to apply it to self. (2 Pet. 3:18; 1:5-11)
  3. One is to develop the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22-23)
  4. One is to know and acknowledge his own weaknesses to avoid compromise.
- C. Outwardly.
  1. This involves attitudes and relationships to others.
  2. Family: love and provide. (Eph. 5:23; Titus 2:3-4; 1 Tim. 5:8)
  3. Friends: be a true friend. (Prov. 17:17; 18:24)
  4. Brethren: be tenderly affectionate. (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:14-18)
  5. Enemies: love. (Matt. 5:43-48)
  6. The lost: seek to save. (Matt. 28:18-20; 5:14-16)
- D. Downwardly.
  1. One is to be rooted in love. (Eph. 3:14-19)
  2. One is to be rooted in Christ. (Col. 2:6-7)

## II. Some Measurements of Growth

- A. Knowledge of God's word. (Heb. 5:11-14)
- B. Attitudes: what you say and think of other people. (Jas. 1:26; 1 Thes. 5:12-13)

- C. Discipline: the use of time, acceptance of responsibility, etc. (2 Pet. 1:6; Gal. 5:23)
- D. Deportment: behavior toward others. (Col. 4:5)
  - 1. Those in authority. (Heb. 13:17; Eph. 6:5-8)
  - 2. Those under you. (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1)
- E. Interests: a desire to be better informed. (Col. 3:1-2; Phil. 4:8)
- F. What you outgrow.
  - 1. Service out of fear and/or duty. (1 John 4:17-19)
  - 2. Inability and doubt. (Eph. 4:11-16)
  - 3. Childishness and/or worldliness. (1 Cor. 3:1-3)
- G. Fruit-bearing.
  - 1. The fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22-23)
  - 2. Doing good works. (Eph. 2:10)
- H. The power to resist temptation. (Jas. 4:7; Eph. 6:13)
- I. A deeper, selfless love.
  - 1. For God and Christ. (Matt. 22:37)
  - 2. For others: family, brethren, etc. (Phil. 2:3-4)
- J. The beauty of Christ's character. (Gal. 2:20)

### **III. Some Practical Suggestions for Growth**

- A. Read and study the Bible every day.
- B. Memorize a Bible verse weekly.
- C. Pray every day.
- D. Have regular family devotionals.
- E. Attend worship services and Bible classes of the church faithfully.
- F. Do a kind deed at least once a week.
- G. Attend gospel meetings.
- H. Attend special classes.

### **Conclusion**

1. In order to gain heaven, you must grow and mature as a Christian.
2. Your faith must increase.
3. Wishing will not get the job done.
4. You must make a diligent effort and fervently pray in order to grow and develop as you should.

# Imitate What Is Good

**Text: 3 John 11**

## Introduction

1. John's admonition for Gaius to imitate what is good not what is evil is applicable for us today.
2. In this short epistle we have examples of both the good and the evil.

## I. Imitate What Is Good: Gaius (vv. 1-8)

A. John prayed that Gaius might prosper and be in health even as his soul was—that his physical welfare would be commensurate with his spiritual welfare.

1. Unless our spiritual prosperity is at least equal to our temporal prosperity, material prosperity ceases to be a blessing.
    - a. There is no profit if one gains the whole world but loses his soul. (Mark 8:36)
    - b. The parable of the rich fool. (Luke 12:16-21)
    - c. Riches will ruin a person if his soul is not right.
      - 1) Consider 1 Timothy 6:9-10.
      - 2) On the other hand, if the prosperity of one's soul is equal with his health and wealth then he can do much good.
  2. How different the world would be if this prayer of John were realized in all people.
    - a. Many of the wealthy would become poverty stricken.
    - b. Many of the poor would become wealthy.
    - c. Many now in good health would die in their weakened condition.
    - d. Many diseased, crippled and unhealthy people would become a picture of health.
  3. What if this prayer were realized in us?
    - a. Would we die of starvation because we so seldom feed our souls? (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 10:25)
    - b. Would we become physically weak even as we are spiritually weak because of a lack of spiritual exercise? (Heb. 5:13-14)
    - c. Others might suppose us to be physically dead inasmuch as we sometimes seem to be spiritually lifeless. (1 Cor. 11:30; Eph. 5:14)
- B. Characteristics of Gaius which we should imitate.
1. He appropriated truth in his mind and heart. (v. 3)
    - a. He believed the truth. (John 17:17)

- b. He did not believe the false teaching of his time concerning the person and work of Christ (Gnosticism).
  - 1) Some doubted the deity of Christ, His preexistence and incarnation because He suffered indignity and anguish. (cf. John 1:1, 14)
  - 2) Some doubted His manhood saying that Deity was above such suffering so they taught that His body was merely an illusion. (1 John 1:1-2)
- 2. The truth was manifested in his life and conduct. (v. 3)
  - a. His practical life was in harmony with his professed teaching—not hypocritical.
  - b. The truth that he believed was a living force in his conduct.
    - 1) Consider verse 11.
    - 2) Consider 1 John 3:7-10.
- 3. He was hospitable. (vv. 5-6; cf. Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2)
- 4. He supported the preaching and teaching of the truth. (v. 8)

## **II. Do Not Imitate What Is Evil: Diotrophes (vv. 9-11)**

- A. He loved to have the preeminence. He wanted to be first and foremost.
  - 1. One is not to think more highly of himself than he ought. (Rom. 12:3)
  - 2. Greatness comes from serving (Matt. 23:10-12)
  - 3. The proper attitude the Christian is to have toward other Christians is seen in Philippians 2:1-4.
- B. He rejected the authority of John, an apostle of Christ.
  - 1. Reject an apostle, reject Christ. (Luke 10:16)
  - 2. Reject the teaching of an apostle, reject God. (1 Thes. 4:8)
- C. He was prating (Footnote NKJV: “talking nonsense”) against John with wicked words (idle, foolish and unprofitable talk directed with a malicious intent). (See Eph. 5:3-4)
- D. He would not show hospitality to the brethren nor allow the rest of the church to do their duty toward those worthy ones needing help. (v. 10)
- E. John forecast the punishment of this wicked one.

## **Conclusion**

- 1. Which is seen in your life? Which do you imitate?
- 2. The destiny of your soul depends on your answer and actions.
  - a. Are you of God?
  - b. Have you not seen God?

# The Impartiality of God

## Introduction

1. The impartiality of God is:
  - a. Seen in the statement of the apostle Peter in Acts 10:34-35.
  - b. Emphasized by the apostle Paul in Romans 10:12.
2. All people ought to be thankful that God is impartial.
  - a. His impartiality assures that He is just and fair.
  - b. While men are often biased being swayed by such factors as wealth, popularity, power, status, etc., God deals with all in the same manner.
3. In this lesson we will note some of the consequences of the impartiality of God.

## I. God Has Concluded All Under Sin

- A. Consider Romans 3:9-10, 23.
- B. Every accountable individual stands guilty before God.
  1. God is not like some parents who view their misbehaving children as “darlings” while viewing other people’s misbehaving children as “brats.”
  2. No one can expect to be “the exception” or to be saved on the basis of “good works” while their sins are ignored.

## II. God Loves and Desires the Salvation of All

- A. Consider 1 Timothy 2:3-4 and 2 Peter 3:8-9.
- B. He loves the soul of the vilest sinner as much as that of the righteous man. (Eph. 3:14-19)
- C. This principle contradicts the Calvinistic concept of “limited atonement.”

## III. There Is One Savior for All

- A. Consider John 14:6.
- B. It does not matter how morally good a person is, he is still a sinner and cannot be saved unless he submits to Jesus and His terms of pardon. (John 8:24, 31-32; Heb. 5:8-9)

## IV. There Is One Plan of Salvation for All

- A. Jude writes of the “common salvation.” (Jude 3)
  1. “Common:” the same for all.
  2. This salvation was delivered “once for all.”
    - a. “Once for all” is once for all people for all time.
    - b. Compare this to the death of Christ: Jesus died once for all people, once for all time. (Heb. 9:26; 10:10-12)
  3. God does not save one person one way and another person in some other way.
  4. All who are saved are saved alike—on the same terms.

- B. This plan and its terms are revealed in the gospel. (Rom. 1:16-17) All must:
  - 1. Hear the word of God. (Rom. 10:17)
  - 2. Believe in Christ. (Rom. 3:22; John 8:24)
  - 3. Repent. (Acts 17:30)
  - 4. Confess Jesus as Christ. (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10)
  - 5. Be baptized. (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16)

## **V. There Is One Name for All**

- A. Salvation is in the name of Christ. (Acts 4:12)
- B. Those who are saved belong to Christ.
  - 1. He purchased the church with His blood. (Acts 20:28)
  - 2. Those who belong to Him have been bought with a price. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
  - 3. He redeems sinners with His blood. (1 Pet. 1:18-19)
  - 4. Therefore, the saved should wear His name as a sign of ownership. (1 Cor. 1:10-13)
- C. Human names divide and are carnal. (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4)
- D. All who aspire to belong to Christ should only wear His name (Acts 11:26)

## **VI. There Is One Church for All**

- A. The New Testament speaks of a church:
  - 1. Jesus promised to build. (Matt. 16:18)
  - 2. For which Jesus shed His blood. (Acts 20:28)
  - 3. Over which Jesus is Head. (Eph. 1:22-23)
  - 4. That is the one body. (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4)
  - 5. To which every saved person is added. (Acts 2:47)
- B. The Lord's church is not segmented into sects, divisions or denominations for such is condemned in Scripture. (1 Cor. 1:10-13)
- C. All who would be in Christ's church get into it in the same way. (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-27)

## **VII. There Is One Rule (Authority) for All**

- A. That rule is the doctrine of Christ. (2 John 9)
- B. Seeing that God speaks solely through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2), all must:
  - 1. Speak as the oracles of God. (1 Pet. 4:11)
  - 2. Do all in the name of Christ. (Col. 3:17)
- C. God does not give one standard of authority to one man or group and a different standard to another person or group.
  - 1. All must submit to the same standard—the doctrine of Christ.
  - 2. Those who make their own standard or attempt to change the standard of God, are condemned. (Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19)

## **VIII. All Will Be Judged**

- A. Consider Romans 14:10-12.
- B. From the least to the greatest, none will escape the judgment of God.

