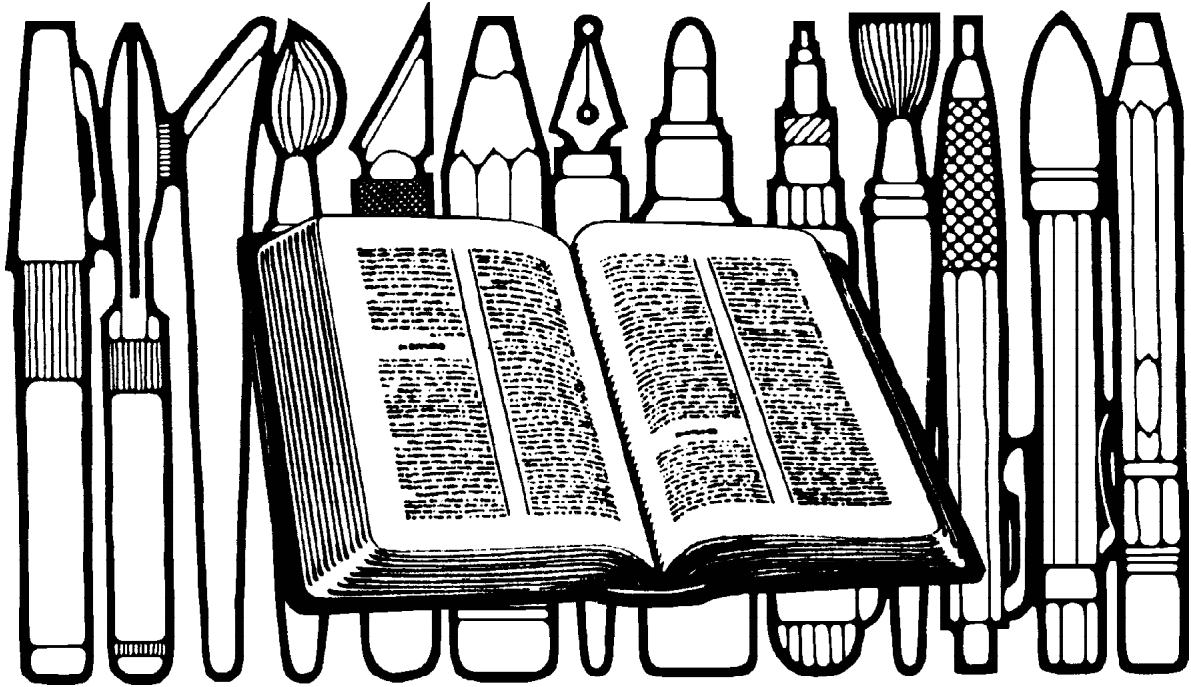


Adorning The Word

Volume 5



Gospel Sermons

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A Faithful Saying

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. “This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:11–13).
- II. These words are “faithful” and worthy of our consideration—they should give us comfort and consolation.

Discussion

I. **Dying And Living**

A. Have you “died” with Christ?

1. “How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” (Rom. 6:2–3).
2. “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).
3. “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness...” (1 Pet. 2:24).
4. We also take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23; 14:27).

B. If you have died with Christ, then the consequence is that you “shall also live with Him.”

1. “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.” (Rom. 6:8–9).
2. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20).

II. **Enduring And Living**

A. Are you “enduring” with Christ right now?

1. Endurance is the same as steadfastness and the result is blessedness (Jam. 1:12; 5:11).
2. Persecution comes with discipleship (Matt. 5:10–12; Mark 10:29–31).
3. “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).
4. “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21).

B. If you “endure” with Christ now you also reign with Him now.

1. Weymouth’s translation of 2 Tim. 2:12, “If we patiently endure pain, we shall also share His kingship...”
2. Christ is reigning right now (1 Cor. 15:24–25).
 - a) We are kings and priests now (Rev. 1:6).
 - b) We reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9–10).
 - (1) “**We shall reign** (*basileusphie*). Read *basileuousin* they reign. Their reigning is not future, but present.” (Marvin Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies*, Vol. II, pg. 492).

- (2) "...it is a perversion to change the present basileuousin into a future, or to take it in the sense of a future" (H.A.W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook*, Vol. XI, pg. 214).
- c) Reign in life through righteous living (Rom. 5:17).
- d) Reign by righteous judgment (1 Cor. 6:2-3; cf. Heb. 11:7; 1 John 4:1).
- e) Reign by enduring (2 Tim. 2:12).
- f) Reign by overcoming (Rev. 3:21).
- g) Ruling over the nations (Rev. 2:25-26).
 - (1) Jeremiah was set "over the nations" (Jer. 1:10).
 - (2) His ruling was by his preaching (Jer. 18:7-11; 25:15-17, 28).
- 3. We are part of a royal priesthood right now (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

III. Denial

- A. Have you denied Christ?
 - 1. The Jews denied "the Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3:14; cf. Jn 1:11).
 - 2. "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." (2 Pet. 2:1).
 - 3. "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).
 - 4. We could deny Him like Peter did (Matt. 26:69-74).
- B. When we deny Christ, He denies us.
 - 1. The words of Christ Himself (Matt. 10:32-33).
 - 2. He will deny some at the judgment (Matt. 7:21-23).

IV. Faithfulness

- A. Have you ever been unfaithful to Christ?
 - 1. The church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-5).
 - 2. Demas left Paul (2 Tim 4:10).
- B. Regardless of how we act, Christ will remain faithful to His word.
 - 1. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23).
 - 2. "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11).
 - 3. He will bless the righteous (Matt. 25:34).
 - 4. He will punish the disobedient (2 Thes. 1:6-8).

Conclusion

- I. Have you died with Christ in the waters of baptism and been raised to walk in newness of life?
- II. Are you enduring with Him now so that you might "reign" now?
- III. Is Christ denying you before His Father right now?
- IV. Regardless of your faithfulness (or lack thereof) He remains faithful.

Back To School

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. Every year at this time our children get a “back to school” checklist: pencils, ink pens, binders, spiral bound notebooks, glue sticks, scissors, wide ruled paper, gym clothes and a book bag.
- II. However, everything you need at school is not on the list.
 - A. School is not what it used to be.
 1. The biggest problem we had in school when I was going was the boys smoking in the bathrooms—an occasional M-80 in the bathroom.
 2. That was considered major compared to the problems of a generation or two before, chewing gum and being tardy.
 3. Young people today face some very serious challenges in the classroom and on the school grounds: drugs, alcohol, lying, fornication, gangs, etc.
 - B. What you need to meet these challenges you are not going to buy at the Wal-Mart or K-Mart—neither the school board nor the teachers are going to provide what you need.
 - C. What every person needs to meet the challenges of going back to school, whether a student, a parent, a teacher or an administrator is to be found in the pages of God’s book.
- III. In this study we will consider some things you must carry with you when you go back to school in this coming year.

Discussion

I. Carry Honesty With You

- A. What is honesty?
 1. “The quality or condition of being honest.”
 2. “Integrity and straightforwardness in conduct, thought and speech; free from fraud.”
 3. Synonyms of honesty: incorruptibility, incorruptibleness, integrity, rectitude, uprightness.
- B. The Word of God says:
 1. “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.” (Rom. 12:17).
 2. “Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified.” (2 Cor. 13:7).
 3. “Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12).

- C. With whom should you be honest?
1. Be honest with God and His Word.
 - a) You cannot fool God, or hide from God, or disregard His Word with impunity (Gal 6:7–8; Num. 32:23; John 12:48).
 2. Be honest with yourself.
 - a) “To thine ownself be true and thou canst not be false to any.”
 - b) You have a conscience and while it is not a perfect guide, God gave it to you to warn when you stray from what He has taught you in His word (John 8:9; Acts 24:16; 1 Pet. 3:16).
 3. Be honest with your fellow students.
 - a) Lying and cheating is the best way to ruin friendships and destroy trust.
 - b) “For He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile” (1 Pet. 3:10).
 - c) “The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.” (Proverbs 11:9).
 4. Be honest with your teachers.
 - a) Your teachers are there to help you and instruct you.
 - b) If you are a cheater or a liar you undermine the implicit trust which exists between student and instructor, and you hurt yourself in the long run (Pro. 20:17, “Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.”).
 5. Be honest with your parents.
 - a) Your parents are on your side and they want to help you through the difficult times (Psa. 103:13, “As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him”).
 - b) However, dishonesty can ruin a good relationship between parents and children (Pro. 27:11, “My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me.”).
 - c) The best way to avoid this pitfall is to obey your parents (Eph. 6:1).

II. Carry Respect For Authority With You

- A. Teachers are in a position of authority over students and are to be respected and obeyed.
1. They are in authority over you because your parents have given you into their care (Gal. 4:1–2; Eph. 6:1).
 2. They are in authority over you because they are the agents of the state (Rom. 13:1–2).
 3. They are in authority over you because they are adults (Lev. 19:32, “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord.”).
- B. Everyone of us is under some authority, and always will be!
- C. We cannot live a peaceable prosperous life without learning respect for and submitting to authority (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17).
1. Turmoil in the home because a lack of respect for authority.
 2. Turmoil in the schools because of a lack of respect for authority.
 3. Turmoil on the job because of a lack of respect for authority.
 4. Turmoil in society because of a lack of respect for authority.

- D. The importance of learning respect for authority is demonstrated by the Centurion who came to Jesus in Matthew 8:5–10.
 - 1. Without respect for parents there will be no respect for teachers.
 - 2. Without respect for teachers there will be no respect for law officers and civil government.
 - 3. Without respect of government there will be no respect for God.

III. Carry Moral Courage With You

- A. What is moral courage?
 - 1. “That quality of mind which enables one to meet danger and difficulties with firmness.”
 - 2. Moral courage exemplified in Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah and Azariah (Dan. 1:6–8; 3:9–18; 6:10).
 - 3. Moral courage exemplified in Joseph (Gen. 39:7–8).
- B. Why the need for moral courage at school?
 - 1. The public schools belong to the people, both good and bad—thus, both good and bad have an influence in the schools.
 - 2. The government cannot and, sometimes will not, legislate against all that is sinful.
 - 3. Therefore, you will have to be brave and resist those influences that come your way that would lead you into sin.
- C. Challenges to be faced with moral courage:
 - 1. Modesty (1 Tim. 2:9–10).
 - 2. Alcohol and drugs (1 Pet. 4:1–4; Pro. 23:29–35)
 - 3. Gangs (Pro. 1:10–19)
 - 4. The special theory of evolution (Psa. 14:1; Rom. 1:20)
 - 5. Sex education (Matt. 19:1–12; Gen. 2:24–25; 1 Cor. 7:1–5).

Conclusion

- I. Yes, there are some things which we need to take with us back to school:
 - A. Honesty.
 - B. Respect for authority.
 - C. Moral courage.
- II. Where we going to find these things?
 - A. We will find them in God’s word (2 Tim. 3:16–17)
 - B. We must find them in the training at home (Pro. 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”).
 - C. We must have them in our hearts before we can put it into practice at school (Psa. 119:11, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”).

The Assurance Of The Believer

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. Several years ago Dan Demshar wrote a tract titled, “Why Am I Uncertain About My Salvation Even Though I Am A Christian And Working For The Lord?”
 - A. He wrote several tracts all of which were designed to convince us that the majority of Christians are uncertain about their salvation.
 - B. I do not believe it—Demshar says, “Many of us are working for the Lord. But deep down we feel like we are not doing enough. We often see ourselves falling short. We turn ourselves over to God to do His will, but we still see sins in our life. This can cause great anxiety and doubt.”
 - C. I should hope so! Christians ought to be anxious about known sin.
- II. They have reason to doubt their security if they are unrepentant.
 - A. Every Christian should know that he is saved and will remain saved by the grace of God.
 - B. We are sometimes reluctant to talk about being “born again” when people obey the gospel because of sectarian errors.
 - C. We tend to be cautious when answering our neighbors who believe in “once saved always saved” when they ask, “Are you saved?”
 - D. I am not ready to give up these Scriptural terms because someone else abuses them.
 - E. Neither am I ready to accept the doubts others have about my salvation because they do not understand the grace of God.
- III. It is appropriate that we discuss the assurance that the believer has in Christ.

Discussion

- I. **The Bible Teaches The Possibility—Not The Inevitability—Of Apostasy**
 - A. There is security for the believer—he can be confident (1 John 5:11–17).
 1. “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. 1:10–11).
 2. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Pet. 1:3–5).
 3. See also: Heb. 10:19–25; 2 Tim. 4:6–8, 18.
 - B. What do we mean by “security” for the believer?
 1. When one is secure, he is free from danger or all adverse consequences—he is safe.
 2. Are believers safe and free from the consequences of their sins? If yes, how, why and when?

- a) Believers are free from the consequences of their past sins (Mark 16:15–16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).
 - b) “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isa. 1:18).
 - c) “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psa. 103:12).
3. “Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:18-19).
- C. Believers may be free from the consequences of the sins they still see in their lives (1 John 1:7–9; James 5:20; Acts 8:22).
- 1. How is it that apostasy is possible?
 - 2. Men are not infallible (1 Cor. 10:12–13).
 - 3. Believers do not have to sin (1 Pet. 4:1,2; 1 John 2:1; Rom. 6:14–16).
 - 4. Thus, the believer sins, but he does not have to sin—it is possible for him to sin, but not inevitable that he sin.
 - 5. When we do sin the remedy is available, but not all avail themselves to the remedy.
- D. Does one sin make a believer an “apostate”? No!
- 1. The erring Christian can be restored (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19–20).
 - 2. However, he may harden himself in his sins and be lost (1 John 5:17; 1 Cor. 5:5–9; 6:9–11; 2 Thes. 3:6; Heb. 6:1–6; 10:5–31).
 - 3. While one sin does not make a believer an “apostate,” it does not mean he enjoys fellowship with God (cf. Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4, 20–21).

II. What Assurance Does The Believer Have Regarding His Salvation?

- A. Assurance of God’s love (Rom. 8:38–39; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- B. Assurance that God understands (Heb. 2:18; 4:15–16).
- C. Assurance that God helps (Jude 24–25).
- D. Assurance that when we sin God is not through with us (Acts 8:22).
- E. The assurance that the commandments of God are not burdensome (1 John 5:3; Matt. 11:30).
- F. Assurance that his brethren love him and will help him (Gal. 6:1–2; 1 Thes. 5:14; 2 Thes. 3:14–15).

Conclusion

- I. It is possible, but not inevitable that the believer will fall away.
- II. The believer has assurance from God that he will not fall away.
- III. Let’s all live in such a way that we not fall away!

Roman Catholicism

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. In previous lessons we discussed Mary, the mother of Jesus.
 - A. We pointed out that the Roman Catholic Church is embroiled in a debate concerning Mary's "role" in Catholic theology.
 - B. "This week a large box shipped from California and addressed to 'His Holiness, John Paul II' will arrive at the Vatican. The shipping label lists a dozen countries—from every continent but Antarctica—plus a number, 40,383, indicating the quantity of signatures inside. Each signature is attached to a petition asking the pope to exercise the power of papal infallibility to proclaim a new dogma of the Roman Catholic faith: that the Virgin Mary is 'Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate for the People of God.'" (Kenneth L. Woodward, "Hail, Mary", *Newsweek*, August 25, 1997, p. 49).
- II. Several years ago I had a debate with a Catholic priest, from the Order of Saint John, concerning the "power" of the Pope.
 - A. He was asking the pope to change his position on the Latin Mass and many doctrines that were "redefined" at the Second Vatican Council.
 - B. My reason for focusing on the Papacy: if you destroy the need for a "pope" the rest of Catholicism falls.