## **IX. There Is One Standard of Judgment for All**

- A. Man will not be judged by human standards, opinions, feelings or motives.
- B. The standard of judgment for everyone this side of the cross will be the gospel. (Rom. 2:16)
- C. It will not matter what we thought or how we felt, if we do not submit to the will of God. (Matt. 7:21-23)

## **X. All Who Do Not Obey Will Be Condemned**

- A. Consider 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
- B. Again, there will be no exceptions.

## **Conclusion**

1. The Lord invites all to accept His terms of forgiveness.
2. Why not submit to the impartial God?



# Isaiah's Messiah

**Text: Isaiah 9:6-7**

## Introduction

1. Isaiah is preeminently the Messianic prophet.
2. This text is one of the most spectacular of his prophecies
3. It speaks of how the Father met the needs of man who had come under the influence of sin. God saw man needed:
  - a. Wisdom. Christ is our counselor.
  - b. Reconciliation. Christ is our peace.
  - c. Help for life's calamities. Christ is our mighty God.
  - d. Provision and comfort. Christ is the Father of eternity.
4. In this lesson we will analyze this text as it pertains to Jesus Christ in order to demonstrate His nature, abilities and authority.

## I. "A Child Is Born"

- A. This tells of Jesus Christ's mode of coming into the world.
  1. He would not come as a descending angel or a conquering king.
  2. He came as a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. (Luke 2:11-12)
- B. In this His humiliation is seen.
  1. The mighty Word of God emptied Himself and took the form of a servant and the limitations of a man. (Phil. 2:5-8)
  2. His incarnation was essential in order to "destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. 2:14)

## II. "A Son Is Given"

- A. Not just a child was to be given but a man child is specified.
- B. He would be a son, not of an earthly father, but a heavenly one. (Isa. 7:14)
- C. The unique circumstances of His birth proved that Jesus Christ was Immanuel, "God with us." (Matt. 1:23)

## III. "The Government Will Be Upon His Shoulder"

- A. The burden of authority would rest upon His shoulders. (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 1:22-23)
- B. The Messiah would reign as king over God's kingdom. (Luke 1:31-33)
- C. Thus today, all who are saved are translated into the kingdom "of the Son of His love." (Col. 1:13)

#### **IV. “His Name Will Be Called Wonderful”**

- A. “Wonderful” could also be translated “wondrous.”
- B. The Messiah is wondrous in His nature for He is Divine. (John 1:1-3, 14)
- C. The Messiah is perfect in His manhood. (1 Pet. 2:21-22)
- D. The Messiah is wondrous in His offices: He alone combined in Himself the three offices of Prophet (Deut. 18:15); Priest (Heb. 7:25-26); and King (1 Tim. 6:15).
- E. The Messiah is wondrous in His relationships with us.
  - 1. He shares in our flesh and blood. (Heb. 2:14)
  - 2. He is Savior of all who believe and obey Him. (Matt. 1:21; Heb. 5:8-9)
  - 3. He is a friend unlike all others. (John 15:13-14)
  - 4. He invites us to jointly share His eternal inheritance. (Rom. 8:16-17)

#### **V. “His Name Will Be Called...Counselor”**

- A. Man, blinded by sin, desperately needed a wise counselor. (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12)
- B. No man ever spoke as wisely as Jesus. (Isa. 11:2; John 7:45-46)

#### **VI. “His Name Will Be Called...Mighty God”**

- A. Jesus reflects the same Divine nature as His Father. (Col. 2:9; John 14:7-9)
- B. To accomplish His mission, the Son could be no less than Deity.
  - 1. As God and Savior He redeemed lost mankind. (Titus 2:14)
  - 2. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself—this no creature could do.
  - 3. He vanquished sin and death. (1 Cor. 15:25-26)

#### **VII. “His Name Will Be Called...Everlasting Father”**

- A. This name has troubled many.
  - 1. The footnote in the ASV says it could be translated, “Father of eternity.”
  - 2. Some have translated it “Father of perpetuity” or “Father of forever.”
- B. Christ is the creator of all existing things. (Col. 1:16)
  - 1. He is Master and Ruler of all.
  - 2. He is sustainer of the universe and all living things. (Col. 1:17)
- C. He is the author of eternal salvation. (Heb. 5:8-9)
  - 1. He came to give eternal life. (John 10:10)
  - 2. Those who follow Him will “inherit eternal life.” (Matt. 19:29)
  - 3. He gives eternal life to those who are His “sheep.” (John 10:27-28)
  - 4. The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ. (Rom. 6:23)

#### **VIII. “His Name Will Be Called...Prince of Peace”**

- A. Worldly kings establish themselves by the sword but Christ’s kingdom is founded upon peace.

- B. He reconciled man with:
  1. God. (Rom. 5:1)
  2. Himself. (Phil. 4:7)
  3. His fellowman. (Eph. 2:17)
- C. He imparts peace, maintains it and perfects it. (John 14:27; Phil. 4:6-7)

### **IX. “Of the Increase of His Government...There Will Be No End”<sup>2</sup>**

- A. His is an eternal kingdom. (Dan. 2:44)
- B. The extent of His reign grows daily as each new heart is won to Him. (Col. 1:13)
- C. One day His enemies will be destroyed for no power on earth or in the spirit realm is sufficient to destroy His kingdom. (1 Cor. 15:51-57)

### **X. “Upon the Throne of David”**

- A. The prophets foretold that Christ would reign on David’s throne. (Acts 2:29-31)
- B. The angel who announced Him to Mary also spoke of Christ on the throne of David. (Luke 1:32-33)
- C. Such had been promised to David some 1000 years before. (2 Sam. 7:12-13)

### **XI. “With Justice and Judgment”**

- A. This is the nature of His reign.
- B. It is totally unlike the governments of men.
- C. No one need to fear unfair treatment at the hands of the King.

### **XII. “The Zeal of the Lord of Hosts Will Perform This”**

- A. This constitutes a Divine guarantee of success.
- B. Many human purposes fail because men lack the zeal and devotion to carry through or the power to accomplish their goal.
- C. God can never be deterred.
  1. His will will be done.
  2. His ends will be accomplished.
  3. His promises will be fulfilled.

### **Conclusion**

1. All of this, according to the text of our lesson, is given “unto us.”
2. A promise and a pledge, all in one person—Jesus Christ.
3. That babe born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes, born to a virgin who was with child of the Holy Spirit, was Immanuel, God in the flesh, who grew to be a man who was tempted in all ways as we are but yet had no sin, who willingly went to the cross to suffer and die to redeem man from his sins.
  - a. He was raised from the grave in victory over sin and death. He then ascended on high where He is seated at the right hand of the Father on the throne of David with all power in heaven and on earth.

- b. With His power, He sent the Holy Spirit to reveal His gospel, His power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), to His chosen apostles who proclaimed and preserved it telling the whole world in all ages that forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation are now available to all who would believe in and obey the only begotten Son of God.
- 4. Therefore, we need to love and serve Him with all our heart, mind, soul, strength, and being.
- 5. Are you willing to obey Him today?

# The Perfect Law of Liberty

**Text: James 1:25**

## Introduction

1. We may call the word of God given through Jesus Christ by various names.
  - a. The New Testament.
  - b. The Gospel.
2. James calls the word of God given through Jesus Christ “the perfect law of liberty.” (Jas. 1:25)
3. In this lesson, we will study James 1:25 to see what each term used in it means and implies in regard to the word of God given through Christ and our obligation to it.

## I. Perfect

A. In revelation.

1. It is the product of God. (1 Cor. 2:9-13)
2. It reveals all man needs to know.
  - a. About life and godliness. (2 Pet. 1:3)
  - b. It thoroughly equips man. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

B. In design.

1. It will do what God intended it to do.
2. It is sufficient to convict the world of sin. (Heb. 4:12; Acts 2:37)
3. It not only makes one aware of his sin but also contains the remedy for it.
  - a. It is the truth that frees one from sin. (John 8:31-32)
  - b. It is the power of God to salvation. (Rom. 1:16)
  - c. It is the word which is able to save one’s soul. (Jas. 1:21)
  - d. By it one’s soul is purified and he is “born again.” (1 Pet. 1:22-23)

C. In teaching how to conduct one’s life.

1. As a Christian, one does not:
  - a. Look to the moral codes of men or conform to the ways of the world. (Rom. 12:2)
  - b. Serve sin any longer. (Rom. 6:12)
2. The Christian is to put off the old man and put on the new. (Eph. 4:24)
  - a. He is to walk in “newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4)
  - b. The word of Christ is his guide as to how to do this. (Titus 2:11-12)

## II. Law

A. Some deny obedience to anything is necessary.

1. They teach salvation is by “faith only.”

2. Faith apart from all works eliminates faith. (John 6:28-29)
  3. Salvation is by faith, but it is "faith working through love." (Gal. 5:6)
- B. Webster (*Webster's 7<sup>th</sup> New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 478) defines "law" as:
1. "Rules of conduct given by one in authority."
  2. "A rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority."
- C. One is to obey and continue in the law Christ has given.
1. Matthew 7:21. One must do the will of the Father.
  2. Hebrews 5:8-9. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him.
  3. James 1:22. One must be a doer of the word.
  4. John 8:31. A true disciple must abide in the word of Jesus.
  5. 2 John 9. One must abide in the doctrine of Christ to have fellowship with the Father and Son.
  6. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. The vengeance of the Lord will be upon those who do not obey His gospel.

### III. Liberty

- A. Many are confused as to the meaning of liberty.
1. Some think it allows them to choose what they desire and that, whatever their choice, God will save them in it. (Ex: "The Church of your choice.")
  2. Some think they are at liberty to do anything not expressly condemned in the Bible. (Rom. 6:1-2; Col. 3:17)
- B. Liberty, as expressed in this passage, is:
1. Freedom from bondage to the Law of Moses. (Gal. 5:1; Rom. 7:4; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:6-13)
  2. Freedom from sin. (Rom. 6:18; Heb. 8:12)
  3. Never a license to think, speak or act according to our own righteousness. (2 Cor. 10:5; 1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17)
- C. One is not at liberty to:
1. Change the gospel. (Gal. 1:6-9)
  2. Change the worship. (Matt. 15:9)
  3. Continue in sin. (Rom. 6:12)
  4. Change anything in the "perfect law of liberty" by addition, subtraction or substitution because to do so would destroy and deny its perfection.

### Conclusion

1. Let us live by the "perfect law of liberty."
2. Let us be content to be guided by it in all things.
3. Let us recognize its sufficiency and be satisfied to submit ourselves to it.

# “You of Little Faith”

## Introduction

1. The New Testament reveals a great deal about faith. It speaks of:
  - a. The value of faith. (Heb. 11:1-6)
  - b. The importance of faith. (John 8:24)
  - c. The ability of faith. (Matt. 17:20)
  - d. An undeveloped faith. (John 12:42-43)
  - e. A dead faith. (Jas. 2:17)
  - f. A little faith. (Matt. 6:25-30; 8:23-26; 14:22-31; 16:1-12)
2. The expression “little faith” is used by Jesus on four occasions.
  - a. It is interesting to note that only Jesus uses this expression.
  - b. Each time He is talking to His disciples.
  - c. Each time He is rebuking a different attitude of heart that existed in His hearers.
3. In this lesson, we will:
  - a. See who Jesus describes as having “little faith.”
  - b. Apply the lessons to those of us who claim to be His disciples today.

## I. Matthew 6:25-30 — A Rebuke of Worry

- A. The disciples were beset with care over material things.
- B. Their worry constituted a lack of faith.
- C. Are you worried and anxious about material things?
  1. If so, your faith is “little.”
  2. You could make shipwreck of what faith you have. (1 Tim. 6:9-10)
- D. Godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Tim. 6:6-8)

## II. Matthew 8:23-26 — A Rebuke of Fear

- A. The context.
  1. A storm was raging about the boat in which were Jesus and His disciples.
  2. The disciples were afraid they were going to perish.
  3. Evidently the presence of Jesus did not mean much to the disciples.
  4. Jesus evidenced His mastery over the elements—even the winds and waves subsided in obedience to His commands.
- B. The lesson: When Christ is near, as He always is to the faithful, there is no need to fear.
  1. Nothing can separate one from the love of Christ. (Rom. 8:31-39)
  2. The disciples have the protection of God. (John 10:27-29)
  3. The disciples need not even fear death. (1 Cor. 15:55)
- C. Are you filled with fear?
  1. Does fear beset you?
  2. If so, you have “little faith.”

### III. Matthew 14:22-31 — A Rebuke of Doubt

#### A. The context.

1. Jesus commanded Peter to come to Him, walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee.
2. Peter made a good start but doubt overtook him.
3. Jesus said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

#### B. Doubt should not be a part of the Christian's attitude toward God. (Heb. 11:6; Jas. 1:5-8)

1. Whatever the Lord has commanded, we ought to obey doubting nothing.
2. The example of Peter being sent to Cornelius. (Acts 10:20)
3. It appears that when people ignore the teachings and commands of God in preference of their own, they have some doubts about those of the Lord.

#### C. The doubter has "little faith."

### III. Matthew 16:1-12 — A Rebuke of Shallowness of Thought

#### A. The context.

1. Jesus told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
2. The minds of the disciples immediately went to physical bread.
  - a. Their reasoning: "We have brought no bread with us so that must be the reason Jesus said what He did."
  - b. This demonstrated their lack of depth as to what life and religion is about.
3. Jesus was really warning them of the doctrines and teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

#### B. Like so many today, the minds of the disciples were not attuned to anything but physical and material things.

1. Though claiming to be Jesus' disciples, the physical was still taking priority in their lives.
2. Such reasoning is faulty and shallow and shows a lack of faith.

### Conclusion

1. Four attitudes—worry, fear, doubt and shallowness of thought:
  - a. Are all condemned by the Lord.
  - b. Are characterized by one common factor—a lack of faith.
2. Let us rid our minds of these attitudes.
3. May the Lord be able to say of each of us that which He said of the centurion in Capernaum: "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" (Matt. 8:10)



# A Lost Generation

**Text: Numbers 13-14; cf. Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:1-12**

## Introduction

1. No word in any language arrests attention and quickens interest more than “lost.”
  - a. A lost child causes an entire community, state or nation to conduct a frantic search.
  - b. The Lord knew this.
    - 1) He told of a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost boy in order to let people know heaven’s attitude toward the lost. (Luke 15)
    - 2) He came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)
2. One of the most tragic accounts in the Bible is that of a lost generation—an entire generation that failed to enter the promised land. (Num. 13-14)

## I. Background and Summary

- A. After their long bondage in Egypt, God delivered Israel.
  1. He brought them through the Red Sea, led them to Mt. Sinai, gave them the law, and fed the with manna.
  2. He graciously attended to their needs and led them to the promised land.
- B. To reassure them of the promised land of rest, God told Moses to send out twelve spies to inspect the land and give their report. (Num. 13:1-2)
  1. They were to:
    - a. See its inhabitants—whether they were strong or weak.
    - b. Check its cities—if they were walled or of tents.
    - c. Examine its soil as to its fertility and productivity.
  2. They completed their assignment but went too far in presenting conclusions they had reached and offering recommendations for action.
    - a. This was not within their jurisdiction.
    - b. These matters belonged to the Lord.
- C. The reports of the spies.
  1. The majority report.
    - a. It is summed up in Numbers 13:27-33.
    - b. As you consider their report, keep in mind that God had promised them this land.
  2. The minority report.
    - a. It was given by Joshua and Caleb.
    - b. It concurred with the majority in what they saw.

- c. It did not agree with the conclusions drawn and recommendations offered.
  - d. Caleb and Joshua had seen the obstacles which had been reported, yet they urged Israel, with the help of God, to go up and possess the land. (Num. 13:30; 14:6-9)
3. Why did the reports differ?
- a. Both sides had seen the same land, cities and obstacles.
  - b. The difference:
    - 1) While both saw the same picture, the majority failed to see the most important element—God.
    - 2) The picture is always brighter if we include God—what He can and will do. (Phil. 4:13; Heb. 13:6)

## II. Why This Generation Was Lost

### A. They drew back.

- 1. When they refused to go up to possess the land, God withdrew His promise. He declared:
  - a. They would not enter in until all those who had murmured had died in the wilderness.
  - b. They would wander in the wilderness a year for each day they had spied out the land. (Num. 14:26-35)
- 2. The same will happen to us if we “draw back.” (Heb. 10:35-39)

### B. They were satisfied with the majority report.

- 1. They rejected the minority report without consideration or investigation. (Ex. 23:2)
- 2. They became angry at the opposition. (Num. 14:10)
- 3. It is dangerous to blindly follow the crowd for often the minority is right.
  - a. Noah was a small minority.
  - b. Elijah stood alone against 450 false prophets of Baal.
  - c. Barabbas got more votes than Jesus.

### C. They magnified their difficulties.

- 1. They saw only trials and hardships while closing their eyes to blessings and opportunities.
- 2. They saw giants and walled cities but forgot God and His providence.
- 3. The apostle Paul forgot his “thorn in the flesh” because of assurance from the Lord. (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
- 4. With every difficulty, God makes provision for His own. (Rom. 8:31; cf. Phil. 4:13; Heb. 13:6)

### D. They did not respect themselves.

- 1. “We were like grasshoppers in our own sight.” (Num. 13:32-33)

2. They should have remembered:
  - a. They numbered 603,500 warriors who had never been defeated.
  - b. The same God who delivered them from Egypt was still with them.
3. Self-renunciation and humility do not mean selling God short!
  - a. We must never cast aspersions on that which God has given us.
  - b. We must never belittle our worth. (cf. 1 John 3:1-2)
- E. They murmured and turned from authority.
  1. They planned an insurrection against Moses and Aaron, thus against God.
  2. Their constant whining and bickering provoked the Lord. (Num. 14:11-12)
    - a. They offered nothing constructive.
    - b. They loudly criticized anything offered to better their lot.
- F. They were looking back not ahead. (Num. 14:1-3)
  1. They turned their attention back to Egypt.
  2. They remembered the experiences of yesterday but did not look with anticipation to what lay ahead.
  3. God's people must look to the future. (Luke 9:62; Col. 3:1-2)
- G. They were unwilling to pay the price.
  1. The cost was reckoned and considered to be too much.
  2. They might have become too soft from accepting free manna and many of God's providential blessings.
  3. We must:
    - a. Be willing to meet the demands of God. (Luke 9:23; Rom. 12:1-2)
    - b. Count the cost but be willing to pay the price. (Luke 14:27-33; Rom. 8:18)

## **Conclusion**

1. It is pathetic that an entire generation was lost.
2. We must apply the lesson to ourselves. (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11)
3. We must not be unmindful of the warnings given to us. (Heb. 4:1-2)

# Mary: “The Mother of My Lord”

**Text: Luke 1:43**

## **Introduction**

1. Because of the errors of Catholicism that surround Mary, we seem to shy away from teaching about her.
2. Yet, her life is filled with rich, valuable lessons for us.