Discussion

- I. **The Papacy**
 - A. "The Pope is the Roman Pontiff who, by divine law has supreme jurisdiction over the universal Church (cc. 331—333). He is the supreme superior of all religious (c. 590f). The pope may act alone or with a council in defining doctrine for the universal Church or in making laws (cf. Infallibility). He is addressed as His Holiness the Pope. By title and right he is: Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman province, and Sovereign of the State of Vatican City. (Cf. Apostolic Succession.)." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Broderick, editor, p. 479).
 - B. "**Power of the Keys:** The grant of authority whereby Christ, through the metaphor of 'keys,' passed on to St. Peter and his successors the supreme jurisdiction over the Church on earth is known as the power of the keys. The fact, recorded in Matthew (16:18–20), is recognized as the transmission of authority and a definition of St. Peter's powers. These powers, consisting of a 'binding' and a 'loosing' in the spiritual order on earth, that is, all powers necessary to the well-being of the kingdom, were recognized by the apostles from the rabbinical terms for 'binding,' that is, of granting or forbidding, as contained in the Jewish law. (cf. Authority.)." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 485).

II. The Foundation Of The Church

- A. What is the “rock” of Matthew 16:13–20?
1. “Peter” is from *petros*, a masculine noun.
 2. “Rock” is form *petra*, a feminine noun.
 3. “No passage in the word of God has called forth more discussion than this and the succeeding verse, the first point in dispute being as to what is meant by the rock; i. e., whether Christ or Peter or Peter’s confession is the foundation of the church; the second point being as to the extent of the power and authority bestowed on Peter by the symbol of the keys. To aid us in reaching a correct conclusion we must note that Jesus speaks in metaphorical language. He represents: **1.** His kingdom as a city about to be built upon a rock. **2.** Himself as a builder of this city. **3.** Simon Peter as the one who holds the keys to the gates by which egress and regress is had to the city. **4.** The gates or powers of the opposing city of Hades are not able to prevail against this kingdom city. Now, since Jesus himself occupies the position of builder in the metaphor, and Simon Peter the position of key-bearer, neither of them can properly be regarded as the foundation. The foundation must therefore be the confession which Peter has just spoken, since it is all that remains that is liable to such application.” (J. W. McGarvey, *The Fourfold Gospel*).
- B. The power to “bind” and “loose” was given to all of the apostles, not just the apostle Peter (Matt. 18:18).

III. Not Filling The Papal Mold

- A. He had a wife (Matt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5).
- B. He was never given religious titles (Matt. 23:8–12; 2 Pet. 1:1).
- C. He would not let others worship him (Acts 10:26).
- D. He and John were sent by the other apostles (Acts 8:14).
- E. He was rebuked by Paul (Gal. 2:11–21).
- F. You can not *prove* from the Bible he was ever in Rome!
1. “Well, what about it? Admittedly the scriptural evidence for Peter being in Rome is weak. Nowhere does the Bible unequivocally say he was there; neither does it say he was not. Just as the New Testament never says, ‘Peter then went to Rome’, it never says, ‘Peter did not go to Rome’. In fact, very little is said about where he, or any of the apostles other than Paul, did go in the years after the Ascension. For the most part, we have to rely on books other than the New Testament for information about what happened to the Twelve, Peter included, in later years.” (Karl Keating, *Catholicism And Fundamentalism*, p. 200).
- G. If you were going to make a Pope, Paul would be a better candidate.
1. Paul rebuked Peter (Gal. 2:11).
 2. Paul was not married (1 Cor. 7:7).
 3. Paul wrote 14 books in New Testament, Peter only wrote two.
 4. Paul went up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:1–6).
 5. Paul did not confer with men (Gal. 1:11–17).
 6. I know Paul went to Rome (Acts 28:16).
 7. No one in Rome would help Paul (2 Tim. 4:16).

IV. Is The Bible A Catholic Book?

- A. The following phrases are never found: Rosary, Vestments, Penance, Sacrifice of the Mass, Extreme Unction, Indulgences, Purgatory, Arch Bishop, Cardinal.
- B. If the Bible is a Catholic book, why these verses...
 - 1. "Do not call anyone on earth your father. Only one is your father, the One in heaven." (Matt. 23:9, NAB)
 - 2. "Through baptism into his death, we are buried with him..." (Rom. 6:4, NAB).
 - 3. "A bishop must be irreproachable, married only once ... keeping his children under control..." (1 Tim. 3:2, NAB).
 - 4. The doctrines of demons is identical with Catholicism (1 Tim. 4:1-3).
 - 5. A photograph could not produce a better picture of modern Catholicism than Paul's description of false teachers in 2 Thes. 2:2-12.
- C. The Ten Commandments:
 - 1. "You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters below the earth." (Exodus 20:4, NAB).
 - 2. Why is this verse left out of the Catholic Catechism? (cf. *The Teaching Of Christ, A Catholic Catechism For Adults*, p. 276).
- D. The Apocrypha (Why don't you use the Catholic Bible?).
 - 1. The Catholic Old Testament has 46 books while there are only 39 which are used by the rest of the world.
 - 2. The added books are: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, 1 & 2 Maccabees (plus additional parts in Esther and Daniel).
 - 3. The extra books were never accepted by the Jews in Palestine.
 - 4. Neither Jesus nor the Apostles ever quoted from them as if they were inspired.
 - 5. Not accepted by the historian Flavius Josephus (c. 100 A.D.)
 - 6. When "Saint" Jerome translated the Old Testament into Latin, he rejected these books as non-canonical (383-406 A.D.).
 - 7. Not received by the Catholic church until the Council of Trent, April 8, 1546.

Conclusion

- I. Jesus promised to build his church (Matt. 16:18).
- II. Peter used to "keys of the kingdom" to tell me how to gain entrance into the church in Acts 2.

The Gospel Makes Christians Only

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. Let us begin by reading two passages: Mark 16:15–16 and Rom. 1:16–17.
- II. All religious people are aware of the fact that the Bible speaks of Christians.
 - A. The name first given at Antioch (Acts 11:26).
 - B. Agrippa knew its use applied to the followers of Jesus (Acts 26:28).
 - C. Peter urged disciples to be willing to suffer for that name (1 Pet. 4:16).
- III. There are many who prefer to be “hyphenated Christians.”
- IV. I am simply a Christian—it is all I desire to be.
 - A. I will not wear a religious name that honors men, human traditions, religious ordinances or religious feast days, or sacred offices or forms of church government.
 - B. The gospel makes Christians only and only Christians.
 - C. Those who meet in this building on a regular basis reject every name other than the name of Christ as a designation of who they are and unto whom they belong.
 - D. We are Christians and members of the body of Christ.

Discussion

- I. **What The Scriptures Teach About The Gospel Of Christ**
 - A. The Gospel is that which Christ commanded His apostles to preach.
 1. The Lord did not send them out on their own, but rather under a specific commission, the Great Commission (Luke 24:44–48).
 2. In the performance of this commission they were guided by Jesus Himself through the direct influence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5–11; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8–13).
 - B. The gospel is that which the apostles and prophets of Christ did preach and defend the world over.
 1. They began preaching the “good news” at Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:14ff).
 2. This message they took into all the world just as Jesus had commanded (Acts 1:8; Acts 8:1–4; Acts 8:5, 12; Acts 10:48; Col. 1:23).
 3. There was one message for the entire world (Gal. 1:6–8).
 4. This message was not subject change, modification, alteration or substitution (Phil. 1:17; Jude 3; 1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 22:18f; 2 John 9).
 - C. This gospel is God’s power to save, God’s means for mankind to obtain righteousness and be set free from the bondage of sin.
 1. The apostles of Christ understood that salvation could not be had apart from belief in their message (2 Thes. 2:9–14; 1 Cor. 15:1–2).
 2. Every case of conversion in the New Testament begins with the preaching of this gospel (Acts 2:14; 3:12; 8:12, 35; 9:6; 10:6; 11:14; 15:7).
 - D. The gospel must be believed and obeyed in order to be saved, born again or have the remission of past sins (Rom. 6:16–17; John 3:3–5).
 - E. Thus the gospel of Christ is what all men everywhere need because they are sinners in need of salvation (Rom. 3:9–23).

II. The Gospel Makes Christians And Christians Only

- A. Whenever and wherever the gospel of Christ was preached, believed and obeyed, Christians and only Christians were made (Acts 11:26).
- B. Christians and Christians only have never been found where the gospel of Christ had not gone (Acts 15:36).
- C. That this proposition is true can be shown from what Jesus Himself taught about the Gospel in the parable of the Sower (Luke 8:5-15).
 - 1. The seed is the word of God, the Gospel (1 Pet. 1:22-25).
 - 2. Every seed brings forth after its own kind, whether in the physical or the spiritual realm (cf. Gen. 1:12).
 - 3. Therefore, the gospel of Christ, the word of God, the seed of the kingdom will only produce after its kind—that which the Gospel produces is Christians (cf. John 15:1-6).

III. What Obeying The Gospel Of Christ Has Never Done, Does Not Now Do, And Cannot Ever Do...

- A. It will not make one a sectarian, nor a member of any sect.
 - 1. Examine again the examples of gospel preaching, what they received and what they became.
 - 2. Can you site one Bible example of a denomination ever being formed? Who formed it? What was it called? What creed other than the Bible did they receive?
- B. It takes the gospel plus denominational doctrine to make a sectarian of one or to add one to a denomination.
 - 1. It takes the gospel plus Baptist doctrine to make a Baptist.
 - 2. It takes the gospel plus Methodist doctrine to make a Methodist.
 - 3. Presbyterian; Pentecost; Catholic; LDS, etc.
- C. You can no more make a Christian and a Christian only by preaching denominational doctrine than you can make a Baptist by preaching Methodist doctrine, or vice versa.
 - 1. That which is peculiar to, distinctive of, exclusively and characteristically Baptist will produce only Baptists.
 - 2. That which is peculiar to any particular denomination will make only members of that particular denomination.

Conclusion

- I. This gospel is that which we preach and plead for—the gospel which we call upon you to believe and obey.
- II. If you will believe and obey what those in New Testament times believed and obeyed, then you will be what they were; receive what they received; enjoy what they enjoyed; have the hope that they hoped; have the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17:20-21).
- III. The gospel and the gospel only will make Christians and Christians only.

The Conversion Of Multitudes

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. An overview of the events leading to the conversion of multitudes of men and women in Jerusalem (Acts 5:14).
 - A. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-4).
 1. Peter makes another defense of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 4:8-12).
 2. The Sanhedrin, in closed session, considers their options (Acts 4:13-16).
 3. Peter and John are threatened and commanded to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:17-22).
 - B. The first recorded prayer meeting is held in Jerusalem (Acts 4:23-31).
 1. Common prayer on behalf of the whole church is made (Acts 4:24).
 2. Their prayer is well seasoned with Scripture (cf. Gen. 1:1; Psa. 2:1-2).
 3. Their prayer recognized God's providence (Acts 4:27-28).
 4. They prayed for the Holy Spirit to come upon them (Acts 4:29-30).
 5. They prayed for boldness (Acts 4:29).
 - C. The church undertakes a work of benevolence on behalf of the poor among the saints (Acts 4:32-5:1).
 1. The believers do not consider their possessions their own (Acts 4:32).
 2. This generosity occasions great influence among the people of Jerusalem (Acts 4:33-35).
 3. Barnabas is set forth as an example (Acts 4:36-37).
 4. This great outpouring of love is an occasion for Satan to corrupt some in the church (Acts 5:1).
 - D. God purges the church of two liars (Acts 5:2-11).
 1. Ananias and Sapphira lie about their gift (Acts 5:2-3, 8).
 2. The Holy Spirit reveals their duplicity (Acts 5:4-9).
 3. Ananias and Sapphira die for their pride, greed and lying (Acts 5:5, 10).
 - E. The apostles continue to perform miracles in Jerusalem (Acts 5:12-16).
 1. Multitudes come to Jerusalem (Acts 5:15-16).
 2. Peter works special miracles (Acts 5:15).
 3. The people are fearful of the apostles and the church magnifies them.
- II. The significance of these conversions in Jerusalem:
 - A. These conversions indicate the increased spread of Christianity in keeping with promise and prophecy (Gen. 15:5, 22:17; Dan 2:35).
 - B. These conversions indicate that the expectation of trial, adversity, and self-denial are not hindrances to the growth of the church (Luke 14:25-33).
 - C. Materialism, greed and covetousness impede the progress of the gospel.
 - D. These conversions demonstrate that the fervent practice of Christianity cannot and will not be ignored (Acts 5:17-18).
 - E. Accordingly, conversions increase and the persecutions against the church accelerate (Acts 5:33).
- III. Observations about the conversion of the multitudes:

Discussion

I. **Began With The Powerful Preaching Of “Unlearned and Ignorant Men”**

- A. Peter and John were so regarded by the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:13).
1. *Unlearned*, “illiterate, without learning: Acts 4:13 (i.e., unversed in the learning of the Jewish schools, cf. John 7:15...” (Thayer).
 2. *Ignorant*, “a private person, opposed to a magistrate, ruler, king...in the NT an unlearned, illiterate man, opposed to the learned and educated...” (Thayer).
 3. “The word translated ‘uneducated’ means without technical training in the school of Hillel, or the school of Shammai. Jesus himself was regarded as ‘uneducated’ (John 7:15) for He, like His apostles, had not attended the schools of the rabbis. ‘Untrained’ speaks of one who is from a private place in life, as opposed to one who is used to appearing and speaking in public.” (Gareth Reese, *New Testament History*, p. 181).
- B. However, “they had been with Jesus.”
1. Peter, John and the other apostles had spent three years in the “school of Jesus” being taught and observing how to teach.
 - a) Their training under the “master teacher” often involved the entire day in His company and under His instruction.
 - b) It has been observed, “If actual hours were counted, we might find that they had more semester hours of training under the greatest Teacher of all time than the average degree man of today.”
 2. Peter and John did not meet the human standards of qualification for being teachers of the people, but they obviously knew what they were talking about (Acts 4:20).
 3. Their boldness was not due to “the arts of rhetoric, but was the native, ingenuous and manly exhibition of a deep conviction of the truth of what they spoke, and that conviction could have been obtained only by their having been with Jesus, and having been satisfied that He was Christ” (Albert Barnes).
 4. The church will grow with this kind of men and this kind of teaching.
- C. Genuine conviction that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God is of far more value in preaching than all the letters any school may be able to attach after one’s name.
1. We are again reaching in “our” history a time when too much emphasis is placed upon a particular school or preacher rather than upon Jesus and His word.
 2. When we look back upon those whom God selected as his spokesmen we see among them herdsmen, fishermen, carpenters, farmers, tax collectors and tentmakers.
 3. There were some learned and trained men whom God was able to use—I sometimes wonder if it were not in spite of their learning and training instead of because of it.