## **I. Her Virginity**

- A. When we first meet Mary in Scripture, she is a virgin. (Luke 1:27)
- B. Virgin defined.
  1. One who has never had sexual relations.
  2. A pure and chaste person in relation to sexuality.
- C. She was a betrothed—espoused, engaged—virgin.
  1. By Jewish law she was already considered a wife for she had been promised to Joseph.
  2. Joseph is called her husband, she his wife. (Matt. 1:19-20)
  3. The purity of virginity and the honor of marriage are both seen in her. (Heb. 13:4)
- D. After the birth of Jesus, she became the wife of Joseph in the complete sense of the term.
  1. Contrary to Catholic doctrine, she was not a perpetual virgin.
  2. Joseph “did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn son.” (Matt. 1:25)
    - a. When they arrived in Bethlehem prior to Jesus’ birth, she was still his betrothed wife. (Luke 2:5)
    - b. After the birth of Jesus, the full husband/wife relationship existed for at least four sons and two daughters were born to them. (Matt. 13:55-56)

## **II. Her Place in God’s Plan**

- A. Mary was chosen for a special act: to be the mother of the Lord.
  1. It was a favor that God bestowed upon her. (Luke 1:28, 30)
  2. This shows her to be a recipient of blessings not one to whom a person is to pray for her to bestow blessings upon him.
- B. She was “blessed among women.” (Luke 1:28, 42)
  1. One of a woman’s greatest earthly blessings is in her children. (Prov. 31:28-31)
  2. Her firstborn was not only a blessing to her but to all who will hear, believe and come to Him. (Luke 11:27-28)
- C. She knew her role was one of subjection.
  1. She is never shown as being in control of or making decisions for Jesus.
    - a. During the infancy of Jesus, God, as revealed in Scripture, dealt entirely with Joseph. God sends him to Egypt, calls him out of Egypt and then directs him where to live. (Matt. 2:13-22)

- b. When Jesus is twelve and has caused her grief by remaining in Jerusalem, she shows a submissive spirit. (Luke 2:42-51)
  - c. At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, she makes a veiled suggestion but can only say, "Whatever He says to you, do it." (John 2:1-12)
  - d. Jesus denies her any special favor or place in His kingdom. (Mark 3:31-35)
    - The spiritual relationship is greater than any physical relationship. (Matt. 10:37-38)
2. At His death Jesus makes provision for her care. (John 19:25-27)
    - a. He acknowledges her by saying, "Woman, behold your son!" (26)
    - b. He entrusts her to the care of the apostle John and we know he carried out that responsibility because the last mention of Mary in Scripture is when she is seen with John in Jerusalem. (Acts 1:14)

### III. Characteristics of Mary to Be Imitated

- A. Her purity and virtuosity.
  1. The Lord expects, respects and honors this in a person.
  2. The Lord commands it of all who would follow Him. (1 John 3:1-3; Phil. 4:8-9)
- B. Her humble faith.
  1. Humility. In response to the angel's announcement to her that she would give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:38):
    - a. She identified herself as "maidservant of the Lord" (ASV: "handmaid," footnote in ASV "bondmaid").
    - b. She responded by saying, "Let it be to me according to your word."
  2. Faith.
    - a. Elizabeth, her relative who was the mother of John the Baptist, calls her, "she who believed."
    - b. She did not always understand, yet she believed. (See Luke 2:50-51)
- C. Her true and patient submission.
  1. To her husband—as all wives are to be in subjection to their husbands. (Eph. 5:22-24)
  2. To the will of God. (Luke 1:38)
- D. A heart filled with heavenly things. (Luke 2:51)
  1. An angel told her Jesus would be great, the Son of the Highest, have the throne of David, and reign over the house of Jacob and a kingdom that would never end. (Luke 1:32-33)
  2. She kept her heart filled with these good things from above as should all Christians. (Phil. 4:8)

### Conclusion

1. Mary is a great woman.
2. She was favored by God because God knew what she was and what she would be.
3. Let all women, and men, strive to be as Mary.

# “None of These Things Move Me”

**Text: Acts 20:22-24**

## **Introduction**

1. As he was completing the third journey in which he took the gospel to the Gentile world, the apostle Paul had the elders of the church at Ephesus meet him at Miletus.
  - a. He had a great fondness for them because he had spent two years among them. (Acts 19:10)
  - b. He wanted to warn them of the dangers they would be facing, encourage them to faithfulness and bid them farewell for he knew he would not see them again.
2. While talking to the Ephesian elders, he spoke of what he would face upon his return to Jerusalem. (Acts 20:22-24)
  - a. He knew that “chains and tribulations” awaited him.
  - b. He told them “none of these things move me.”
3. Paul would not allow anything to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem.
  - a. He would not permit anything to keep him from completing his God-given task.
  - b. There was nothing that anyone, not even Satan, could do to prevent him from pressing on.
4. That is not surprising for Paul was always determined to press on to his life’s goal of reaching heaven. (Phil. 3:13-14, 20-21)
  - a. Nothing could move him from attaining that goal.
  - b. At the end of his life, he was able to state that he had accomplished his goal in spite of those things which could have moved him from it. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)
5. In this lesson, we will:
  - a. Examine some of the things that could not move Paul from his goal.
  - b. Make application to our lives since our goal as Christians is the same.

## **I. Physical Afflictions**

### **A. Persecutions.**

1. Paul’s life seemed to be in jeopardy at all times. (2 Cor. 11:24-27)
  - a. He went to Jerusalem even though he knew what awaited him.
  - b. No persecution could move him.
2. Paul understood that all who live godly would suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12)
3. If severe persecution were to arise, would you remain faithful and steadfast or would you be moved?

## B. Physical problems.

1. Paul was also afflicted with some physical malady. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)
  - a. He viewed it as a messenger of Satan to keep him humble.
  - b. Though God did not remove it, he did not allow it to keep him from his task of preaching. (Gal. 4:12-14)
2. How sad it is that some who claim to be Christians allow the slightest physical problem—a slight headache, the sniffles, etc.—to keep them from serving the Lord.

## II. Fleshly Appetites

### A. Paul not only understood but also described the battle that takes place within man. (Rom. 7:22-23)

1. It is a war between the desire to do right against the propensity to do evil.
2. Being a man, he fought this battle himself.

### B. Paul was determined the flesh would not keep him from his eternal prize. (1 Cor. 9:27)

### C. By inspiration, Paul has given us a great deal of help in overcoming fleshly lusts.

1. He listed the works of the flesh so we are able to identify them. (Gal. 5:19-21)
2. He let us know we are to hate evil. (Rom. 12:9)
3. He told us to abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thes. 5:22)

## III. Worldly Position and Honor

### A. As a Jew of high birth and great intelligence, Paul could have enjoyed many honors and attainments among his people. (Phil. 3:4-6)

1. He counted such things as “rubbish.” (Phil. 3:7-11)
2. He knew those things stood in the way of his goal. (Phil. 3:12-14)

### B. Many have refused to relinquish their desire for worldly honor.

1. Some of the rulers of the Jews who believed in Jesus were that way. (John 12:42-43)
2. Too many have refused to deny themselves of worldly honors and prestige for the narrow, sacrificial way of the cross.

## IV. Friends and Family Relationships

### A. It is evident that his family had given Paul the finest education that a young Jewish boy could receive at that time.

1. He had been a student of Gamaliel, the most respected teacher of his day. (Acts 22:3; 5:34)
2. He had excelled in his studies. (Gal. 1:14)

### B. Yet, when Paul learned the truth, he:

1. Did not say, “I cannot accept this doctrine for I would be condemning my people.”
2. Obeyed the gospel for his own salvation. (Acts 26:19; 22:16; 9:18)
3. Made every effort he could to reach his people with the truth. (Acts 26:19-20; Rom. 9:1-3)

- C. Many offer family or friends as excuses for not obeying the gospel.
  - 1. Some say they cannot go against their parents but we must love Jesus more. (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26)
  - 2. We must be a friend to Jesus above all others. (John 15:13-14)

## **V. Possible Obstacles and Weaknesses**

- A. When Paul had the opportunity to see the error of persecuting the church, he:
  - 1. Did not try to find excuses for disobedience.
  - 2. Asked, "What shall I do Lord?" for he was anxious to obey. (Acts 22:10)
  - 3. Obeyed immediately when told what to do. (Acts 22:10-16; 9:18)
- B. Many have cited the obstacles they may face and/or the weaknesses they may have as reasons for delaying obedience.
  - 1. "I want to be sure I can be a faithful Christian."
  - 2. It is only when one becomes a Christian that he is able to gain the necessary strength to overcome all obstacles and weaknesses.
    - a. Prayer, study, association with other Christians, etc., all are blessings which edify and strengthen the Christian to give him the ability to overcome obstacles and weaknesses and remain faithful.
    - b. Paul understood this for he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13)

## **VI. Opposition Within the Church**

- A. When one stands for the truth, he might expect opposition from without the body of Christ.
  - 1. From within, he should expect great help and encouragement. (Gal. 6:2; Rom. 14:19)
  - 2. But sometimes opposition comes from within the body.
- B. Some in the church greatly opposed Paul.
  - 1. They endeavored to discredit his apostleship.
  - 2. They sought to destroy his influence for good.
  - 3. Such treatment may have saddened his heart but it did not deter his efforts for the cause of Christ and his heavenly home.
- C. There are those today, supposedly in the body, who, for any number of reasons, will oppose efforts for good.
  - 1. As difficult as it may be, one who is striving to do right must not be stopped by them.
  - 2. As Paul, one must continually press on.

## **VII. Standing Alone**

- A. It takes great faith and courage to stand alone when it seems all the world is going in a different direction.



- B. Paul knew what it was to stand alone and be forsaken by fellow members of the church. (2 Tim. 4:16)
- C. Even though all forsook him, Paul did not allow this to move him from his goal. (2 Tim. 4:17)
- D. Sometimes in serving Christ you will be all alone.
  - 1. In reality, as a Christian you are never alone for the Lord is with you. (Matt. 28:20)
  - 2. Remember, also, the majority does not make right.