II. Effected By The Sincere Commitment Of Converts

- A. Notice the affect of the lives of the saints upon the unconverted in Jerusalem (Acts 4:31–33; cf. 2:47).
1. Twice in these early chapters the benevolent spirit of the New Testament church is singled out as being responsible for improving the gospel's opportunities for being heard among the people.
 2. The benevolence which characterized the early church was altogether different and superior to anything that had been previously seen in Jerusalem or the rest of the world.
 3. The Jews were required to lay aside in their gates a tithe for the poor—they were notorious for neglecting this (Mal. 3:8).
 - a) There were provisions in Jewish society for indentured servitude for the payment of debts (Lev. 25:35–55).
 - b) There were laws governing the transfer of property in order to relieve personal poverty (Lev. 25:23–34).
 - c) The poor were given the right to glean the fields and corners (Lev. 19:9–10; Deut. 24:19–22).
 4. However, there were no provisions for a Jew to sell his possessions and make provision for those that were not of his household—yet, this is what Barnabas and others did for their brethren (Acts 4:32–37).
- B. Too much cannot be said about the importance of living Christianity before men as an aid to evangelism.
1. Jesus taught that the cause of the kingdom was advanced by the influence of its citizens (Matt. 5:13–16; Matt. 13:33).
 2. Paul taught that Christians were to be ready to do good works by which others were influenced (Titus 3:8; Eph. 2:10).
 3. Other apostles taught the same truth (1 Pet. 3:1–2; 4:1–4).
 4. The devil knew the power of this influence and sought to undermine it through the sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11).

III. The Result Of Corrective Discipline In The Local Church

- A. The occasion of giving to the relief of the poor saints was an opportunity for Satan to tempt men with greed, pride and dishonesty.
1. The example of the righteous (Acts 4:36–37).
 2. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–2, 8).
 3. The divine punishment of such sin (Acts 5:5, 10).
 4. These events had a positive influence on the converted and the unconverted in Jerusalem (Acts 5:5, 11).
 5. They were taught to fear God.
- B. They saw the effects of God's grace in the lives of Christians (Acts 4:33).
1. They also needed to learn about God's severity (Rom. 2:4–6).
 2. It is not enough to preach grace, mercy and love—we must also preach God's justice, righteousness and hatred of sin.
- C. They learned that Christ expects something of His people.
1. Christ expects that our service come from the heart freely (John 4:24).
 2. Christ expects that we deal with our sins honestly (cf. Acts 8:20–22).
 3. Christ expects that we love each other more than things (Acts 4:32).

- D. They learned that the church must be kept free of the influence of impenitent sinners.
1. God will not fellowship sin (2 John 6–10).
 2. Those who fellowship sin lose fellowship with God (1 Cor. 5:7–11).
 3. Keeping the church pure does not hamper its growth (Acts 5:14).

Conclusion

- I. Conversion of multitudes of men and women is effected by powerful preaching and not by popular preachers.
- II. Conversion of multitudes of men and women is influenced by committed people and not by a colossal building.
- III. Conversion of multitudes of men and women is encouraged by maintaining purity in the fellowship and not by maintaining fellowship and party rooms.

The Conversion Of The Samaritans

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. An overview of the events leading up to Philip's arrival in Samaria.
 - A. Thousands of Jews were converted in the early days of the church:
 1. Three thousand on Pentecost (Acts 2:41).
 2. Five thousand after the healing of the lame man (Acts 4:4).
 3. Multitudes added as opposition begins (Acts 5:14).
 4. "And the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).
 - B. The opposition to the church moves into violent localized persecution:
 1. Peter and John are threatened and beaten (Acts 5:40).
 2. There are some who conspire to put them to death (Acts 5:33).
 3. Stephen becomes the first recorded martyr of the church (Acts 7:58).
 4. Saul becomes the leader of the opposition to the church (Acts 9:1-2).
 5. Great persecution against the church results in the dispersion of saints throughout Palestine and the rest of the world (Acts 8:1-4).
 6. This dispersion brings Philip into the city of Samaria (Acts 8:5).
- II. In Patriarchal times Samaria either as a nation or a city was unknown.
 - A. The region was well known and associated with men of great faith.
 - B. It was in this region that Abraham built his first altar (Gen. 12:6).
 - C. Jacob first settled upon returning from Padan Aram (Gen. 28:1-7; 31:18).
 - D. It was in this region that Jacob dug a well (cf. John 4:5-6).
- III. After the Law of Moses the region of Samaria was important.
 - A. Shechem was a city of refuge (Josh. 20:7).
 - B. Joseph was buried there (Josh. 24:32).
 - C. The Northern region was the center of the early religion of Israel: Shiloh, Gibeah, Gilgal, Bethel, Ramah.
 - D. Shechem was the first capitol of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12:25).
 - E. Later the capitol was moved to nearby Samaria (1 Kings 16:24).
 - F. Samaria became the name for the entire territory of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 13:32; 2 Kings 17:29).
 - G. After the Assyrian conquest and captivity "Samaritan" came to denote a people of mixed origin composed of immigrant peoples brought in to take the place of the expatriated Israelites (2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2).
 - H. Samaritans were not allowed to participate in the rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity (Ezra 4:1-4).
- IV. Great enmity that existed between Jews and Samaritans (John 4:9; 8:48).
 - A. Jesus found many Samaritans to be willing recipients of the Gospel.
 - B. The Samaritan leper was a man of faith (Luke 17:11-19).
 - C. A woman of Samaria opened opportunities in Sychar (John 4:1-42).
 - D. The story of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37).
 - E. Samaria was specified in the great commission (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).
- V. The significance of the conversion of the Samaritans.
 - A. Represented a step toward the universal spread of the gospel (Acts 1:8).
 - B. This is the first external indication that the religion of Christ is not just another sect of Judaism (Acts 24:5; cf. Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20).
 - C. The conversion of the Samaritans is proof that physical persecution cannot and will not eradicate the church of Christ (Acts 4:38-40).

Discussion

I. Look At The Preacher

- A. He was Philip, the evangelist (Acts 8:26).
- B. Philip was one of “the seven” in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1–8).
 - 1. A man of “good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.”
 - 2. The hands of the apostles were laid upon him (Acts 6:6).
 - 3. He by this act was able to perform miracles (Acts 8:13–14).
 - 4. He was instrumental in the growth of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:7).
- C. He met with great success among the Samaritans (Acts 8:4–8).
- D. An angel directed Philip to leave Samaria and go down from Jerusalem toward Gaza to meet the Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8:26).
- E. This is also the same Philip who we find in Caesarea (Acts 21:8–9).

II. Those Philip Preached To

- A. Philip’s entry into Samaria was very successful—he preached to multitudes of both men and women.
- B. Among those to whom Philip preached was Simon, a former magician who had astonished the people with his sorceries (Acts 8:9–11).
 - 1. Sorcery included the use of incantations, amulets, astrology and drugs.
 - 2. Ephesus was steeped in the practice of sorcery (Acts 19:18–19).

III. What Philip Preached (Acts 8:12)

- A. The Kingdom of God is the church of Christ:
 - 1. Jesus came to establish “the kingdom” (Mark 9:1)—which is the church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:1–4).
 - 2. Jesus announced the new birth as essential to being in the kingdom (John 3:1–8; Matt. 16:19)—Peter preached faith and baptism by which one was added to the church (Acts 2:38–41).
 - 3. God translates us into the kingdom (Col. 1:12–13)—and adds us to the church (Acts 2:47).
- B. To preach the name of Christ is to preach doing all in His name (Col. 3:17).
 - 1. It is to preach the authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18–20).
 - 2. It is to preach salvation as He appointed it (Acts 4:12).
 - 3. It is to baptize for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
 - 4. It is to continue in the apostles doctrine, breaking of bread, fellowship and prayers (Acts 2:42).
- C. Often we hear, “Preach the man and not the plan.”
 - 1. Philip “preached Christ” (Acts 8:5).
 - 2. While “preaching Christ” he preached the church and water baptism.
 - 3. Philip evidently knew more about it than many preachers today.

IV. How The Samaritans Were Saved

- A. First they heard and believed the word of God (Acts 8:12).
 - 1. It is implied that they repented from their evil works (Acts 8:9).
 - 2. These penitent believers were baptized (Acts 8:13).
 - 3. This constitutes God's first law of pardon.
- B. Peter and John came to impart the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans.
 - 1. What happened? "Samaria had received the word" (cf. Acts 2:41).
 - 2. However, they had not received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-16).
 - 3. Some of my brethren teach that every baptized believer receives a non-miraculous indwelling as per Acts 2:38 and Acts 5:32.
 - 4. This passage says they had not "received" the Holy Spirit, and in order to receive Him the Apostles were going to lay hands on the believers.
 - 5. The Spirit was given through the laying on of the Apostle's hands.
 - 6. It was the peculiar office of the apostles to bestow miraculous gifts including tongues, and we find no one having them apart from an apostle laying on his hands.

V. God's Second Law Of Pardon

- A. Simon sinned in the matter of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18-19).
 - 1. It was unintentional.
 - 2. It was out of weakness.
 - 3. It was done in ignorance.
 - 4. It was just one sin.
 - 5. He was a babe in Christ.
- B. As a result of his sin Simon was condemned (Acts 8:20-24).
 - 1. His act was "wickedness."
 - 2. He needed "forgiveness."
 - 3. He was in "poisoned by bitterness" and "bound by iniquity".
- C. He was told: "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22).
 - 1. Repentance is a change of heart that brings about a change of life.
 - 2. Peter expected more than remorse.
- D. Simon's prayer was to be a confession of his guilt unto God in this matter and a seeking of the advocacy of Christ (1 John 1:7-2:2).
 - 1. A forthright declaration of one's sin (cf. Matt. 3:6-8).
 - 2. Such confession is found in the publican Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8) and the temple publican (Luke 18:13).

Conclusion

- I. Preaching Christ requires preaching authority, baptism and the church.
- II. Salvation from alien sins is at the point when he penitent believer is baptized for the remission of sins.
- III. The Holy Spirit was received by believers only through the laying on of the apostles hands—there is no direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- IV. Forgiveness of the sins of the believer is conditioned upon repentance and confession in prayer.

What Does The Cross Represent?

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. The New Testament places great emphasis upon the cross of Christ:
 - A. Whenever Paul went into a city, the first thing he did was to preach Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-5).
 - B. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).
 - C. Some Christians in the first century suffered “persecution for the cross of Christ” (Gal. 6:12), while others were freely willing to bear “the offense of the cross” (Gal. 5:11).
 - D. The Law of Moses, the “handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us” was “taken out of the way” and “nailed to the cross” (Col. 2:14).
- II. Paul spoke of some who were “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18).
 - A. Did Paul preach about a piece of lumber? Did he suffer for a timber? No!
 - B. Paul was using a figure of speech known as *synecdoche*.
 - C. Synecdoche is “a figure of speech in which a part stands for a whole or a whole for a part” (Doubleday Dictionary).
 - D. Guests to our home will often visit for a while and then say, “I have to get the *luggage* out of the car.” (suitcases, 3 bags of junk and their trash).
 - E. When asked about lunch someone might say, “I stopped at McDonald’s for a *sandwich*.” (sandwich, fries, Coke and a hot apple pie).
 - F. In the New Testament “the cross” is used to represent many other things.
- III. In this lesson, we want to look at what “the cross of Christ” represents.

Discussion

- I. **God’s Hatred Toward Sin**
 - A. People often ask, “Why did Christ have to die on the cross anyway?”
 - B. Sin had separated man from God (Ezek. 18:20; Isa. 59:1-2).
 - C. The penalty for sin is death (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23).
 1. For sins to be removed, blood had to be shed (Heb. 9:22).
 2. Instead of man dying, God allowed an animal to die (Heb. 10:4).
 3. At the Jewish Passover 250,000 lambs were slain.
 - D. Christ came to this earth as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).
 1. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9).
 2. Christ died for our sins (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

II. God's Love Toward Man

- A. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).
- B. An angel of God said Mary would "bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).
- C. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).
- D. The Father knew what would happen (Acts 2:22–23; Isa. 53:1–12).
- E. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).
- F. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:14–15; Num. 21:9).

III. The End Of The Old Law

- A. The Law of Moses was taken away by the cross (Col. 2:14).
- B. The first covenant was temporary (Heb. 8:7–13; 9:15–17).
- C. Paul tells us that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Gal. 3:13).

IV. The End Of Racial And Ethnic Barriers

- A. Prior to the death of Christ there was a great barrier between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11–17).
- B. God is not a respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11).
- C. God is a respecter of character (Acts 10:34–35).

V. The Drawing Power Of The Gospel

- A. The cross was the means by which Christ would draw men unto Him and the salvation He offers (John 12:27–33).
- B. The story of the cross is the foundation of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1–4).
- C. This gospel is God's power to salvation (Rom. 1:16).
- D. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).
- E. New Testament preachers did not use carnal means to draw men to Christ—the story of the cross was sufficient.
- F. Like fishing, your "bait" determines your "catch."

Conclusion

- I. To those who love the Lord this is the story that will never grow old!
- II. Those who love the Lord, there will never be a cry to "Preach something new" or "Update the message for the times."

How Does God Act?

By Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. God had determined that Sodom, because of its wickedness, should be destroyed (Gen. 18:20–25).
 - A. Abraham pleads for the righteous men of Sodom: “Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”
 - B. Abraham, knowing God’s character, pleads with God until He promises He will spare the city if ten righteous men could be found (Gen. 18:32).
 - C. The statement of the text is made when Abraham begins his pleading with God: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”
- II. How does God act?
 - A. Why did Abraham reach this conclusion? He knew God (Jam. 2:23).
 - B. He knew the character of God and was able to understand God’s works even though they sometimes appeared to be out of harmony with what he thought was right and good.
 - C. Many today do not have such an exalted opinion of God’s character—they seek to blame God with all the misery that exists in the world—they want to charge God with doing evil.
 - D. If men knew better the character of God, as did Abraham, then they would be as confident in God as was Abraham.
 - E. Today we will attempt to better understand the character of the Almighty.
- III. God does what He does because He is Who He is.
 - A. God’s nature determines His actions:
 1. God is Spirit (John 4:24).
 2. God is self-existent (Psa. 90:2).
 3. God is boundless (Jer. 23:24).
 4. God is self-sufficient (Acts 17:25).
 5. God is unchangeable (Mal. 3:6).
 - B. Thus, the question is: How does a self-existent, boundless, self-sufficient, unchangeable Spirit act?
 - C. We would not know the answer to that question were it not for the fact that many of the acts of God are revealed and preserved in the Bible.
 - D. When we read about what God has done and said about what He does, then we are able to know how God acts.

Discussion

- I. **God Is Holy (Lev. 19:2)**
 - A. The word holy fundamentally signifies “separated, and hence, in Scripture in its moral and spiritual significance, separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God, sacred ... It is predicated of God (as the absolutely Holy One, in His purity, majesty and glory) ...” (W.E. Vine).
 - B. God is Holy because He does only what is right:
 1. “Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty that He should commit iniquity” (Job. 34:10).
 2. “The word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and truth” (Psa. 33:4–5).
 3. “... there is no unrighteousness in Him” (Psa. 92:15)
 4. “righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works” (Psa. 145:17)

- C. God is Holy because He hates sin:
 1. “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13).
 2. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:2).
 3. “... God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth” (1 John 1:5–6).
- D. God’s actions are determined or directed by His holiness.
 1. The destruction of the world with a flood (Gen. 6:5–15).
 2. The destruction of Sodom with fire (Gen. 18:20; 2 Pet. 2:6–8).
 3. Christ died on Calvary because God is holy (Matt. 26:28; Rev. 1:5).
- E. God’s holiness necessitates our own holiness (1 Pet. 1:15–16).
- F. Our holiness is acquired by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:5–7).

II. **God Is Love (1 John 4:8)**

- A. Love is that divine principal that determines the operation of all of God’s attributes—His love is:
 1. Willful—
 - a) God’s love is not a response to any goodness in man (Rom. 5:7–8).
 - b) His love of us is the deliberate and free act of His will (Eph. 1:4–5).
 2. Universal—
 - a) It pleases God to love everyone (John 3:16).
 - b) This despite the fact that the world was in sin and unworthy of His love (Rom. 5:7–10).
 3. Infinite—
 - a) There is a height, depth and breadth to the love of God that is boundless (Rom. 8:38–39).
 4. Immutable—
 - a) Unlike men, God will not change His mind about loving us.
 - b) He loved us from before the foundation of the world and will love us throughout eternity (Eph. 1:4–5).
- B. God’s actions are determined or directed by His Love.
 1. God’s choice of Israel demonstrates His Love (Deut. 7:7–8, 13).
 2. God brought them out of Egypt while they knew Him not.
 3. He delivered them from the wilderness (Psa. 136).
 4. He gave them the land of Canaan.
- C. The fact that Christ came into the world to die on Calvary is a demonstration of God’s Love (John 3:16; Rom. 5:7–10).
- D. Our relationship to God is based on love (1 John 4:7–8).
 1. If we love God we will do what He says (John 14:15, 21).
 2. If we love God we will love our enemies (Matt. 5:43–48).
 3. If we love God we will love our brethren (1 John 3:14; 1 Pet. 1:22).
 4. If we love God we will love our neighbor (Matt. 19:19).
 5. If we love God we will love our family (Eph. 5:22–23; Titus 2:4).

III. God Is Truth (Psa. 31:5)

- A. God's truthfulness is manifested by His faithfulness—
 - 1. By "faithfulness" I mean God's fidelity to His own nature and the promises which He makes.
 - 2. The Scriptures refer to God's faithfulness (2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:17–18).
 - 3. God in order to be God cannot have ever broken one promise that He ever made to anyone, man or other being.
- B. Examples of God's faithfulness:
 - 1. The curse upon Adam, Eve and the Serpent (Gen. 2:16,17; 3:16-24).
 - 2. The rainbow covenant (Gen. 9:8–17).
 - 3. Messianic promise to Abraham (Gen. 22:18).
 - 4. Messianic promise to David (2 Sam. 7:13; Psa. 89:28,29; Acts 2:22–32).
- C. God's actions are limited by His truthfulness.
 - 1. God cannot act in anyway that would contradict what is true or cause Him to renege on a promise.
 - 2. This explains why the universe is as it is.
 - 3. Why bad things sometimes happen to good people.
 - 4. This also explains why religious error cannot be tolerated.
 - 5. God will not compromise His revealed truth.
 - 6. There will be a judgment.
 - 7. There is a hell.
 - 8. Sinners will be rejected.

IV. God Is Just (Gen. 18:25)

- A. The "justice of God" has to do with how God deals with two classes of people, the righteous and the wicked.
 - 1. Abraham's question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right," is rooted in his conviction of the just character of God.
 - 2. Abraham knew that it was right for God to punish the wicked and reward the righteous.
 - 3. He knew that God could not and would not do otherwise.
- B. The Bible affirms that it is consistent with God's character to punish the wicked and reward the righteous (2 Thes. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2 Pet. 2:9).
- C. Try to understand God's righteous character.
 - 1. God's holiness demands His hatred of sin.
 - 2. God's truth demands His judgment of sin.
 - 3. God's justice demands His punishment of sin.
 - 4. The justice of God is tempered by the love of God (Rom. 3:23–26).
 - 5. God loves us and it is His purpose that all should be saved (2 Pet. 3:9).
 - 6. But, His love cannot nullify His justice! (Psa. 89:14)
 - 7. Therefore, the plan of salvation was put in place (Rom. 3:23–26).
 - 8. Now, because God is just, He expects us to be just in our dealings with one another (Matt. 7:1–5).

Conclusion

- I. How does God act? In holiness, love, truth and justice.
- II. What does that mean to you?
 - A. God hates your sin, but loves your soul.
 - B. God condemns your sin, but reveals the truth about saving your soul.
 - C. God will judge or justify, which will it be?

The Jesus That Peter Preached

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22–24).
 - A. One of the three annual festivals of the Jews in which “all your men shall appear before the Lord” in Jerusalem (Ex. 34:22–23; 23:14–17).
 - B. Pentecost came fifty days after the Passover (Lev. 23:15–16).
 - C. This particular Pentecost was the first one to follow the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:3–10).
- II. The preacher on this occasion.
 - A. Peter, one of the twelve whom Jesus chose (Matt. 10:2).
 - B. The brother of Andrew, who brought Peter to Christ (John 1:40–41).
 - C. He denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion (Matt. 26:69–75).
- III. The audience.
 - A. “Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5).
 - B. These were honest and sincere men (Acts 2:37).
 - C. These men were sincerely wrong and honestly mistaken (Acts 2:23).
- IV. The subject of this sermon.
 - A. “Jesus of Nazareth...” (Acts 2:22).
 - B. “whom God raised up...” (Acts 2:24).
 - C. “both Lord and Christ...” (Acts 2:36).
 - D. “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).
- V. Let us notice what Peter preached about Jesus...

Discussion

- I. **Jesus Was “A Man” (Acts 2:22, 30)**
 - A. No doctrine more clearly taught in the Bible than the humanity of Jesus.
 1. In the New Testament (Heb. 2:17–18; 4:15; 10:10; 1 John 4:2–3; Gal. 4:4).
 2. In the Old Testament (Isa. 7:14–16; 11:1; Micah 5:2; cf. Acts 2:30).
 - B. The aim of His humanity...
 1. To establish His equality with us (1 Tim. 2:5; Job 9:33; Heb. 2:17).
 2. Make it possible for Him to be tempted (Heb. 2:10, 18; 5:8–9).
 3. Do the Father’s will in dying for sin (Heb. 10:9–10; 9:22; Heb. 2:9–10).
 - C. We need to understand that Jesus was a man as we are, yet without sin.
 1. Jesus did not have “an edge.”
 2. All that Jesus had as a man, I can have (e.g., parents, training).
 3. To argue that Jesus had ability to overcome sin that I do not and cannot have is to negate His death for us.
- II. **Jesus Came To Do The Father’s Will (Acts 2:23)**
 - A. The death of Jesus was not an accident.
 1. Foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18–20; Rev. 13:8; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3).
 2. Jesus’ act was a free will offering (Phil. 2:5–10; Heb. 5:8–9).
 3. Jesus knew He was to die and did not seek to avoid death (Matt. 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19, 28; 26:2, 12, 28, 31, 46, 53).
 4. Jesus preached that His death was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets (Matt. 26:55–56; Luke 24:44–47; cf. Isa. 53).

- B. It was the will of the Father that Jesus' death be for the sins of the whole world (Heb. 10:5–14).
 - 1. God would not be satisfied with animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:5–8).
 - 2. Only the death of the Son of Man would satisfy God (Heb. 10:9–10).
 - 3. Jesus offered that sacrifice which sanctifies us forever (Heb. 10:10–14).

III. Jesus' Miracles Were Done By God Through Him (Acts 2:24, 32)

- A. The Bible says in many places that God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32; Rom. 10:9; Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 37; 17:30, 31; Rom. 4:24; 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20, 21; Col. 2:12).
- B. Does this deny the unity of the Godhead?
 - 1. No more than creation (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16–17; John 1:3).
 - 2. No more than miracles (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20).
 - 3. No more than inspiration (John 15:26).

IV. Jesus Is Now Glorified In Heaven (Acts 2:33)

- A. What was raised from the garden tomb?
 - 1. The body that was buried (John 20:24–29; Luke 24:36–40).
 - 2. The same body was resurrected (1 Cor. 15:21–23, 35–54).
 - 3. This is the basis of our hope (1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18; Rom. 8:29).
- B. The importance of this truth...
 - 1. We will be like Him (1 John 3:2).
 - 2. It is essential to our justification (1 Tim. 2:5).
 - 3. It is an incentive to holy living (“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” 1 John 3:3).
 - 4. It is an inducement to seek grace (Heb. 4:15–16).

V. Jesus Is The Son Of God (Acts 2:34–35)

- A. Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 16:8–11 as proof of the Deity of Christ.
 - 1. Jesus made this argument to the Pharisees (Matt. 22:41–46).
 - 2. Paul makes this argument in Hebrews 1:1–13.
 - 3. Peter's use of “Holy One” (Acts 2:27) is language applicable only to Him who is Divine.
- B. An affirmation of the humanity of Christ is not a denial of the Deity.
 - 1. At baptism we confessed both (Acts 8:37).
 - 2. To not confess His humanity is to be anti-Christ (1 John 4:3).
 - 3. To confess his Deity is to dwell in God (1 John 4:15).
 - 4. To confess his Deity is to have eternal life (1 John 5:10–12, 20).
 - 5. To deny the Deity is to make God a liar (1 John 5:10).

Conclusion

- I. Peter preached Jesus:
 - A. The Man.
 - B. The Crucified.
 - C. The Resurrected.
 - D. The Glorified.
 - E. The Divine.
- II. Have you believed in this Jesus that Peter preached?

Letting Your Light Shine

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13–16).
 - A. This is one of those statements which should cause us to lift up our heads and make us realize once more what a remarkable and glorious thing it is to be a Christian.
 - B. “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8).
 - C. We have not only received light, we have been made light; we have become transmitters of light.
- II. Our light is meant to be seen by men.
 - A. A Christian should be just as much a Christian in his place of employment, the schoolroom or the golf course as he is while sitting in the assembly of the saints.
 - B. Jesus did not say “You are the light of the *church*”; He said, “You are the light of the *world*.”
 - C. We live in the world and our Christianity should be evident to all.
 - D. Our good deeds ought to draw attention, not to ourselves, but to God.
 - E. This saying of Jesus is a total prohibition of what someone has called “theatrical goodness.”
- III. Sometimes, instead of “letting our light shine,” men prefer to “shine their lights” in the face of others—forcing people to look at them.
 - A. Instead of behaving like “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Pet. 2:9), some Christians revel in the idea of standing out in the crowd—they become a living “Church Lady” skit from Saturday Night Live.
 - B. Our Lord warns us to not “sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men” (Matt. 6:2, 16–18; 23:1–5).
 - C. Such activities do not cause men to “glorify your Father in heaven”—they serve only as an embarrassment to our Heavenly Father.

Discussion

- I. **Our Clothing**
 - A. God commands us to wear “modest apparel” (1 Tim. 2:9–10), He did not command us to dress like freaks from the last century.
 - B. The Amish of this country are known by their clothing—it is certainly modest and unassuming, but they go out of their way to stand out in society and draw attention to themselves.
 - C. Lydia was a “seller of purple” (Acts 16:14).
 1. The “purple” was a dye derived from purple shellfish.
 2. Such dye was very expensive, so Lydia was evidently a woman of considerable means.
 - D. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was adorned in “fine linen and purple” (Prov. 31:21–22).

II. Our Language

- A. God condemns “coarse jesting” (Eph. 5:4); He did not ban all humor.
- B. “Coarse jesting” is “vulgar” or “lewd” joking or language.
- C. Christ did use humor in His teaching (Matt. 23:23–26).

III. Our Prayers

- A. God commands us to pray give thanks for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11); He does not expect us to put our “piety” on display.
- B. Some turn their prayers into a display at restaurants (Matt. 6:5–6).
- C. Can you honestly say you are “giving thanks” when you can’t even hear what is being said by the one leading in prayer? (cf. 1 Cor. 14:16).

IV. Our Money

- A. God commands us to be good stewards of our resources (1 Pet. 4:10; cf. Titus 1:7); He did not command that we live like monks.
- B. There is nothing wrong with enjoying life (Eccl. 2:24, 3:9–13, 5:18–20).
- C. “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.” (Eccl. 11:9).

V. Our Music

- A. Jesus warns us to be careful “how we hear” (Luke 8:18); He doesn’t command that we all become tone deaf and burn our radios.
 - 1. Parents often fight a losing battle with their children over music.
 - 2. The volume and beat of the music are inconsequential.
 - 3. The *words* of the songs are where we need to focus—you might not like the beat or the volume, but those are not religious issues!
- B. What we meditate upon is what we become (Psa. 1:1–6).

VI. Our Calendar

- A. God prohibits the church from establishing holy days (Gal. 4:9–11); He doesn’t prohibit you from reading the calendar or observing traditions and customs that are a part of our culture.
- B. Some preachers leave you with the impression that if you smile during the month of December you have somehow sinned—and heaven help you if you say “Happy Holidays.”
 - 1. Christmas is a civil holiday, not a religious holy day.
 - 2. I don’t know of anyone who can get through December without observing some part of Christmas (meals, football, travel, lights).
- C. Individual Christians have the liberty to “observe” special days unto the Lord—but they can’t bind them on others (Rom. 14:4–8).

VII. Our Worship

- A. God commands order in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:40); He doesn't require the worship service to look like a funeral service.
- B. The Israelites were commanded to serve God with "joy and gladness of heart" (Deut. 28:45-48; cf. 1 Kings 8:66; Ezra 6:22).
- C. We are to "delight in the Law of the Lord" (Psa. 1:1-2).
- D. "Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord" (Psa. 27:6).
- E. "And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation" (Psa. 35:9).
- F. "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit" (Psa. 51:12).
- G. We are to receive the Word with joy (Matt. 13:20, 44; Acts 8:8).
- H. We need to be able to say "Amen" (1 Cor. 14:16; Neh. 8:6).
- I. If Christianity makes you miserable, then you do not have Christianity, just a poor substitute for your dried up soul.

Conclusion

- I. God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.
- II. We are living in the midst of people who are in a state of spiritual darkness.
 - A. They will never find light anywhere in the world except from you and me and the gospel we believe and teach—they are watching us.
 - B. Are our lives a silent rebuke to them?
- III. Do we so live so as to lead them to come and ask us, "Why is your life so peaceful? How is your life so balanced?"
 - A. If they ask, we can tell them that wondrous, amazing news that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."
 - B. Christ came to give us life and make us the children of God.
 - C. Christians are the light of the world—let us live and function as the children of light.

The Manifold Wisdom Of God

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. Ephesians 3:1–12 tells of the unfolding of the mystery of God.
 - A. The word “mystery” is the Greek word *musterion* (SR #3466).
 - B. “In the NT it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the Eng. word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a ‘mystery’ implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed. Hence the terms especially associated with the subject are ‘made known,’ ‘manifested,’ ‘revealed,’ ‘preached,’ ‘understand,’ ‘dispensation.’ The definition given above may be best illustrated by the following passage: ‘the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to His saints’ (Col. 1:26, RV).” (W. E. Vine).
- II. The “manifold wisdom of God” is now “made known by the church.”
 - A. This passage does not mean that “the church” is supposed to tell people about the wisdom of God.
 - B. Rather, “the church” itself is evidence of Divine wisdom.
- III. God’s wisdom is revealed in many different ways through the church:

Discussion

- I. **Origin**
 - A. The church came into being at the appointed time.
 1. Prophesied by the prophets of God (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2–4).
 2. “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.’” (Mark 1:14–15).
 - B. “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law...” (Gal. 4:4).
 1. Universal Empire.
 2. Universal Roadways.
 3. Universal Language.
 4. Universal Peace.
 5. The Synagogues.