## **Conclusion**

- 1. Is heaven your goal?
- 2. If it is, do not let anything in this world move you from attaining it.

# The Role of Man in the Home

## Introduction

1. At the time of creation, God saw that it was not good for man to be alone so He created woman and provided for the marriage relationship, the beginning of a home in which children would be born and raised. (Gen. 2:18-24)
2. God has given guidelines to govern conduct in the physical family just as He has for the spiritual family, the church.
  - a. Each person is to study the word of God to know his/her role in the physical family whether as husband, wife, parent or child.
  - B. As Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23), He is to be the “head” of every physical family, thus, His will should guide them in all things.
3. This lesson will focus on the role of the man in the family as husband and father.

## I. The Role of Man as Husband

- A. He is to leave father and mother. (Matt. 19:5-6)
  1. Leaving that relationship in favor of another has many implications.
  2. He leaves the “headship” of his parents to become the head of his own family.
  3. He leaves the financial support of his parents to provide for himself and his own household.
- B. He is to cleave to (NKJV: “be joined to”) his wife (Matt. 19:5-6).
  1. His wife is to be his highest earthly loyalty and he is to live for her and to think of her and please her before his parents.
  2. “Cleave” literally meant cemented, glued, adhered to. (cf. Acts 11:23)
  3. God has joined the husband and wife together.
    - a. They are to become “one flesh.”
    - b. The godly husband sticks with his wife in and through all things— “for better or worse.”
- C. He is to be head of his wife. (Eph. 5:23).
  1. Proper leadership is needed in every family, therefore, the husband must live up to his God-given responsibility.
  2. He is to be head of his wife as Christ is head of the church.
    - a. His headship must be exercised in love, humility, and consideration of his wife and her needs before himself and his own needs.
    - b. He is neither to be a tyrant nor a dictator—his wife is not to be his slave and “bow and scrape” before him.
- D. He is to honor his wife. (1 Pet. 3:7)
  1. Many wives are profaned, treated as common and/or taken for granted.

2. Peter's instruction suggests respect, esteem and treatment expressive of proper honor in both word and deed.
3. How different this attitude is than that which was normally expressed toward the woman in society in Biblical days.
  - a. "In every sphere of ancient civilization, women had no rights at all. Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was owned by her husband in exactly the same way as he owned his sheep and his goats; on no account could she leave him, although he could dismiss her at any moment...In Greek civilization the duty of the woman was 'to remain indoors and be obedient to her husband.' It was the sign of a good woman that she must see as little, hear as little, and ask as little as possible. She had no kind of independent existence and no kind of mind of her own, and her husband could divorce her almost at caprice, so long as he returned her dowry. Under Roman law a woman had no rights. In law she remained for ever a child. When she was under her father she was under the *patria potestas*, the father's power, which gave the father even the right of life and death over her; and when she married she passed equally into the power of her husband. She was entirely subject to her husband, and completely at his mercy. Cato the Censor, the typical ancient Roman, wrote: 'If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial'... The whole attitude of ancient civilization was that no woman could dare to take any decision for herself." (Wm. Barclay, *Daily Study Bible, The Letters of Peter*, 258-259)
  - b. "The lot of women in non-Greek countries, particularly before the influence of the gospel began to be felt, was a deplorable one. Aristotle writes that among the barbarians (non-Greeks) women and slaves held the same rank; and though among the Greeks her position was not quite so degraded, they considered her as holding only an intermediate position between free persons and slaves, mother of her children, but not worthy to educate them, qualified to receive orders, but never to give them." (*Gospel Advocate Commentaries, Commentary on First Peter*, 86)
4. She is to be honored:
  - a. As "the weaker vessel." Though some believe this has reference to the physical weakness of the woman in comparison to the man, a better explanation is that she is to be honored as a piece of "fine china" rather than as a piece of the "everyday stoneware."
  - b. Because she is a fellow heir "of the grace of life."
  - c. So that "one's prayers may not be hindered."
  - d. Because she has honored her husband—of all the men to whom she could have chosen to give herself and her life, she chose her husband.

- E. He is to dwell with his wife with understanding. (1 Pet. 3:7)
1. A husband may never be able to completely understand his wife and her way of thinking—that is not what is commanded here.
  2. The understanding the husband must have is that of the marriage relationship and his God-given responsibilities toward his wife in that relationship.
    - a. “*Ginosko*—signifies to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand, or to understand completely.” (W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of NT Words*, 637)
    - b. “With an intelligent recognition of the nature of the marriage relation.” (Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the NT*, Vol. I, 651)
- F. He is to provide for the needs of his wife.
1. Physical needs. (1 Tim. 5:8)
  2. Sexual needs. (1 Cor. 7:1-4).
  3. Emotional needs. The godly husband understands the link between the emotional and sexual and will see that the emotional needs of his wife are satisfied.
  4. Intellectual needs. He will engage in conversation with her and provide opportunities for her to develop her intellectual abilities.
  5. Spiritual needs.
    - a. As a joint heir of the grace of life. (1 Pet. 3:7)
    - b. Nothing better complements the efforts of a wife trying to serve the Lord than a faithful husband doing the same.
- G. He is to truly love his wife.
1. Such a love is the summation of all the husband should be and do.
  2. The husband’s love for his wife, when compared in Ephesians 5 to Christ’s love for the church, shows it is to be:
    - a. Sacrificial: “as Christ loved the church.” (25)
    - b. Preeminent: “as their own bodies.” (28)
    - c. Truly caring: “even as himself.” (33)

## II. The Role of Man as Father

- A. A man who is a father is to provide for, love, teach and chasten his children.
1. Provide. (1 Tim. 5:8)
  2. Teach.
    - a. To see that his children develop in all the areas in which Jesus developed—wisdom, stature, favor with men and God. (Luke 2:52)
    - b. So that his children will be brought up in “the training and admonition of the Lord.” (Eph. 6:4)
    - c. So that his children will have a solid foundation on which to build their lives. (Prov. 22:6)

3. Chasten.
  - a. Following the example of the Lord. (Heb. 12:5-11)
  - b. The father who loves his children disciplines them promptly. (Prov. 13:24)
  - c. He is not to withhold correction. (Prov. 23:13)
  - d. He is to chasten his children to properly mold them and preserve them from destruction. (Prov. 19:18)
- B. The man is to be the spiritual leader in the home. (Eph. 5:23; 6:4)
  1. Following the example of Joshua. (Josh. 24:15)
  2. Following the example of Cornelius. (Acts 10:2)
  3. This is a must for one who would serve as a leader of God's people. (1 Tim. 3:5)
  4. As He did with Eli, God will judge all those who neglect this responsibility. (1 Sam. 3:13)

## **Conclusion**

1. When husbands fail to honor their wives, joyfully live with them and cleave to them, they endanger the most fundamental and intimate relationship God designed for mankind. (1 Pet. 3:7; Eccl. 9:9; Matt. 19:5)
2. When fathers neglect to fulfill their responsibilities to their children, they have neglected a sacred responsibility that can have eternal consequences.
3. The word "man" suggests an essential quality of a husband and father.
  - a. He must be brave and courageous if he can be called manly.
  - b. He must be ready for life's adversities and all the problems that come with being a husband and father and face them without surrender or even despondency.
  - c. He must be ready for sicknesses, tragedies and losses and meet them with confidence.
  - d. If he will act as a man, he will be rewarded with a loving family in this life and with eternal blessings in the life to come.

# The Parable of the Seed Growing

**Text: Mark 4:26-29**

## Introduction

1. This parable is only found in the gospel of Mark.
  - a. Mark is a dramatic, moving and powerful picture of the life of Jesus so there are not as many quotations from Christ as there are in the other gospels which means it contains relatively few parables—only four.
  - b. The four parables found in the book of Mark are:
    - 1) The sower. (4:3-20)
    - 2) The mustard seed. (4:31ff)
    - 3) The wicked husbandmen. (12:1-11)
    - 4) The growth of the seed. (4:26-29)
2. Jesus taught a number of parables which concerned seeds.
  - a. The sower.
    - 1) Matthew 13:3-23; Mark 4:2-20; and Luke 8:4-15.
    - 2) It reveals there are different kinds of hearts in which the word of God may be sown.
  - b. The tares.
    - 1) Matthew 13:24-30.
    - 2) It demonstrates that not all that happens is God's will or His doing.
      - aa. "An enemy has done this." (v. 28)
      - bb. This is the kind of seed the devil is responsible for sowing.
  - c. The mustard seed.
    - 1) Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19.
    - 2) It testifies of the seeming insignificance of the gospel and the all-prevailing influence of which it is capable.
  - d. The growth of the seed. (Mark 4:26-29)
3. This sermon will consider some of the lessons to be learned from the parable of the seed growing.

## I. We Are Not Responsible for the Growth of the Seed (vv. 26-28a)

A. In the physical realm.

1. When wheat or barley was sown, men did not know how the seed sprang up and grew.
  - a. They prepared the fields, sowed the seed and then went about their business.
  - b. They trusted that, since they had done their part, the seed would grow.