II. Organization

- A. Local, independent, autonomous congregations.
 - 1. Paul and Barnabas went to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch and “appointed elders in every church” (Acts 14:23).
 - 2. Elders are to feed the flock which is “among” them (Acts 20:28).
 - 3. Instructions given to elders (1 Pet. 5:1–4).
- B. The seven churches of Asia are represented as candlesticks (Rev. 1:12, 20).
 - 1. “Impelled by natural instinct John turned to see the voice (the speaker) that uttered the loud, clear sound. As he turned, a glorious vision burst upon his sight—seven golden candlesticks, or lampstands. Gold was the metal used in the vessels of divine service. The tabernacle in the wilderness had been lighted by a single stand of seven lamps located on the south side of the holy place. Solomon’s temple multiplied this number by ten, five on one side and five on the other before the Holy of Holies. In John’s vision there are seven stands; each light is an individual pedestal. Whereas there was formerly one lampstand with seven lamps standing on a common base confined to one location, there are now seven separate stands suggesting the independence of each stand or church, separated by distance but bound together by a common faith and Head. The unity of the church is ‘in Him’ who is in the midst of the congregation and who holds the seven stars in His right hand (v. 16). The purpose of the lampstand is to support and provide light; if it gives no light its purpose disappears. In the same way, when a congregation fails in its mission of providing spiritual light, it will be removed.” (Homer Hailey, *Revelation, An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 109).
 - 2. “I know your works” (Rev. 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).
- C. God designed the church to be perfect and complete, but there have been many violations of church autonomy:
 - 1. In evangelism: American Christian Missionary Society (1849).
 - 2. In edification: colleges begging for money from the treasury.
 - 3. In benevolence: plans unheard of in NT (cf. Acts 11:27–30).

III. Worship

- A. Think of how simple New Testament worship really was!
- B. Simple items in which all could participate (Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19; Acts 20:7).
- C. Instrumental music bars others from participating.
- D. Every item of worship fills our need for spiritual growth.
 - 1. Singing: teach and admonish others and ourselves (Col. 3:16).
 - 2. Preaching: edification and evangelism (1 Tim. 4:13).
 - 3. Lord’s Supper: proclaiming the Lord’s death (1 Cor. 11:26).
 - 4. Prayer: our dependence on God (Matt. 6:8).
 - 5. Giving: abound in thanksgiving (2 Cor. 8:1–5).

IV. Basis Of Unity

- A. The platform of unity is not found in a creed book (Eph. 4:1–6).
- B. All word-pictures of the church present unity: family, kingdom, body, bride, vineyard, fold, etc.
- C. How is this unity maintained? “In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things charity.”
- D. “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

V. Plan of Salvation

- A. One plan for all mankind, rich or poor, black or white, educated or illiterate, Jew or Gentile (Eph. 2:11–18).
- B. Those who had crucified the Messiah (Acts 2:38–39).
- C. The Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8:27–39).
- D. The poor Philippian jailer (Acts 16:25–34).

Conclusion

- I. The wisdom of God has been made know through the church.
- II. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. 1:18).

No Substitutes Accepted

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. By definition, to substitute means “to put under, put or use in the place of, or instead of; to take the place of; a person or thing put in the place of another; to replace; take the place of something or someone.”
- II. What is wrong with substitution?
 - A. In some areas substitutes are perfectly in order, well accepted, useful, beneficial and right (after-market auto bumper).
 - B. But in many areas no substitute is acceptable or should be accepted because they are not useful, beneficial or right.
 - C. It is to these we shall direct our attention in this study (1 Sam. 15:22–23).
- III. Let the following serve to illustrate:
 - A. “They were a loving couple, married for only a few years. She was a Christian; he was not. Nothing would have pleased her more than for him to attend church services with her, and especially for him to become a Christian. They were on a tight budget, and she paid the bills. They had to watch the money. He was easy-going, friendly, likable, but he loved to ‘shoot pool,’ and would occasionally gamble some of their limited income on his games-and lose track of time. One day, after work, he made one of his stops at the pool hall. When he arrived home, a few hours later, her first words were, ‘Why are you so late? Where have you been?’ He was grinning like a school-boy and holding a ‘surprise’ for her behind his back. He promptly produced it; he knew it was something she had been wanting. But more than that, what she really wanted was for him to give up the pool hall and the gambling. Yet, he thought his surprise gift would make up for his failure to please her. What he brought home was only a substitute, a poor, miserable, unacceptable substitute!”
 - B. We also find the same behavior manifested in every realm of life wherein such behavior is only a poor, miserable, unacceptable substitute! A complete failure!

Discussion

- I. **Biblical Examples Of Men Trying Unsuccessfully To Offer God Substitutes**
 - A. The example of Cain (Gen. 4:1–8).
 1. Cain sought to substitute and became angry toward God and resentful toward his innocent brother when God would not accept his substitute.
 2. By implication (Heb. 11:4) his sacrifice was not by faith (cf. Rom. 10:17).
 3. His anger and resentment led him to murder his own brother, even after God had warned him (Gen. 4:7).
 4. His attempt to substitute only made bad matters worse.
 5. The written record of Cain stands as an ever-present reminder that God accepts no human substitutes!

- B. The example of Sarai and Abram (Gen. 16:1–16; 21:1–12).
 1. Sarai proposed a substitute for God’s promise and plan, and Abram went along with it.
 2. But it only brought anguish and grief to all the parties concerned.
 3. Abraham was to have a son by Sarah, not by Sarah’s handmaid, Hagar.
 4. The son of promise was to be by one specific woman, no other would be accepted—God would accept no substitute.
- C. The example of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1–2).
 1. These two sons of Aaron, the highpriest, as priests, were qualified and authorized to burn incense, but they substituted “profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them.”
 2. The fire God had authorized (Lev. 6:13) was the only authorized, acceptable fire.
 3. God refused to accept their substitute and Aaron was deprived of two of his four sons who were burned to death and their bodies disposed of without funeral or mourning (Lev. 10:3–7).
- D. The example of King Saul (1 Sam. 15:1–23).
 1. Note what God told Saul to do and why (1 Sam. 15:1–3).
 2. Note what Saul did (1 Sam. 15:7–9).
 3. Note God’s refusal to accept Saul’s substitute (1 Sam. 15:10–23).
 4. King Saul attempted to substitute splendid sacrifices to God for submissive obedience to God and was told (1 Sam. 15:22–23).
 5. Note the price Saul paid for his actions (1 Sam. 15:24–35; 16:1).
 6. God will not accept sacrifices or offerings, no matter how abundant or how costly, as a substitute for repentance.
 - a) “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord but the prayer of the upright is His delight” (Prov. 15:8).
 - b) David’s psalm after his sin with Bathsheba (Psa. 51:1–4).
 - c) Don’t forget what repentance is (Matt. 21:28–30; 2 Cor. 7:10–11).
- E. The example of the priests of Israel (Mal. 1:6–14).
 1. The priests of Israel tried to substitute blind, sick and injured animals for unblemished ones, and thus they insulted their God.
 2. The law specified the type of animals to be offered as sacrifice and their unlawful substitute was unacceptable (Lev. 22:17–25).
- F. Jesus warned us of vain worship (Matt. 15:7–9).
 1. The scribes and Pharisees thought they could substitute lip service, purely external service, for service that came from the heart.
 2. Jesus pronounced their worship vain as he applied an Isaiah passage to them (cf. John 4:24).
- G. A final example is that of the Galatians (Gal. 3:1; 1:6–9).
 1. The foolish Galatian saints were bewitched into accepting another gospel for the genuine and all-sufficient gospel Paul preached.
 2. But the Holy Spirit through Paul branded it for what it was: a perverted gospel, a powerless gospel, a condemning gospel.
 3. They were willing to accept a substitute, but God would not!!

II. Notice Some Present Day Examples Where Men Are Still Trying Human Substitutes But Without God's Acceptance

- A. Their human creeds for the Scriptures (2 John 9–11).
- B. Their doctrines for God's (Matt. 15:9; 2 Tim. 4:1–4).
- C. Their churches for the Lord's church (Matt. 16:18).
- D. Their ways for God's way (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12).
- E. Their many ways to heaven for God's one way (Matt. 7:13–14; John 14:6).
- F. Infant baptism for the baptism of penitent, confessing believers, (Mark 16:15–16; Rom. 10:9–10; Acts 8:35–39).
- G. Sprinkling or pouring for immersion (Rom. 6:3–4; Col. 2:12; Acts 8:36–39).
- H. Faith only for obedient faith (Matt. 7:21–23; Heb. 5:8–9).
- I. Instrumental music for singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- J. Elaborate ritual for simple New Testament worship (John 4:24).
- K. Titled and garbed clergy for preachers (Matt. 23:5–12; 2 Tim. 4:5).
- L. Many religious mediators for God's one mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).
- M. Mere physical presence for dedicated, committed presentation of their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Rom. 12:1–2).

Conclusion

- I. On and on it goes, but remember, God will not accept our substitutes.
- II. There is no substitute for obedience!

Sacred Vows

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. I recently learned that a couple I thought I knew very well were contemplating getting a divorce and ending their marriage of twelve years.
 - A. Out of all the married couples I know, I would have thought that this couple would have been the least likely to have marital problems.
 - B. They are both Christians, they have two wonderful children and both have been very active in the work of the church for many years.
 - C. Yet, somehow, they have grown apart and it appears that just about every ounce of love and respect they once had for each other has now dissipated.
- II. I remember quite well that Saturday twelve years ago when they got married.
 - A. We were on a college campus with 200 of their closest friends.
 - B. The groom stood before me in his black tuxedo along with five of his friends who served as groomsmen—one of which had the special honor of being the “best man.”
 - C. I watched him nervously fidget with his tie as the music played and as he waited for the love of his life to make her appearance and be escorted down the aisle by her father.
 - D. When the music changed to the wedding processional, the entire audience stood as a beautiful young woman walk down the aisle.
- III. I reminded the audience that we were in the presence of God to witness the exchanging of vows that would bind this couple together in marriage—and that when they left the building that day, they would leave as husband and wife.
 - A. I reminded them that of the three institutions ordained of God (the home, church and the state), that the home is the oldest.
 - B. Since it had its origin with God, the marital relationship is honorable.
 - C. Moses tells the story in Genesis 2 and 3.
 - D. Adam named the animals and saw that he was alone.
 1. Eve came from his rib, not his head or his foot.
 2. I reminded them that the institution of marriage is not a casual one—God ordained marriage, therefore it is good.
 3. So holy is that relationship that Paul could only liken it to the relationship of Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22–31).
- IV. On one occasion the Pharisees came to Christ and questioned Him about the permanency of marriage (Matt. 19:1–9).
 - A. They wanted to know if marriage was a precarious relationship (one that could be subject to dissolution by the whim of either party).
 - B. Or, was it a permanent relationship (bound for life).
 - C. “Is it lawful to put away his wife for any cause?”
 1. Jesus explained that God ordained the relationship, “For this cause...”
 2. “What God has joined together...” Therefore it is permanent!
 - D. “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”
 1. Jesus explained that Moses had allowed it because of the hardness of the human heart, but that “from the beginning it was not so.”
 2. One exception: sexual unfaithfulness by either party.

- V. I reminded this young couple that when trouble comes, as it often does, divorce was not an option for either one of them.
- A. I told them that one day their friends might encourage them to get a divorce.
 - B. Their friends might forget the vows they were taking, but God would not!
 - C. Marriage vows should be sacred to us, for they are sacred to God.
 - D. And I plainly asked if they both understood, and I waited for an answer.
- VI. I told them that according to the laws of the state of Indiana, several things were necessary to have a marriage: license, vows, witnesses and records—but marriage is more than a piece of paper or a ring of gold.
- A. Marriage involves a new relationship in which a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife.
 - B. The old parental ties, though they remain in affection, give way in strength to the union of flesh which involves the deepest moral and spiritual obligations.
- VII. I told them both that they would have many new responsibilities:
- A. He would be the head of a new family unit: the provider and protector.
 - B. She would be in submission to her husband, and serve as his companion and comforter (Eccl. 4:9–11).
- VIII. I read the “vows of intent” and they both agreed:
- A. “John, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife? Will you love, honor, cherish and keep her as long as you both shall live?”
 - B. “Mary, will you take this man to be your wedded husband? Will you love, honor and obey him as long as you live?”
- IX. As they exchanged wedding rings, they repeated their respective vows:
- A. “I, John take thee Mary to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till in death we part, and with this ring I thee wed, and with my body I thee honor, and pledge my faithfulness.”
 - B. After the giving and exchanging of rings and of vows, I pronounced them to be husband and wife—from that day forward they were to be one in mind, one in spirit, and by the grace of God, one in eternal destiny.
 - C. And as a closing admonition, I repeated the words of our Lord, “What God has joined together, let not man put assunder.”
- X. After first learning of their trouble it was hard for me to think of anything else for several weeks.
- A. And I have wondered, if people like this who have so much going for them are having trouble in their marriage, what about the rest of society?
 - B. I begged for the opportunity to sit down in person with these two friends of mine—I want to remind them of the love they once had for each other and of the sacred vows they took in the presence of God.
- XI. It might very well be that in the audience today there is some couple who thinks they are at the end of their ropes and are ready to give up.
- A. If such is the case, I would beg of you to remember your wedding vows.
 - B. There are young people here today who will probably get married within the next few years, even if they don’t know what they are in for.
 - C. A vow is giving your word—your sacred honor.

Discussion

I. “To Be My Wedded Spouse”

- A. This is a recognition of the fact that you are not going to be just living together, but that you are entering into a contract.
- B. Those in the days of Malachi forgot about their covenant (Mal. 2:14).
- C. The immoral woman as one “who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God” (Prov. 2:17).

II. “To Have And To Hold From This Day Forward”

- A. This part of the vow speaks of companionship.
- B. Sometimes young people get married and want to keep on acting like they are single so they can hang out with their friends.
 - 1. When you are married, your closest companion is to be your spouse.
 - 2. Many young people do not know this, for they did not see it the homes they grew up in—their parents were strangers to each other.
- C. One of the greatest things you can do for your children is to make sure they know that their parents are still madly in love with each other.
 - 1. They need to see that daddy came home from work and daddy pinched mommy and mommy liked it!
 - 2. They need to see their parents hold hands in the mall and give tokens of affections to one another (card, flowers, or sneak up for a hug).
 - 3. It affirms their marriage is stable.

III. “For Richer Or Poorer”

- A. You are vowing to love and honor each other regardless of whether you live in a million dollar mansion or a rented flat.
- B. Financial problems are the leading cause of divorce in this country—a lot of the problems start before they wedding day.
- C. A lot of young girls who think they are grown women marry some young man who doesn’t have a great future—then they expect him to furnish a home like their parents had—even though it took their parents 25 years of hard work to acquire what they have.
- D. Many problems in marriage can be seen in advance by outsiders: the bait determines the catch.
 - 1. The young man who thinks he has to have the hottest, fastest car in order to attract a young woman will end up with someone who is a lot more interested in possessions than in him.
 - 2. Sometimes young women think they have to dress like the whore of Babylon in order to attract a man—they shouldn’t be surprised if they end up marrying a whoremonger.

IV. “In Sickness And In Health”

- A. I don’t care how healthy you are now, but if you don’t die in an auto accident you are probably going to get sick before you die.
- B. Men have a 50/50 chance of long term disability before reaching 50.
- C. And even if you don’t get really sick, you are going to get old!

V. “To Love And To Cherish”

- A. Think back of when you were dating—always looked your best, men sent flowers, opened doors, spoke tender words of affection—cherished.
- B. Love is seeking the highest good for your spouse.

VI. “Till In Death We Part”

- A. Marriage is a life-long contract (Matt. 19:9; Rom. 7:1–4).
- B. Divorces are too easy to get in this country.

VII. “And With This Ring I Thee Wed”

- A. The ring is a symbol of eternity, symbolizing the lifelong commitment.
- B. The ring is a token to remind the individual that they are married, and to signal other folks to stay clear!
- C. Let it serve as a reminder of the covenant you made.

VIII. “And With My Body I Thee Honor”

- A. A very common vow used in Jewish weddings.
- B. We are to honor our spouse with our body (Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:3–5).
 - 1. Abstinence was only to be “for a short time” and accompanied with fasting and prayer.
 - 2. It is sinful to use sexual relations as a bartering chip (Eph. 5:26).
- C. We are to rejoice in our spouse (Prov. 5:15–20). Sex education.

IX. “And Pledge My Faithfulness”

- A. The marriage vow is so sacred that God has only allowed one reason for a man to leave his spouse and marry another: sexual immorality (Matt. 19:9).
- B. Three greatest lies ever told:
 - 1. The check is in the mail.
 - 2. I’m from the government and I’m here to help you.
 - 3. My wife doesn’t understand me.
- C. Wisdom will keep one from this sin (Prov. 6:24–35).

Conclusion

- I. If you have taken wedding vows, continue to take them seriously.
- II. If you are having problems in your marriage don’t think that they will get better by walking away from the Lord.
- III. Marriage is not the only life-altering vows you can make—you can become a Christian and vow to spend your life in service to your King.

Seeking The Lost

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. The Lord gave the great commission to the apostles (Matt. 28:18–20).
 - A. Making “disciples of all the nations” would involve people of different races, customs and languages—sometimes with government interference.
 - B. Some unlikely prospects for the gospel have proven to be very fruitful.
 - C. They are fruitful because of conversion (Matt. 18:3; Acts 3:19).
- II. Look at several first century conversions:
 - A. Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:3; 9:1, 10–15, 20–21, 26–30).
 - B. Cornelius (Acts 10:1–6).
 - C. The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26–40).
 - D. Matthew the Tax Collector (Luke 5:27–32).
 - E. The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:25–34).
 - F. These men might not have been considered “good prospects.”
- III. What can we learn?

Discussion

- I. **We Must Not Prejudge The Hearts Of Men**
 - A. Who would have preached to Paul? Would we let prejudice interfere?
 - B. Our duty is to preach, God will take care of results (Isa. 55:6–11; 1 Cor. 3:6).
 - 1. The parable of the sower (Luke 8:4–8, 11–15).
 - 2. We are to be sowers, not soil inspectors.
 - C. Some people will love the gospel, others will hate it (2 Cor. 2:14–16).
- II. **Christ Can Change The Hearts Of Men**
 - A. We become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:5–6, 15–18).
 - B. “Lord, now indeed I find, Thy power and Thine alone, Can change the lepers spots, and melt the heart of stone” (Song, Jesus Paid It All).
 - C. Must put on the “new man” (Eph. 4:17–24).
 - D. Those at Corinth changed their lives (1 Cor. 6:9–11).
 - E. The conversions at Ephesus (Acts 19:18–20).
 - F. Saints in Caesar’s household (Phil. 4:22).
- III. **The Gospel Has Not Lost Its Power In The Lives Of Men**
 - A. It is still alive (Heb. 4:12).
 - B. It is still God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16).
 - C. It will be preached till the end of the world (Matt. 28:18–20).
 - D. Preach what people need, not what they want (1 Cor. 1:18–22).

Conclusion

- A. It will be the standard of judgment in the final day (John 12:48).
- B. Have you allowed the gospel of Christ to change your life?

The Conversion of Sergius Paulus

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. Historical background of the conversion of Sergius Paulus.
 - A. The church is established in Antioch of Syria by certain brethren from Cyrene and Cyprus (Acts 11:19–21).
 - B. Barnabas and Saul go to Antioch to build up the church (Acts 11:22–26).
 - C. The church at Antioch makes a contribution for the saints in Judea to help during an approaching famine—Barnabas and Saul deliver the contribution to the churches throughout Judea (Acts 11:27–30).
 - D. Thus, begins the work of cementing the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians through their common work in the church of Christ.
 - E. A persecution arises against the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:1–23).
 - F. The work of the Lord continues even though James is executed and Peter imprisoned (Acts 12:24).
 - G. Upon returning from their trip through Judea, Barnabas and Saul are set apart by the Holy Spirit to undertake the first preaching trip to the Gentiles which has its beginning in Cyprus.
- II. The significance of the conversion of Sergius Paulus.
 - A. It is not that he is the first convert among the Gentiles or even among the Cypriots because he was not (Acts 11:20; 4:36).
 - B. It is not that he was a high ranking official—his conversion is of no more or less importance because of his station (Gal. 3:27–28; Matt. 16:26).
 - C. Rather, his conversion is significant in what it reveals about the character of those who will be converted and the obstacles that they will face in making a decision for Christ.

Discussion

- I. **Who Was Sergius Paulus?**
 - A. He was a Roman proconsul (Acts 13:7).
 1. There were two types of government in the Roman Empire in use within the provinces.
 2. If there was a standing Roman army in the province to keep law and order, there was a military governor who answered to the Emperor.
 3. However, if there was no army, then the province was governed by a proconsul that answered to the Roman Senate.
 4. The isle of Cyprus swung back and forth between government by proconsul and government by a governor.
 - B. “An intelligent man...” (“prudent” KJV, Acts 13:7).
 1. The word used here (Gr. *sunetos*) may be understood as “intelligent, sagacious, understanding” (W.E. Vine).
 - a) Respecting the Gospel, being “prudent” may be viewed as a hindrance to obedience (Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 1:19).
 - b) When used in the sense of worldly wisdom, philosophy and education, such a person could have more confidence in these things than in the Gospel message.
 - c) Such does not fit our picture of Sergius Paulus.

2. The negative form of the word is used to describe those without any knowledge at all of God and His Word (Rom. 1:31 “undiscerning”).
 - a) Thus, a man of understanding would be one with a knowledge of God and His Word.
 - b) This idea would properly represent Sergius Paulus in some degree considering his association with Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6).
 3. The word is also used by Jesus to describe those men whose character is such that they are able to receive the Gospel and be saved (Mark 7:18).
 - a) These are men who are free from prejudice, whose minds and hearts are receptive to truth wherever it may be found and from whomever it may come (cf. John 1:47–48).
 - b) A man who is reasonable and judicious in his approach to things, willing to hear all the facts and consider all the evidence before rendering a judgment (John 7:51; Acts 17:11, 32).
- C. “Sought to hear the word of God...” (Acts 13:7).
1. The word “hear” means he wanted to hear what the apostles had to say (cf. Matt. 6:33).
 2. They did not come looking for him; he went looking for them—he was ready to hear the Word of the Lord.
 3. He was not just curious, like the Athenians (Acts 17:21).
 4. He was not being ulterior, like Felix (Acts 24:26).
 5. He was not being expedient, like Festus (Acts 25:26–27).
 6. He was a ready and willing hearer like Cornelius (Acts 10:33).
 7. He was ready and willing to obey (Jam. 1:21–25).

II. **Sergius Paulus Had To Distinguish Between Truth and Error**

- A. “But Elymas the sorcerer... withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith” (Acts 13:8).
1. A Jewish magician, or soothsayer (cf. Exo. 22:18; Acts 8:9; 19:13–16)
 2. Elymas “withstood them” (Acts 13:8).
 - a) He may have used magic (2 Tim. 3:8, cf. Exo. 7:10, 22; 8:7, 18).
 - b) He may have misrepresented the apostles (Acts 17:7).
 - c) I am certain that he did whatever he thought was necessary—just as false teachers do today (petitions, crank calls).
- B. Rarely is truth preached without opposition.
1. It is a spiritual reality that the Devil is always seeking to confuse men with respect to their salvation.
 - a) Satan does not care if you are religious, as long as you are religiously wrong (Matt. 15:9).
 - b) Satan does not care if you are evangelistic, as long as you are proselytizing men to a wicked cause (Matt. 23:15).
 2. Satan accomplishes his mission of propaganda and confusion through his army of false teachers (2 Cor. 11:13–15; 2 Pet. 2:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:13).
 3. Sergius Paulus, as noble as he was, was not so noble that Satan would not seek to deceive him (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3).

- C. How was this opposition met? How should such opposition be met today?
 - 1. Look at the example that is left for us.
 - a) Elymas got the attention of a Gospel preacher (Acts 13:9).
 - b) He was thoroughly denounced (Acts 13:10).
 - c) The opposition was identified and error was rebuked (Acts 13:11).
 - 2. Preachers today should do exactly the same.
 - a) Error should not be allowed to oppose the truth without drawing the immediate attention of a Gospel preacher—those who teach error should be identified for exactly what they are.
 - b) Once identified a Gospel preacher should feel the obligation to prove that the charge of error and misrepresentation is true from the confirmed word of God.
- D. Sergius Paulus could not resist the power of the truth when displayed against the weaknesses of error (Acts 13:12).
 - 1. He was not just terrified and intimidated (cf. to Pharaoh and Moses).
 - 2. Authority was in the Word, not the miracle (Heb. 2:3–4; Mk. 16:19–20).
 - 3. Sergius Paulus submitted to the authority (Acts 13:12).
 - 4. Men today will submit to the same authority when handled aright.

III. **Sergius Paulus “Believed” Unto the Saving of His Soul**

- A. Is this a case of a man being saved at the point of faith before and without any works of obedience?
 - 1. The *assumption*: “Whatever the passage does not specifically mention in conjunction with salvation is not essential to salvation.”
 - 2. The passage does not specifically mention baptism in conjunction with salvation.
 - 3. Therefore, baptism is not essential to salvation.
- B. However, the passage also does not specifically mention:
 - 1. Repentance which is essential to salvation (Luke 13:3–5; Acts 11:18).
 - 2. Confession which is essential to salvation (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9–10).
 - 3. The “sinner’s prayer” which is mentioned nowhere in Scripture.
 - 4. The Scriptures teach that the baptized believer is the saved believer (Acts 2:38–41; 8:12; 8:37–39; 9:18; 10:48; 16:30–34).
- C. Based upon the evidence there can be no doubt that that Sergius Paulus was a baptized believer.

Conclusion

- I. From Sergius Paulus we learn:
 - A. Men of honest and noble character will hear the Gospel unto salvation.
 - B. Satan seeks to hinder these through false prophets and false teachers.
 - C. To be a saved believer one must be a penitent, confessing baptized believer.
- II. Will you follow the example of Sergius Paulus?

Sowing The Seeds Of Unbelief And Reaping Infidelity

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. Sometimes the question is asked, “Why are so many of our young people falling away or simply not being converted?”
 - A. The complete answer is probably unknown.
 - B. However, infidelity “in full bloom” did not just happen.
 - C. Somewhere in the child’s development the seeds were sown in his heart and have now come to fruition.
- II. There are many antagonistic, anti-theistic forces at work in the world which influence our children:
 - A. Modernists say, “God has no power!” They deny the miracles.
 - B. Evolutionists say, “There is no God!” They deny His image is in us.
 - C. Humanists say, “There are no absolute values!” They deny there is right and wrong.
- III. Faith does not just happen—it is sown in the heart (Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:1–4; 1 Cor. 7:16).
- IV. Think of what is said when a child “goes bad”?
 - A. “Well, Johnny has been in Bible class since he was born.”
 - B. “His entire family have been members of the church for generations.”
 - C. “He is such a good boy—he has never gotten in any kind of trouble.”
 - D. Do church attendance, religious heritage, and morals guarantee the development of faith in the heart?
- V. There are forces from without seeking to destroy the faith of some.
 - A. But there are equally dangerous and more effective forces at work within churches that sow the seeds of unbelief only to reap infidelity.
 - B. It is quite possible for believers to be guilty to this sin (Titus 1:16).
 - C. Some are guilty without realizing it (Rom. 2:24; 2 Sam. 12:1–4, 14).
 - D. This lesson study shall identify the means of sowing the seed of unbelief.

Discussion

- I. **Squabbling, Fussing, Disunited Churches**
 - A. Jesus taught and prayed that believers all be one (John 17:20–21).
 1. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa. 133:1).
 2. I have devoted entire lesson studies to these passages and so have others repeatedly.
 3. How many times have churches dismissed after one of these sermons only to reconvene later for a business meeting to fuss and squabble?
 - B. If written in book form, much of the chaos and confusion would be a classic textbook, *How to Promote Unbelief*.
 - C. Children and new converts hear brethren professing the words of the Psalmist; yet, see them mad enough to chew nails—how can they believe without fear and doubt?

II. Brethren Who Desire To Throw Off Restraint

- A. The Bible teaches we will be tempted (1 Cor. 10:12; Jas. 1:2, 12; 2 Pet. 2:9).
- B. Some being tempted throw off restraint (1 John 3:9; Lk. 8:13; 1 Thes. 5:19).
- C. Rather than face their filthy sins and repent, they announce that they are no longer certain the Bible is right on many points, they disbelieve!
- D. In so doing they harden their own hearts and sow doubt and unbelief in the hearts of others (Heb. 3:7–19).
- E. The church allows such “seeds” to germinate when they fail in noting or marking such individuals (2 Thes. 3:1–4; Rom. 16:17).

III. Hypocrisy And Deceit Among Brethren

- A. There is nothing faith-building about blessing God on Sunday and denying Him on Monday (James 3:10).
- B. How can we speak ill of our fellow men and surmise evil of them and chastise our children for evil speaking (Eph. 6:4)?
- C. No wonder children question the nature of God and His power.

IV. Permissive Parents Who Will Not Discipline Their Children

- A. Children learn to respect God’s commands by learning to respect their parents (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1–2)
- B. Children are sometimes raised on a steady diet of “If you do that again I’ll spank you,” with a hand never raised to punish (Eccl. 8:11; Prov. 13:24).
- C. There are many things bound up in the heart of a child because of a lack of discipline (Prov. 22:15; 23:13–14).

V. Brethren Whose Seeking Materialistic Pleasures

- A. Parents who claw, grab, and scrape to make it in the material world should not be surprised when their children are confused (Matt. 6:33).
- B. When there is money and time for new cars, other possessions and entertainment but never enough for giving and spiritual edification something is wrong! (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 9:6–8).
- C. Children know what is of value and what is not—it is not difficult for them to ascertain what is first in the hearts of their parents.

VI. Formalism, Traditionalism And Apathy In Worship

- A. Too many brethren destroy the faith of their children by their attitude toward the worship (Psa. 122:1; John 4:24).
- B. Parents exhaust themselves and allow their children to do the same on the eve of the Lord’s day.
- C. They are meticulous to attend worship periods but they participate like heartless robots.
- D. However, their enthusiasm for their favorite ball club is not dampened—is it any wonder young people are not being converted?