2. Twenty-one centuries later, we still do not know how this takes place.
    - a. We have made great progress in agriculture: the benefit of rotating crops, feeding nutrients to the soil, etc.
    - b. We have made no progress at all when it comes to understanding how a seed that appears lifeless can grow and produce.
  3. That seed is able to grow and produce by the power of God. (Acts 17:25)
- B. In the spiritual realm.
1. The same is true with the spiritual seed, the word of God.
    - a. What is there in that word that can produce a new creation?
    - b. How can it lift, enable and renew a person?
    - c. How can it make one a real man, father and husband?
    - d. How can it make one a real woman, mother and wife?
  2. It is the power of God. (Rom. 1:16-17)
    - a. The word of God has great power.
    - b. God caused the world to come into being by His word.
    - c. Consider the cleansing of Naaman. (2 Kings 5:1-15a)
  4. The word of man has no such power.
    - a. Men can put beautiful words and great thoughts together but the literature of Shakespeare or Dickens does not effect such changes in people's lives.
    - b. You never heard anyone say, "I used to be a drunkard, then I read Tennyson and it changed my life."
    - c. The creed books of theologians cannot bring about such changes they can only make religion vain. (Matt. 15:7-9)
  5. Only one book can truly change lives: the word of God which must be planted in the heart. (Jas. 1:21)
  6. The pattern for growth of the seed is seen in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7.
    - a. You and I sow.
    - b. You and I water by continuing to teach and encourage.
    - c. Beyond that, it is up to the individual and God.
    - d. We should admonish and encourage but at the same time we must recognize that all we can do is plant and water.

## II. Expect Stages of Growth (v. 28b)

- A. Often we are too impatient—with both ourselves and others.
1. The farmer does not sow his seed and then expect to harvest his crop the next morning. (Jas. 5:7-8)
  2. If the seed is good, the soil is good and we do plenty of planting and watering, then God will give increase.
- B. We must realize that those things which are really important are not always accomplished in quick, "surefire methods" but in quiet patience. (1 Pet. 3:1-2)

- C. Growth as a Christian comes in stages by patiently:
  - 1. Studying the Bible.
  - 2. Building up one's character.
  - 3. Learning from the examples of others.
  - 4. Attitudes and concepts passed down to succeeding generations.
- D. Be alert: apostasy happens in the same way—gradually.
  - 1. Satan can sow seed (The parable of the tares in Matthew 13).
  - 2. One does not just wake up one morning and decide not to be a Christian anymore.

### **III. The Harvest (v. 29)**

- A. The purpose of the Christian is to bear fruit. (John 15:1-8; Eph. 2:10; Rom. 12:1-2)
- B. In the parable of the sower (Matt. 13), the good soils brought forth different yields but they all brought forth fruit.
- C. There are at least three senses in which we are to bear fruit.
  - 1. Winning others to Christ. (1 Cor. 3:8)
  - 2. Strengthening and edifying brethren. (Heb. 10:24-25)
  - 3. Growing spiritually. (Gal. 5:22-23)
- D. The harvest will come.
  - 1. At the proper season, when He determines, God will use the sickle.
  - 2. Are we bearing fruit?

### **Conclusion**

- 1. We should be busy working for the Lord and bearing much fruit.
- 2. If the seed is planted in good soil and then watered, God will give the increase.



# Self-Righteousness

## Introduction

1. As Saul of Tarsus, the apostle Paul had been a Pharisee. (Phil. 3:5)
  - a. The Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews. (Acts 26:5)
  - b. The Pharisees were the most numerous and influential of the five Jewish sects numbering about 6,000 at the time of Herod the Great.
  - c. The Pharisees had originated from the Hasidim, the “devoted ones.”
  - d. The Pharisees were the most conservative, most religious sect of the Jews.
  - e. By the time of the New Testament, many of the Pharisees became fanatical and took on a self-righteous air which Jesus condemned.
2. In Romans 10:1-3, Paul pours out his heart in regard to his brethren in the flesh.
  - a. His desire is that they might be saved.
  - b. He acknowledged that they had a zeal for God but, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, they established their own righteousness and did not submit to the righteousness of God.
3. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, also spoke of the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and how those would enter the kingdom of heaven must have a different type of righteousness. (Matt. 5:20)
4. This lesson will consider:
  - a. The reality of self-righteousness among the Jews.
  - b. The attitude behind self-righteousness.
  - c. The results of self-righteousness.

## I. The Problem of the Jews: The Reality of Their Self-Righteousness (Matt. 23:23-25)

- A. They were neglecting the weightier matters of the law. (v. 23)
  1. In relation to others: Justice and mercy.
  2. In relation to God: Faith.
- B. They would strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. (v. 24)
- C. They were cleansing the outside but leaving the inside full of extortion and self-indulgence. (v. 25)
  1. Extortion: To take by force that which is not rightly yours.
  2. Self-indulgence: “Unrighteousness” (ASV).

## II. The Attitude Behind Self-Righteousness (Luke 18:9-14)

- A. The Pharisee “trusted in himself that he was righteous.”
- B. The Pharisee, because he trusted in himself that he was righteous, “despised others” thinking he was better than them and having no concern for them or their souls.

- C. The Pharisee was thankful he was not like others—even the tax collector.
- D. The Pharisee measured himself by his own standard as being good and righteous while, in reality, he was miserably in sin.

### **III. The Results of Self-Righteousness (John 8:2-11)**

- A. A lack of justice. The accusers did not bring the man.
- B. A lack of mercy. The accusers made a spectacle of the woman.
- C. The accusers did not care who they hurt.
- D. The accusers magnified another's sins but failed to see their own.
- E. The accusers used the sin of another to make themselves feel cleaner and bigger.

### **Conclusion (Proverbs 30:12-13)**

“There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness. There is a generation—oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up.”

# Soldiers at War

## Text: 2 Timothy 2:1-3

### Introduction

1. Christians are engaged in the greatest struggle the world has ever known.
  - a. It is a struggle between right and wrong, truth and error.
  - b. The forces of evil on one hand and the army of righteousness under the royal banner of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the other.
  - c. Paul calls it “the good fight.” (I Tim. 6:12)
2. This struggle goes back to the morning of time when the serpent entered the garden to do his sinister work (Gen. 3:15) but you can see this conflict down through the ages.
  - a. Moses asked Israel who was on the Lord’s side. (Ex. 32:26)
  - b. This conflict still existed in the NT as seen in Jesus’ temptation, the stoning of Stephen, persecution by Saul and others, etc.
3. All must choose sides in this struggle. One had better choose to be on the Lord’s side.
  - a. Even though at times it may seem that evil is prevailing, ultimately God will be victorious—His side will be the winning side.
  - b. The devil and those who serve him will ultimately suffer defeat. (Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41)
  - c. The triumphant Christ will be acclaimed “King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Rev. 19:16)
4. In order to share in that victory, one must be a faithful soldier in the cause of Christ (Text; Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8). This lesson will show what that involves.

### I. An Enemy

- A. In this struggle, there is a real adversary. (1 Pet. 5:8; cf. Job 1:7)
  1. He is cunning and vicious, bent on the destruction of all mankind.
  2. No one of accountable age has been spared his efforts to destroy.
- B. His sphere of operation.
  1. He operates in times and places of happiness as in the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 3)
  2. He operates in times and places of sorrow as in the calamity of Job. (Job 1, 2)
  3. Geographically he operates in the wilderness and in the city. (Matt. 4:1-10)
  4. He is in the world (1 John 2:15-17) but he attempts to operate in the church. (Acts 5; 1 Cor. 5; cf. 2 Cor. 2:1-11)
- C. He operates through cunning devices (2 Cor. 2:11).
  1. He uses subtleties such as ignorance, prejudice, and pleasure to lure his prey.
  2. He may not appear as an enemy at all but rather as an angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:14)

## II. A Commander

- A. Soldiers are not left on their own to do as they please without proper leadership. Not only must the battle be planned but the commander must show the way.
- B. Christians have a “captain of their salvation,” one made perfect through suffering. (Heb. 2:10)
  - 1. He has the right to command. (Matt. 28:18)
  - 2. He shows His great leadership by defeating the enemy Himself. (Matt. 4:1-10; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-22)
  - 3. In this fight, all need to follow the orders and in the footsteps of the captain, leader and head—Jesus Christ.

## III. Armament

- A. The Christian is well equipped to engage in victorious battle with Satan. If he properly uses the armor he has been given, the devil must go down to defeat.
- B. The Christian’s armor is described in Ephesians 6:10-18.
  - 1. His waist is girded with truth.
  - 2. Breastplate of righteousness.
  - 3. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.
  - 4. Shield of faith.
  - 5. Helmet of salvation.
  - 6. Sword of the Spirit—the word of God.
- C. His armor is full, complete. As a soldier he is thoroughly furnished. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; Titus 2:11-12)

## IV. Essential Qualities

- A. A willingness to endure hardship.
  - 1. A soldier may experience cold and hunger and face danger—even death.
  - 2. The soldier of Christ must be ready to suffer hardship. (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-16). Consider the example of Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28.
  - 3. Sadly, many today who claim to be in the army of the Lord are hardly willing to suffer inconvenience much less sacrifice and hardship.
- B. Loyal.
  - 1. There must be no conflicts of interest, no alliances with the enemy, no surrenders, and no compromises.
  - 2. The world is divided into two camps: those serving Satan and those serving Christ. There is no neutral ground. (Matt. 12:30; 6:24)
  - 3. The soldier does not become involved in the things of the world. (2 Tim. 2:4)
  - 4. Each one who claims to be in this struggle against evil and error, against Satan and the world, needs to look honestly into his own heart and see if he has any divided interest.

C. A hatred for the enemy.

1. When soldiers are trained for carnal warfare, they are trained to hate the enemy.
2. Every soldier loyal to Jesus will hate the vicious enemy of all mankind.
  - a. Psalm 97:10. "You who love the Lord, hate evil!"
  - b. Romans 12:9. "Abhor what is evil."
3. If we:
  - a. Hate Satan, there will be no serving him.
  - b. Abhor sin, there will be no fraternizing with it.
  - c. Despise error, there will be no spirit of compromise.