VII. Inadequately Coping With Hardships

- A. No one's life is free of these hardships.
- B. However, sometimes individuals turn to the wrong source for help (e.g., alcohol, another woman, crime, their job, drugs, etc.).
- C. How shall you instill faith in your children when you do not have it yourself (Psa. 46:1; 40:1; 41:1; 48:1; 55:1-3).
- D. In times of trouble, the seeds of unbelief are sown when we forsake the very one who can help.

Conclusion

- I. Our enemies war against us and sow the seeds of unbelief.
- II. We are quite capable of sowing our own "seeds" and sometimes do.
- III. Certainly we should expect to reap what we sow (Gal. 6:8).

“Lord, Teach Us To Pray”

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1–13).
 - A. Few subjects have greater prominence in the Bible than prayer.
 - 1. There is a tendency in our day to minimize prayer.
 - 2. John Welch asked before debate, “How much have you been praying?”
 - B. Two essential elements in a Christian’s character:
 - 1. Obligation: binds us to discharge our duties; can create self-satisfaction.
 - 2. Dependence: like a little child dependent on parents.
- II. Let us notice the model prayer given.

Discussion

I. The Model Prayer (Luke 11:2–4)

- A. *Reverence*: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”
 - 1. “Hallowed” mean “sanctified” or “set-apart.”
 - 2. Recognition of His rule and authority (Acts 17:24–26; James 1:17).
 - 3. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7).
 - 4. “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace...” (Heb. 4:16).
- B. *Desire for God’s will to be done*: “Your Kingdom come...”
 - 1. God’s Kingdom had been promised (Dan. 2:44; Mark 1:15; Mark 9:1).
 - 2. The Kingdom, God’s rule among men, did come (Col. 1:13).
 - 3. My prayer is that God’s will might be done by me! Complete surrender.
- C. *Dependence*: “Give us this day our daily bread.”
 - 1. Bread comes with or without prayer—disciples recognize the source.
 - 2. We are to be content with what God provides (Matt. 6:19–21).
 - 3. Paul had learned “in whatever state I am, to be content” (Phil. 4:11).
- D. *Forgiveness*: “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive everyone who is indebted...”
 - 1. Shown in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt 18:21–35).
 - 2. Forgiveness is based on true repentance (Luke 17:3–4).
- E. *Guidance*: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”
 - 1. God does not tempt us (James 1:13), but He can permit us to be led into temptation, or He can shield us from it.
 - 2. “...the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment” (2 Peter 2:9).
 - 3. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - 4. Trials should not be looked at as being all bad (Jas. 1:12).
- F. *Praise*: “For Yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” (From Matthew’s account in Matt. 6:13).
 - 1. This was not a request, nor thanksgiving, nor informing God of needs.
 - 2. It is an affirmation of the exalted position He holds.
 - 3. Prayer of David: “Therefore You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (2 Sam. 7:22).

II. Persistence In Prayer

- A. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5:17).
- B. Parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1–8).
 - 1. The poor widow was weak, and had no bribe to offer.
 - 2. You are not going to “wear God down” by constant asking.
- C. Parable of the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5–8).
 - 1. KJV uses the word “importunity.”
 - 2. NKJV uses the word “persistence.”

III. What Should I Pray For?

- A. Civil government (1 Tim. 2:1–2).
- B. My enemies (Matt. 5:44).
- C. Preachers of the word (Eph. 6:18–19).
- D. Wisdom (James 1:5).
- E. The furtherance of the gospel (2 Thes. 3:1–2).

IV. Things To Avoid In Prayer

- A. Putting on a show (Matt. 6:5–8).
- B. Bargaining with God (Luke 18:9–14).
- C. Preaching through prayer—it is not the time to preach a sermon!
 - 1. This has nothing to do with the length of a prayer.
 - 2. What is the purpose of quoting Scripture to God?

Conclusion

- I. Prayer is not a substitute for obedience (Acts 22:16).
- II. Think of the song, *Did You Think To Pray?*
 - “Ere you left your room this morning, Did you think to pray?
 - “In the name of Christ our Savior, Did you sue for loving favor as a shield today?
 - “O how praying rests the weary! Prayer will change the night to day;
 - “So when life seems dark and dreary, Don’t forget to pray.”

When I Am Tempted To Sin

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. It is the common lot of mankind to be tempted to sin.
 - A. Eve was tempted by Satan's appeal to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16).
 - B. "...the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6).
- II. While it is true that all men sin (Rom. 3:23), this does not mean that God made us in such a way that we *have* to sin (1 John 1:7-2:2).
 - A. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - B. We have the promise of God that says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).
 - C. Hence, there can be no excuse for our unfaithfulness.
- III. Christ left us an example to not only prove that man does not have to sin, but an example of how to overcome temptation.

Discussion

I. We Are To Imitate Christ

- A. The New Testament abounds with admonitions for Christians to follow the example of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Paul said, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).
 - 2. Peter said Christ left us a perfect example (1 Pet. 2:21-24).
- B. We sing many songs which encourage us to be like Jesus.
 - 1. "*O To Be Like Thee.*"
 - 2. "*Have Thine Own Way Lord.*"
 - 3. "*Let The Beauty Of Jesus be Seen.*"
 - 4. "*More Like The Master.*"

II. Was Jesus Really Tempted To Sin?

- A. The Hebrew writer tells us that "in all things He had to be made like His brethren ... For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Heb. 2:9-18).
 - 1. The word for "tempted" both times in this passage is *peirazo* (SR #3985).
 - 2. "As God, he knows of course all our wants, and is ever able and willing to supply them. But as a man, he had to experience all the trials, temptations, privations, sorrows, and sufferings, which are common to our race, in order to fully qualify him for the duties of his mediatorial office: and these, as the Divine record shows, he endured to the uttermost. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, and brought up in the humble condition of a peasant, he entered upon his public duties under the most trying and discouraging circumstances. Satan tempted him; the scribes and Pharisees derided and persecuted him; and even his own friends and brethren forsook him. But he faltered not in his purpose. His course was ever onward toward the sublime

goal of his earthly mission. Amidst the lowering tempests and gathering storms of demoniacal fury and satanic malice he marched directly onward, until baptized in sufferings, his oppressed and care-worn frame sunk under the tremendous pressure of his mental agonies, and his great heart literally burst under the crushing and overwhelming influence of his incurred responsibilities ... he could endure no more; but calmly said, 'It is finished;' and then expired." (Robert Milligan, *Commentary on Hebrews*, p. 105).

- B. The temptations in the wilderness were real (Matt. 4:1–11).
1. "The case of Jesus was now similar to that of Israel. He was in a foodless wilderness, but he trusted that as God had provided for Israel in its helplessness, so would he now provide for him. Israel sinned by doubt and murmuring, and proposing to obtain bread in its own way—that is, by returning to Egypt (Ex. xvi. 1–9). Jesus avoided a like sin. We should note the use which our Lord made of Scripture: in his hour of trial he did not look to visions and voices and special revelation for guidance, but used the written Word as the lamp for his feet (Ps. cxix. 105); in the conflict of temptation he did not defend himself by his own divine wisdom, but used that wisdom which God had revealed to all Israel through his prophets. Jesus fought as a man (Phil. ii. 6, 7), and used that weapon which, as God, he had given to man (Eph. vi. 17). Jesus used the Scripture as of final, argument-ending authority. Eve also started with 'God hath said' (Gen. iii. 3); but she was not constant in her adherence to God's word. Jesus permitted Satan neither to question nor pervert the Scripture." (J.W. McGarvey, *The Fourfold Gospel*, pp. 92–93).
 2. "But Satan left to return many times. Here was the first being endowed with human nature who had defeated Satan under all circumstances for thirty years. This was Satan's first defeat under Christ's ministry. His last is yet to come, and it shall come by this same Christ Jesus. Temptations are battles. They leave the victor stronger and the vanquished weaker. Hence Satan when resisted is represented as fleeing. But he only flees for a season. He never despairs of the conflict so long as man is on the earth. Christ was constantly tempted by the returning devil (Luke xxii. 28)." (McGarvey, pp. 100–101).
 3. Christ "condemned sin in the flesh" by living a life which proves that man does not have to sin (Rom. 8:3).

III. Christ Is My High Priest

- A. Our High Priest can "sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb 4:14–16).
1. He is able to understand our problems and sympathize with the us.
 2. Having gone through life on this earth, Jesus is qualified to recognize an excuse when He hears one.
 3. No one will be able to say at the judgment, "you don't know what its like to live down here on earth."
 4. The fact that Christ does know what life is like down here makes it easier for me to approach Him in prayer.
- B. Christ did not take this honor upon Himself (Heb. 5:1–11).

IV. How Should I React To Sin?

- A. Men react in different ways when their sins become known.
 - 1. David wrote the beautiful psalm of repentance (Psa. 51:1-4).
 - 2. Saul sought “forgiveness” and then honor (1 Sam. 15:30).
 - 3. Peter went out and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75).
 - 4. Judas took his own life (Matt. 27:1-5).
- B. What good can come from my overcoming temptation?
 - 1. Trials reveal what we really are (1 Pet. 1:6-9).
 - 2. The Lord told Peter to strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:24-32).

Conclusion

- I. The humanity of Christ made it possible for Christ to leave us a perfect example, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).
- II. Jesus has shown the type of life God demands and told us to imitate Him.

The Training Of Our Children

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. It has been said that if you ask a Jew what his child will be when he grows up, he will answer, "A Jew."
 - A. Or, if you ask a Roman Catholic what his child will be when he grows up, he will answer, "A Roman Catholic."
 - B. But, ask a member of the church of Christ what his child will be when he grows up, and he will answer, "I hope he will be a Christian."
 - C. Why the difference?
- II. It may very well be that we are failing to teach our children the importance and the uniqueness of the Lord's church.
 - A. A lot of people in the world do not think the church is important.
 - B. But surely such an attitude should not be characteristic of Christians.
- III. How can we teach our children the importance of being a Christian?

Discussion

- I. Teach Them The Importance Of The Church**
 - A. Let them learn the importance of the church from:
 - 1. It being a part of God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:8-11).
 - 2. The price God paid for it (Acts 20:28).
 - 3. Jesus' love for it (Eph. 5:25-27).
 - B. In our age of denominationalism, they need to be impressed with the oneness of the church (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13).
 - C. Children use to hear these things preached from the pulpit.
 - 1. Such is not always the case with our modern preaching today.
 - 2. As parents, it is up to us to instill these things into their hearts.
- II. Setting A Proper Example Before Them**
 - A. How do parents expect their children to be faithful to the Lord when they themselves are not?
 - 1. Do you really think your child will be active in evangelism when he never sees you teaching anyone the gospel?
 - 2. Do you really think your child will attend all services of the church when you fail to do so yourself?
 - 3. Do you really think your child will be a student of the Scriptures when he seldom observes you studying the Word of God?
 - B. We will influence our children one way or another.
 - 1. Either as shining lights for good (Matt. 5:16).
 - 2. Or corrupting good habits by evil company (1 Cor. 15:33).
 - C. It's sad that there are a lot of children who never hear their parents pray.
 - 1. Thankful for the faithful (Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:3-11).
 - 2. For its preachers (Eph. 6:19-20).
 - 3. For open doors (Col. 4:2-4).

III. Practicing Hospitality

- A. The Bible teaches us to do this whether we have children or not.
 - 1. We should be given to it (Rom. 12:13).
 - 2. It should not be forgotten (Heb. 13:2).
- B. But consider the benefits for our children that comes from such.
 - 1. It gives them wholesome friends to associate with and enjoy.
 - 2. Warn them about the evil influence of bad company (1 Cor. 15:33).
 - 3. At the same time we need to provide them the opportunity to develop some friendship with spiritually minded people.
 - 4. By observing their lives out of the building itself they can see that these are just normal folks who are serving the Lord.
 - 5. Plus it may very well be that they may be influenced to also be a teacher, song leader, deacon, elder or preacher.
- C. It helps them and us to appreciate more fully the figure of the church as being the family of God.

IV. Preparing For Worship

- A. What's Sunday morning like at your house?
 - 1. Do kids have to be dragged out of bed because they were up too late the night before?
 - 2. Is there yelling, explosive tempers, mad rushes to try and get everyone dressed and ready on time?
 - 3. Are you nearly always late for services?
- B. The Jews had a "Preparation Day" (John 19:14), and it may be that we need such if we and our children are to have the proper frame of mind.
 - 1. What about having the clothes laid out on Saturday evening.
 - 2. Find all the lesson books, Bibles, shoes, purses, etc. the day before.
 - 3. Make sure everyone is in bed on time to have sufficient rest to be alert for the next day's activities.
 - 4. Leave from home in time to arrive early enough to greet brethren and to have a few moments of quiet meditation before the services begin.
- C. How much time and effort goes into your child's Bible lesson?
 - 1. Does he or she get it in the car on the way to Bible study.
 - 2. Do they realize that you are more interested in their Bible study than you are their school studies?
 - 3. As parents let's also study our children's Bible lessons.
 - 4. Ephesians 6:4 is directed to parents—not to Bible class teachers.
- D. We put a lot of planning and preparation into things that are special to us.
 - 1. We may plan and prepare a whole year for just one week of vacation.
 - 2. Children are impressed with the importance of such planning.

V. Demonstrate Sacrificial Giving

- A. Once again, your own example in this matter will go along way to impress this importance on your children.
 - 1. Let them see you planning and purposing your giving (2 Cor. 9:7a).
 - 2. Let them see you giving cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7b).
 - 3. Let them see that you realize God blesses bountiful giving (2 Cor. 9:6).
- B. If they get an allowance help them to decide what would be a good portion to return to the Lord.
- C. Show them a need for special sacrifices at times (Acts 2:44–45).

Conclusion

- I. Surely there are other things we can do to teach our children the importance of the Lord's church, but how are we doing on these?
- II. What does the church mean in your child's life?
- III. Let's do all we can to impress them with the value of being a child of God—for the eternal well being of their soul depends on it.

“What Do You Offer?”

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. It is very common to answer the phone here in the meetinghouse and have someone tell me that they are “new in town and are looking for a church” and they want to know “what we offer.”
- II. Most of the time these people hung up rather disappointed—we apparently do not offer what they are looking for.
- III. We establish criteria for many of the things we look for in life.
 - A. Boys dream of the perfect car.
 - B. Girls dream of the perfect wedding and house.
 - C. Men dream of the perfect wife.
- IV. How should we answer the question posed above?

Discussion

I. What Many Are Looking For

- A. Social activities: they want a YMCA with a little Scripture thrown in.
 1. Many churches boast of their softball or volleyball team.
 2. They want a Ladies Slimnastics course and lessons on dieting.
 3. When these folks visit, they are looking for a gym, sauna, dining room and a lovely shaded area for family picnics.
 4. The worthies of the Old Testament “wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:38).
 5. History tells us that Christians in the first century often met in caves, tombs, catacombs and “from house to house” (Acts 20:20).
 6. “And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” (Matt. 8:20).
- B. Social contacts: they want to meet the right people.
 1. “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake” (Matt. 10:22).
 2. The New Testament church had former prostitutes, homosexuals, adulterers and drug users (1 Cor. 6:9–11).
 3. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one...” (Gal. 3:28).
 4. “Then Peter opened his mouth and said: In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” (Acts 10:34–35).
- C. The biggest church in town: they want to get lost in the crowd.
 1. They want to be a part of the “mega-ministries.”
 - a) Oral Roberts had the biggest hospital owned by any church.
 - b) Robert Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral had the biggest computer database of any church organization in America.
 - c) Jim and Tammy Bakker built the third largest theme park in USA.
 2. They totally forget personal responsibility (Jam. 1:26–27; Gal. 6:1–10).
 3. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).
 - a) Complaints: “Not enough young people,” or “Not enough senior citizens” or “You don’t have enough get-togethers.”
 - b) They are not looking for the presence of Christ.