D. A responsible individual.

1. Each soldier is responsible for his individual conduct.
  - a. If he does his job well, he will receive recognition and perhaps some medal of honor.
  - b. If he fails, he will most probably die but if he runs in cowardice, he will be disciplined.
2. In the army of the Lord each person has an individual responsibility to the Lord. (Rom. 14:12; Gal. 6:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:10)

E. A willingness to cooperate.

1. In physical warfare, all forces must work in coordination.
2. In the battle against sin and Satan, Christ requires unity. That unity is based upon recognition of His authority and complete submission to His will.
3. Christians are to be endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:3)
4. There are to be no divisions among those who belong to Christ. (1 Cor. 1:10)
5. All members of the body of Christ should work together in unity to further the cause of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12-28)

## Conclusion

1. In the armies of men, a soldier may be drafted or he may enlist but a soldier in the Lord's army is there by choice—a voluntary enlistment.
2. He is persuaded to enlist by the highest motives known to man:
  - a. Love for God.
  - b. Love for Christ.
  - c. Love for the truth.
  - d. Love for his own soul and the souls of others.
3. He chooses to heed the great invitation of Christ—"Come unto me." (Matt. 11:28)
4. To become a soldier for Christ, one submits to the gospel of Christ. He believes in Christ, repents of his sins. He pledges his allegiance to Christ in the good confession and when he is baptized, his sins are forgiven and he comes under the command of the Savior.

# Jesus As a Stone

**Text: I Peter 2:4-8**

## Introduction

1. The apostle Peter ties together several passages in which Jesus is referred to as a stone.
2. These Old Testament figures of speech, applied to Jesus, tell us several different things about Him.

## I. The Rejected Stone

- A. Jesus is described as “the stone which the builders rejected.” (vv. 4, 7; Psa. 118:22)
- B. This is a figure of speech which describes the erection of a building in which builders reject one stone as being unfit to be used in construction.
  1. However, the chief architect came and selected that rejected stone to be the chief cornerstone.
  2. That stone is Jesus.
- C. This figure denotes the manner in which Jesus was rejected by the Jews. (Matt. 21:33-42)
  1. The Jews found Jesus unacceptable.
    - a. They were expecting an earthly kingdom with a reigning monarch.
    - b. When He refused to accept the position of king in an earthly kingdom, they rejected Him. (John 6:15)
  2. When He cleansed the Temple and pronounced woes against the religious leaders, they despised Him.
  3. When they witnessed His popularity as a result of the resurrection of Lazarus, they determined He had to die. (John 11:47-53)
- D. Isaiah 53:3.
  1. “He was despised and rejected of men.”
  2. He was rejected just like a stone rejected by builders for use in construction of a building because they considered it unfit.

## II. The Chief Cornerstone

- A. That stone which the builders rejected was used as the chief cornerstone. (v. 7; Psa. 118:22; Isa. 28:16)
- B. Through this comparison of these two figures, we can see the different valuations placed upon Jesus by the Jews and by God.
  1. The Jews rejected Him but God chose Him as the cornerstone—the most important stone in all of the spiritual building He was constructing.

2. The cornerstone is chosen first because:
  - a. It is the best, most precious stone.
  - b. All the rest of the stones in the building are placed in alignment with it.
- C. Jesus is the chief cornerstone in the church. (Eph. 2:19-22)
  1. Without Him, there could be no forgiveness of sins, no hope of salvation, no hope of a resurrected body or no hope of heaven. (Acts 4:11-12)
  2. He is the way to the Father. (John 14:6)
  3. Without Him, no other stones could be added to the house of God. (1 Pet. 2:5)

### III. A Reliable Stone

- A. 1 Peter 2:6 is a quotation from Isaiah 28:16.
  1. Isaiah had used the promise of a Messiah as that which God's people could rely upon for assurance as they faced the Assyrian crisis.
  2. The emphasis of the passage in Isaiah is that this foundation stone which God laid is adequate to sustain those who put their hopes in Him.
- B. He was "a tried stone."
  1. He was tested and found to be adequate.
  2. He was a sure and reliable foundation upon which to build.
- C. This fact is emphasized over and over in Scripture. (2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:25; 2 Tim. 4:6-8)
- D. He is a reliable stone not a foundation which breaks and crumbles under stress.

### IV. A Stone of Stumbling and Rock of Offense

- A. 1 Peter 2:8 alludes to Isaiah 8:14.
- B. The passage in Isaiah emphasized that Judah should fix her hope upon God, specifically on the promise of the Messiah which God had repeatedly given.
  1. Not all Judah was willing to listen.
  2. Those who refused to trust in God would find their rejection of His promises of the Messiah to be the source of their own destruction.
- C. In the New Testament, the passage in Isaiah is applied to Jesus. (Rom. 9:30-33)
  1. Whoever chooses not to believe in Him will be destroyed. (Matt. 21:44)
  2. Those who reject Him will be condemned to everlasting damnation. (Mark 16:16)
    - a. It is as if they have stumbled over a rock which was laying in their path.
    - b. That rock will then fall on them and crush them to pieces.

### Conclusion

1. Both the acceptance and rejection of Jesus are pictured in reference to Jesus as a stone.
2. All people will either accept or reject Him.
3. What will be your choice?
4. Will Jesus be your chief cornerstone or your rock of offense?

# Who Is a Christian?

**Text: Acts 11:19-26**

## Introduction

1. "A name signifies and stands for all that the individual that bears it is." (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 497)
2. "Were called." "The former of these two words, rendered *were called*, meant, originally, to transact business, to have dealings with; thence, in the course of business, to give audience to, to answer, from which comes its use to denote the responses of an oracle; a divine advice or warning. See Acts x. 22; and compare Matt. ii. 12; Heb. xi. 7. Later, it acquires the meaning to bear a name; to be called, with the implication of a name used in the ordinary transactions and intercourse of men; the name under which one passes. This process of transition appears in the practice of naming men according to their occupations, as, in English, 'John the Smith,' 'Philip the Armorer;' a practice which is the origin of many familiar family names, such as *Butler, Carpenter, Smith, Cooper*. Compare in the New Testament *Alexander the coppersmith* (2 Tim. iv. 14); *Erastus the chamberlain* (Rom. xvi. 23); *Rahab the harlot* (Heb. xi. 31). In the same line is the use of the word *calling*, to denote one's business. The meaning of the word in this passage is illustrated by Rom. vii. 3." (Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. I, p. 506)

## I. The Origin of the Term "Christian"

- A. Many erroneously believe the term "Christian" is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 62:2.
  1. "The new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name."
  2. That "new name" is identified in verse four: "Hephzibah," "My delight is in her."
    - a. Judah was to be in captivity and had been termed "Forsaken" because having forsaken God, He forsook her (Deut. 28:15; 2 Chron. 15:2; Isa. 51:19-20), though only for a short time (Isa. 54:7).
    - b. When restored to God, He would once again "delight in her."
- B. The origin of the term as presented by scholars.
  1. "The disciples *were called*. They did not assume the name themselves. It occurs in only three passages in the New Testament: here; ch. xxvi. 28; and 1 Pet. iv. 16; and only in the last-named passage is used by a Christian of a Christian. The name was evidently not given by the Jews of Antioch, to whom *Christ* was the interpretation of *Messiah*, and who would not have bestowed that name on those whom they despised as apostates. The Jews designated the Christians as *Nazarenes* (Acts xxiv. 5), a term of contempt, because it was a proverb that nothing good could come out of Nazareth (John i. 47). The name was probably not assumed by the disciples themselves; for they were in the habit of styling



- each other *believers, disciples, saints, brethren, those of the way*. It, doubtless, was bestowed by the Gentiles. Some suppose that it was applied as a term of ridicule, and cite the witty and sarcastic character of the people of Antioch, and their notoriety for inventing names of derision; but this is doubtful. The name may have been given simply as a distinctive title, naturally chosen from the recognized and avowed devotion of the disciples to Christ as their leader. The Antiochenes mistook the nature of the name, not understanding its use among the disciples as an *official* title—the *Anointed*—but using it as a *personal* name, which they converted into a *party* name.” (Vincent, 506-507)
2. “‘Christian,’ a word formed after the Roman style, signifying an adherent of Jesus, was first applied to such by the Gentiles and is found in Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16. Though the word rendered ‘were called’ in Acts 11:26 might be used of a name adopted by oneself or given by others, the ‘Christians’ do not seem to have adopted it for themselves in the times of the apostles. In 1 Pet. 4:16, the apostle is speaking from the point of view of the persecutor, cf. ‘as a thief,’ ‘as a murderer.’ Nor is it likely that the appellation was given by Jews. As applied by Gentiles there was no doubt an implication of scorn, as in Agrippa’s statement in Acts 26:28. Tacitus, writing near the end of the first century, says, ‘The vulgar call them Christians. The author or origin of this denomination, Christus, had, in the reign of Tiberius, been executed by the procurator, Pontius Pilate’ (Annals xv. 44). From the second century onward the term was accepted by believers as a title of honor.” (W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of NT Words*, p. 193)

## II. Identifying Characteristics of Those Called “Christians” at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26)

- A. They heard the gospel (v. 20).
1. They heard the preaching of Jesus which included all the gospel message including the commands one must obey.
    - a. Paul at Corinth (1 Cor. 2:1-2; 15:1-2).
    - b. Philip to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-38).
  2. The gospel is the only thing that can make one a Christian (Rom. 1:15-17).
    - a. No other teaching is needed (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
    - b. Anything else brings condemnation (Gal. 1:6-9).
- B. They believed what they heard preached (v. 21).
1. One must believe in Jesus as the Messiah (John 8:24).
  2. Belief is necessary for life (John 3:16).
- C. They turned to the Lord (v. 21).
1. More is involved in this turning than merely calling Jesus “Lord” (Matt. 7:21-23).
  2. This turning requires doing the will of the Lord, obeying His gospel (Heb. 5:8-9; Luke 6:46; Jas. 1:22-25; John 14:15).