- D. Entertainment: they want to “go home feeling good.”
 - 1. Maybe they just want to hold hands and turn the lights down low.
 - 2. The New Testament church was not in the entertainment business (John 4:24; Eph. 5:19; Acts 2:42).
- E. A “good preacher,” one who make you laugh and cry in the same lesson.
 - 1. Would they have liked Moses (Exodus 4:10)?
 - 2. Would they have liked Paul (1 Cor. 2:1–5)?

II. What Christ Offers

- A. Freedom from sin.
 - 1. Jesus saw sin for what it really was—a cruel master (John 8:31–36).
 - 2. Sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1–2).
 - 3. He implores you to come to Him (Matt. 11:28–30).
- B. A way of life.
 - 1. A way of holiness (Isa. 35:8).
 - 2. A narrow way (Matt. 7:13–14).
 - 3. A way of service (Matt. 20:20–28).
 - 4. A way of peace (John 14:27; Phil. 4:6–9).
- C. Citizenship in His kingdom.
 - 1. He came to establish His kingdom (Matt. 3:1–2; Col. 1:13).
 - 2. “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...” (Phil. 3:20).
 - 3. Citizenship gives us fellowship with the Father (Rom. 5:6–11).
- D. A home hereafter.
 - 1. Heaven is the home of the redeemed (John 14:1–3; 2 Tim. 4:6–8).
 - 2. “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matt. 13:43).

III. What Should I Look For?

- A. The church for which Christ died (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22–23).
- B. Like minded souls (Phil. 2:1–5).
- C. People content to be Christians (Acts 11:26).

Conclusion

- I. We are 2,000 years and 10,000 miles removed from the church that was established in Jerusalem in the second chapter of Acts.
- II. The seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11).

What You Do When You Do Not Obey The Gospel

by Jeff Asher

Introduction

- I. What does it mean to obey the gospel (Rom. 10:8–21)?
 - A. To “call upon the name of the Lord” (Rom. 10:13).
 - B. It involves believing and hearing (Rom. 10:14, 17).
- II. The Bible teaches that many do not obey.
 - A. “They have not all obeyed the gospel” (Rom. 10:16).
 - B. “Have they not heard? Yes verily...” (Rom. 10:18).
 - C. “I have stretched forth my hands...” (Rom. 10:21).
- III. There are severe consequences for disobedience.

Discussion

- I. **You Overthrow The Power of God**
 - A. The disobedient are not more powerful than God.
 - 1. God is omnipotent (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16–17).
 - 2. Some make it impossible for God to save them (Isa. 59:1–11).
 - B. The gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16).
 - 1. This is the only means God will use (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:47).
 - 2. Examples of conversion (Acts 10:6; 11:14; 16:31–32).
 - C. To disobey the gospel is to choose damnation (Acts 13:46; 18:6).
- II. **You Make The Death Of Christ Of No Effect**
 - A. The universal atonement of Christ’s death (Heb. 2:9; Rom. 5:12, 18).
 - B. The gospel invites all men to it (Matt. 11:28–30; Matt. 28:18–20).
 - C. We can make Jesus’ death ineffectual (1 Cor. 1:17; Gal. 2:21; Heb. 10:29).
- III. **You Resist the Holy Spirit**
 - A. “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...” (Eph. 4:30).
 - B. The Holy Spirit convicts and converts sinners (John 3:3–5; Titus 3:5).
 - C. The apostles were guided by the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:7–11).
 - D. He convicts and converts through the gospel (Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:22–25).
 - E. Those who reject the gospel resist the Spirit (Acts 7:51; Neh. 9:30).
- IV. **You Make The Labor Of The Apostles And Prophets Vain**
 - A. The apostles had the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18–21).
 - B. They preached the word of reconciliation (1 Cor. 3:5–11).
 - C. Disobedience nullifies that gospel ministry (1 Thes. 3:5; Phil. 2:12–16).
- V. **You Give The Victory Over Death To Satan**
 - A. Jesus conquered death for every man (2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14–15).
 - B. Believers have victory over death (1 Cor. 15:54–58; John 5:24–30).
 - C. Unbelievers die in sin and will perish in hell (John 8:24; Rev. 21:8).

Conclusion

- I. Men can and do disobey the gospel—in doing there are severe consequences.
- II. You should obey the gospel now.

Why Churches Die

by David Padfield

Introduction

- I. It is entirely possible for a congregation of God's people to die.
- II. The church at Sardis was dead (Rev. 3:1–2).
 - A. Out of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation, only this one and the church at Laodicea seem to be lacking in outward foes, but they both had inward troubles to deal with.
 - B. They were not plagued by emperor worship, the Jews or the Nicolaitans.
 - C. Viewed externally, the church at Sardis looked peaceful and acceptable, a model church—but from the Lord's viewpoint it was spiritually dead.
 - D. The truth is that the church was so lifeless that it was not worth attacking.
 - E. Like some that Paul spoke of, they had “a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5).
 - F. “This church has the reputation of being alive, but the Lord sees it as it actually is—dead. Apparently this church, like the one in Ephesus, had begun with enthusiasm and a burning zeal for Christ and truth, but now it was dying of ‘dry rot,’ an internal deterioration. As the widow who gives herself to pleasure ‘is dead while she liveth’ (1 Tim. 5:6), so this church had sunk into spiritual inactivity, possibly to the level of the world, while yet maintaining an outward impression of love and piety. This describes many churches today that have a reputation of soundness and activity, but inwardly are decaying and dying.” (Homer Hailey, *Revelation: An Introduction And Commentary*, pp. 144, 145).
- III. There are congregations throughout this country that are every bit as dead as the church at Sardis.
 - A. Like Sardis, some of them have good reputations and a great past.
 - B. They assemble every Lord's Day and observe the “acts of worship” described in the New Testament (Acts 2:42).
 - C. Sometimes they point back to past and take pride in the fact that some “great” preachers used to work with them.
 - D. But, like in “The Wizard of Oz,” you can pull back the curtain and see them for what they really are: spiritually dead.
- IV. In our society when a dead body is found and the cause of death is not immediately known, the county coroner will order an autopsy.
 - A. An autopsy is an “examination of a cadaver to determine or confirm the cause of death” (*American Heritage Dictionary*).
 - B. An autopsy will not only give the immediate cause of death, but will also list the “contributing causes” of death.
 - C. Today, we are going to do an autopsy on a dead church—look at the immediate cause and some of the contributing causes.

- V. Over the past twenty years I have preached in meetings at over 150 different congregations—many of which were dead and didn't even know it.
 - A. In churches, seldom is the cause of “death” easy to see.
 - B. Most of the time it is not a single item that killed a church, it was a combination of several things that brought about their demise.
 - C. Some time ago I had the opportunity to speak at a congregation in that I believe is dead—at one time it had well over 300 members, but now they struggle to get 40 bodies present on Sunday.
 - D. While driving home I thought of several congregations I know of, places I visited while growing up, and how dead they are right now.
 - E. As an outside observer it seems to me that all of the “dead” churches I know have several things in common—and it is these elements that I want to talk with you about tonight.
 - F. Some of elements might be classified as “causes” and others as “effect.”

Discussion

I. Neglect Of Bible Classes

- A. Bible classes are an expedient way to teach the story of the Bible.
 - 1. In Bible classes teachers can adapt the material they present to the age level and understanding of the students in their class.
 - 2. Preaching from the pulpit can not be as specific, since in the same audience you might have Ph. D's and those who dropped out of high school, babes in Christ sitting beside well-grounded Christians, those who diligently study their Bibles daily sitting by some who won't open their Bibles again till the next Sunday.
- B. Some congregations conduct their Bible classes in a hodgepodge manner.
 - 1. Teachers are allowed to teach what they want whenever they want.
 - 2. It is not that they are teaching error, but as a whole the students are not being given the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).
 - 3. Some of the class books brethren use are nothing but fluff—it is not that they contain false doctrine—they don't contain any doctrine!
- C. The brethren here in Zion, Illinois have invested a great deal of time and money in the teaching program of this congregation.
 - 1. Our teachers prepare all of their own material / bulletin boards.
 - 2. The church here owns two copying machines to keep up with the demand for printed matter.
 - 3. Yes, it would be “cheaper” and easier to purchase printed class books.
 - 4. But, as everyone who has ever taught anything knows, the teachers get the most out of a class.
- D. The result of neglecting the Bible class program:
 - 1. Leads to untaught individuals—where will future elders, deacons, preachers and teachers come from? (2 Tim. 2:2).
 - 2. Visitors see the neglect and, given the option, will go elsewhere.

II. Neglect In The Pulpit

- A. There are some congregations that would be content if the preacher never left the four gospels in his sermons, and sadly, there are some preachers who are willing to comply!
 - 1. There are some passages in the Bible that are very difficult to understand (2 Pet. 3:15–16).
 - 2. The Revelation, one of the most difficult books in the Bible, contains a special blessing to “reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it” (Rev. 1:3).
 - 3. The purpose of preaching is to explain the Scriptures (cf. Neh. 8:1–8).
 - 4. Paul explained the Scriptures to his audience (Acts 17:1–3; cf. Acts 8:31).
- B. Dead congregations usually have a history of “short-term” preachers.
 - 1. Sometimes this is because the men they asked to work with them are lazy—they have a three year supply of sermons and when that is exhausted they find it easier to move than to study.
 - a) Lazy preachers can get by with just a few hours work a week.
 - b) They reach into their file cabinet on Saturday night to find out what they will preach in Sunday morning—he can spend the rest of the week playing golf or reading USA Today.
 - c) Never write an article, class book or prepare any original material.
 - d) Some of these men are great at have tea parties, but they usually don’t know the epistles from the apostles.
 - e) One of the reasons I prepare class books and hand out copies of my sermon outlines is so brethren can see what I’ve been doing—the brethren support me and I think they have a right to know.
 - 2. Sometimes churches have a high turnover of preachers because the church is full of knuckleheads and unrepentant sinners (3 John 9–10).
 - a) I know of a few congregations that have had five preachers in the past ten years—some men didn’t even stay a full year.
 - b) When the truth is taught and someone gets their toes stepped on the easiest thing to do is to kill the messenger (Acts 7:54–60).
 - c) Bickering among brethren is an infectious disease (James 3:1–12).
- C. The results of neglecting the pulpit:
 - 1. No stability in a congregation—no consistency in public teaching.
 - 2. The new preacher doesn’t even get a chance to know the brethren of the town being the moving van pulls up.

III. A Lack Of Joy Among The “Saved”

- A. I use the word “saved” in an accommodative sense, for if there is no joy in your life I doubt if you are really saved to begin with.
 - 1. They sit in the pew like they are at a funeral and when they leave the meetinghouse they stick out their hand and you are not sure whether you should shake it or pray for it.
 - 2. Their “Christianity” is like wearing a wool suit on a hot and muggy August day—you’re mighty uncomfortable, but you look good—but these “Christians” don’t even look that good.
 - 3. This lack of joy is so easy to spot, and the “Christianity” they offer no one in their right mind would want.

- B. As churches go, I am not sure if this is a “cause” or “effect” of death.
 1. Christ is to be received with joy (Matt. 13:20).
 2. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matt. 13:44).
 3. The seventy returned with joy (Luke 10:17).
 4. Jesus told the apostles, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11).
 5. Jesus said, “Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).
 6. There is joy in heaven over a sinner who repents (Luke 15:7).
 7. After worshipping the Lord, the disciples “returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Luke 24:52).
 8. When the people of Samaria received the gospel, “there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:8).
 9. “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).
 10. “Joy” is a part of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22).
 11. “...count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (Jam. 1:2).
- C. What happens to a congregation filled with saints who have lost the “joy of their salvation”? (Psa. 51:12).
 1. They end up losing their children.
 2. They scare away anyone who might be interested in the gospel.
 3. They lose their own soul as well.

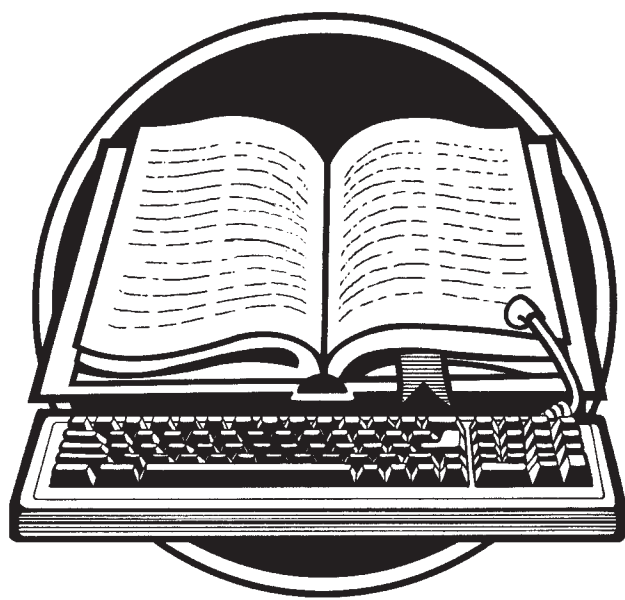
IV. Neglect Of The Meetinghouse

- A. This is more an “effect” than a “cause” of death.
 1. I realize that the meetinghouse is just an expediency, and that we are not even required to have a meetinghouse to assemble in.
 2. I also realize that the most beautiful building in the world is not a sign of spiritual vitality or the Lord’s approval.
 3. However, it has been my observation that “dead” churches usually meet in unkempt or decaying buildings—I am not talking about the cost or size of the building, but how well the brethren maintain it.
- B. Why is an unkempt meetinghouse a “dead give-away”?
 1. The meetinghouse itself was purchased with the Lord’s money.
 2. The way brethren treat the meetinghouse is a reflection of their attitude towards the Lord Himself.
 3. Think of the Old Testament tabernacle and temple—constructed with the finest materials and put together with the greatest of care.
 4. Our meetinghouse is neither a tabernacle nor a temple, but it is a place where God’s people assemble together for spiritual purposes.
 5. This building is not “holy” in any way—but it was purchased with “holy” money (i.e., the Lord’s money).
 6. Paul told Titus to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10).
 7. When people allow their children to ruin our tracts, I throw the wrinkled tracts away—the greatest message in the world deserves a better presentation than we often give it.

- C. What is the harm in allowing the meetinghouse to decay?
1. Shows a lack of appreciation for what we have.
 2. It shows a lack of concern for things belonging to our Lord.
 3. Shows that we have more interest in our own houses (cf. Hag. 1:1–5).

Conclusion

- I. Is there any hope for a “dead” church?
- II. The Lord extended some hope to the church at Sardis (Rev. 3:2–4).
- III. Victory lies not in the past, but in the future (Rev. 3:1).
- IV. I’ve had friends move into cities with “dead” churches—I’ve told them to start a new work in that city, for I’ve found it is easier to give birth than to raise the dead.



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