3. Obedience indicates repentance, a turning, has been made.
  - a. Such a turn is essential (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30; 2:38; 3:19).
  - b. One must become dead to sin and the world (Rom. 6:1-4) and alive to Christ (Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:20).
4. Those in Antioch and all others who can rightfully be called "Christians," turned to the Lord by:
  - a. Hearing the gospel.
  - b. Believing what they heard (turned to the Lord).
  - c. Repenting of their sins.
  - d. (Confessing Christ as Lord) Being baptized for the remission of sins.

## **Conclusion**

1. Of all the people in Antioch, only those who submitted to the gospel in this manner, were called "Christians."
2. Have you done that which would allow you to be called a Christian by God's standard?

# Resisting the Devil

## Introduction

1. While we may not know what Satan looks like, God wants us to be familiar with him and his characteristics so that we might be able to resist him.
2. Satan is a “wily” being. (Eph. 6:11)
  - Wile: “Denotes craft, deceit...a cunning device.” (W.E. Vine)
3. Satan is a relentless adversary. (1 Pet. 5:8)
4. Satan uses many devices to get people to serve him. (2 Cor. 2:9-11)
  - a. Device: “Plan, scheme, artifice, stratagem, plot.” (Vine)
  - b. Some of Satan’s devices are:
    - 1) He casts doubt on the word of God. (Gen. 3)
    - 2) He afflicts the righteous. (Job 1:1 - 2:8)
    - 3) He discourages, resists and hinders the righteous. (1 Thes. 2:18)
    - 4) He appeals to fleshly appetites to make unlawful satisfaction appear innocent and right. (Gen. 3; Matt. 4:2-4)
    - 5) He appeals to vanity by preying upon man’s desire for praise and his desire to occupy positions beyond the limits which God has established. (John 12:42-43; 3 John 9-11)
    - 6) He appeals to ambition and greed. (Matt. 4:8-10)
    - 7) He appears as an angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:13-14)
5. Satan must be resisted. (Jas. 4:7)
  - a. How do we resist?
  - b. This lesson will consider some of the ways revealed in Scripture by which he can be resisted.

## I. We Must Be Sober and Vigilant

- A. If we are not watchful, we will be devoured. (1 Pet. 5:8)
- B. We must be sober.
  1. Sober: “To be calm and collected in spirit; to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect.” (Vine)
  2. Sober: “To be of sound mind.” (J.H. Thayer)
- C. We must recognize the reality of Satan and the real threat he poses to our salvation.

## II. We Must Have the Will to Resist

- A. Some love the world and the pleasure of sin so much that they simply do not want to resist.
  1. The Jews in the time of Jesus were this way. (John 8:44)
  2. Many, like those Jews, easily, quickly and gladly give themselves over to do the will of Satan.

- B. God works successfully in one who desires to do His will. (Phil. 2:12-13)
- C. Nothing replaces desire.
  - 1. The example of a coach who instills in his team the desire to win.
  - 2. The will to live has caused many to survive what seemed to be insurmountable circumstances.

### **III. We Must Have a Confident Spirit**

- A. We seldom rise higher than our expectations.
- B. The apostle Paul's expectations were high. (Phil. 4:13)
- C. We can be confident because with the help of God there is nothing we cannot overcome. (Rom. 8:31-39)

### **IV. We Must Use Scripture**

- A. The Bible is not a charm that scares Satan away but its truths in a person enables him to intimidate and triumph over the devil.
  - Jesus met the devil in this way. (Matt. 4:1-11)
- B. The word of God is our sword to fight Satan. (Eph. 6:17)
- C. Satan's "unrighteous deception" will only overcome those who do not have "the love of truth" and who do "not believe the truth." (2 Thes. 2:9-12)

### **V. We Must Pray**

- A. The Lord spent the hours before His arrest in prayer.
- B. Jesus instructed His disciples to "watch and pray" so that they would not enter into temptation. (Mark 14:38)
- C. Paul asked the brethren to pray so that he might "preach as he ought." (Eph. 6:18-20)
- D. We need to ask God for help because He knows how to deliver. (2 Pet. 2:9)

### **VI. We Must Have and Use Wisdom**

- A. James recommended prayer for wisdom in time of trial. (Jas. 1:5)
- B. Resisting Satan is no "fool's game." (2 Cor. 11:3)
- C. Good judgment is necessary if we are to defeat the cunning of the devil.
- D. Successful resistance demands that we not be ignorant of his devices. (2 Cor. 2:11)

### **VII. We Must Have Character**

- A. This means being "strong in the Lord" and "putting on the whole armor of God." (Eph. 6:10-11)
  - The result will be that we will be able to "stand against the wiles of the devil" and "withstand in the evil day." (vv. 11, 13)
- B. The weak are devoured by Satan.

## **VIII. We Must Have Good Associations**

- A. As surely as evil companions corrupt (1 Cor. 15:33), good associations help. (Gal. 6:1)
- B. Good brethren “stir up love and good works.” (Heb. 10:24)

## **Conclusion**

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (Jas. 4:7)

# Receiving the Word with Meekness

**Text: James 1:19-21**

## Introduction

1. When considering the gospel of Christ:
  - a. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. (Rom. 1:16)
  - b. It is God's desire that every sinner should hear it. (Mark 16:15-16)
  - c. It produces the faith essential to salvation in the heart of the hearer. (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31)
2. The heart properly equipped to hear and heed the saving message of God is one that is "noble and good." (Luke 8:15)
  - a. This is the attitude of heart the one outside of Christ must have if he is ever going to believe, obey and be saved.
  - b. It is also the attitude of heart the child of God must have.
    - 1) This is emphasized by the text. (Jas. 1:21)
    - 2) Christians have been begotten by the word of truth (v. 18) but are still urged to "receive with meekness the implanted word." (v. 21)
3. The text is written to Christians—Jewish Christians in the Dispersion. (Jas. 1:1)
4. The Christian who would receive the word with this attitude must possess several very important characteristics.

## I. Characteristics Needed

- A. "Swift to hear" the word. (Jas. 1:19)
  1. One must be appreciative of the word and of every opportunity to hear it proclaimed.
  2. One must long for the "pure milk of the word." (1 Pet. 2:1-2)
    - a. That longing must be as intense as a physical babe longing for milk.
    - b. It is akin to hungering and thirsting for righteousness. (Matt. 5:6)
  3. Sadly, some who claim to be Christians grow dull of hearing. (Heb. 5:11-14)
- B. "Slow to speak" against the word. (Jas. 1:19)
  1. A pagan philosopher said, "Man has two ears and one mouth showing that he should listen more than he talks."
  2. The person fond of hearing the sound of his own voice is never a good listener, nor often a good learner. (Prov. 29:20)
  3. The person who does not bridle his tongue has vain religion. (Jas. 1:26)

- C. "Slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (Jas. 1:19-20)
1. One must not be eager to find fault with the truth nor to quarrel with the person who presents it.
  2. Wrath, springing from evil disposition, makes right thinking impossible.
    - a. Under the influence of wrath, people often do and say things they later regret.
    - b. That man's wrath never works God's righteousness is illustrated by the account of Naaman. (2 Kings 5:11-12)
- D. Therefore, the Christian should rid himself of all filthiness and overflow of wickedness. (Jas. 1:21)
1. NIV: "Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent."
  2. The wickedness and filthiness are viewed as abnormal outgrowths of one's character.
    - a. All of it must be put away. (cf. 1 Pet. 2:1)
    - b. Having put away these besetting sins, one is then able to turn his attention toward reception of the word. (Jas. 1:21)
  3. It is the "implanted word" one can then receive.
    - a. The word is not innate with us like our consciences but it must be sown in our hearts. (Luke 8:11-15)
    - b. Only when that word is planted in our hearts can it produce the fruit of salvation.
  4. We are responsible for the reception we give the word.
    - a. It is important to receive it in a docile, teachable manner.
    - b. We must receive it with "meekness." (Jas. 1:21)

## II. Meekness Defined

- A. The word translated "meekness" in the text occurs only three times in the New Testament. (Jas. 1:21; 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:15)
- B. The Greek word is very difficult to translate.
1. It can mean absence from resentment or resignation in suffering.
  2. Its translation depends on the context in which it is found.
  3. In the text it means the opposite of wrath—receiving the word in a yielding, receptive manner.
- C. It "refers to that inwrought grace of spirit which accepts God's word without backtalk, dispute or questioning." (R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on James 1:21*)
- D. It "expresses that temper or spirit in which we accept his dealing with us without disputing or resisting, and it is closely linked with humility and follows it closely (Eph. 4:3; Col. 3:13), because it is only the humble heart which is also the meek, and which as such, does not fight against God, and more or less struggle and contend with him." (R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*)

- E. "The teachable spirit is docile and tractable, and therefore humble enough to learn. The teachable spirit is without resentment and without anger, and is, therefore, able to face the truth, even when the truth hurts and condemns. The teachable spirit is not blinded by its own overmastering prejudices, but is clear-eyed to the truth. The teachable spirit is not seduced by laziness, but is so self-controlled that it can willingly and faithfully accept the discipline of learning. Prautes describes the perfect conquest and control of everything in a man's nature which would be a hindrance to his seeking, learning and obeying the truth." (William Barclay, Commentary on James)
- F. In order to "receive with meekness the implanted word," we must rid ourselves of pride and yield our hearts to its reception.
1. Sinfulness consists essentially in rebellious pride which attributes to self honor and glory that are due to God.
  2. We must have that attitude because we are God's children: He has spoken and we must be ready to listen.
  3. We must not try to:
    - a. Avoid what we deem to be an undesirable command.
    - b. Rationalize disobedience.
    - c. Explain away the word.
- G. There is more to this attitude than being merely a "gracious listener."
1. We must hear with the intention of obeying.
  2. One who hears sound doctrine but does not put it into practice will not be profited by it but will only deceive himself. (Jas. 1:22-25)

## **Conclusion**

1. The Christian who conscientiously applies these instruction from James to his life will be saved by the word.
2. If his heart is proper, he will allow the word to work its saving influence in it.
3. Take heed how you hear.



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